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Engaging God's Language

Guest Editors

Daniela Dumbravă

Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban

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« Ce Dieu terriblement humain ». Réflexions sur le langage dans l'interprétation de la résurrection de Lazare chez André Scrima

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Abstract

This article aims to analyse Fr André Scrima's interpretation of the resurrection of Lazarus in his commentary on the Gospel of John and in a homily dedicated to the miracle that Christ performed at Bethany. The texts we take into consideration are particularly relevant for a Christian reflection on the relationship between God's word and human language. Scrima's hermeneutics is traditional as well as oriented to a modern audience. Speaking about Lazarus, he chooses to focus on three aspects of the divine language: compassion, truth, and restoration of man. Scrima's reflections illustrate a possible dialogue between the long and rich reception of the raising of Lazarus in the Christian tradition and the Lazarus motif in modern culture.

Keywords: Lazarus, resurrection, God's language, André Scrima, Gospel of John

Les homélies, les commentaires bibliques ou les autres écrits qui forment la tradition foisonnante de la réception de la résurrection de Lazare[1] confèrent une place de choix aux questions concernant le langage et notamment le rapport entre la parole de Dieu et les paroles de l'homme. Bien que Lazare reste un personnage silencieux jusqu'à la fin[2], le miracle raconté

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[1] Voir Victor Saxer, « Lazzaro di Betania », *Bibliotheca sanctorum*, t. VII (Roma, 1966), col. 1135-1150 ; Jacob Kremer, *Lazarus. Die Geschichte einer Auferstehung* (Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1985); Alain Marchadour, *Lazare. Histoire d'un récit, récits d'une histoire,* préface de Pierre-Marie Beaude, Lectio divina 132 (Paris : Cerf, 1988) et *Lazare (*Paris : Bayard, 2004) ; les contributions réunies par Jean-Marc Vercruysse, *La Résurrection de Lazare*, Graphè 26 (Artois Presses Université, 2017).

seulement dans l'Évangile de Jean met en scène plusieurs discours et dialogues qui ont comme point culminant l'appel fort de Jésus : « Lazare, viens dehors ! ». Dans l'économie de l'Évangile c'est un épisode décisif à plusieurs égards, qui marque l'accomplissement des signes miraculeux opérés par le Christ. Il met le lecteur devant le contraste entre le miraculé sans parole et le Verbe de Dieu incarné qui se manifeste à travers la parole, mais aussi entre le dire du Verbe et l'incompréhension de ses proches et des autres témoins de ses œuvres.

Un « évangile en miniature »[3], ce condensé christologique a nourri autant les débats théologiques que la vie spirituelle et liturgique des communautés chrétiennes aux premiers siècles[4]. La prière adressée par Jésus au Père avant de ressusciter Lazare a constitué elle-même une pierre d'achoppement dans l'histoire du christianisme, car elle semblait mettre le Christ dans une position d'infériorité. Dans le combat contre l'interprétation arienne de ce passage, les Pères de l'Église ont développé une réflexion sur le langage condescendant du Christ, relevant de sa pédagogie salvifique[5]. Le moment qui a eu peut-être les plus amples réverbérations dans la réception du miracle reste le climax dramatique où Jésus appelle son ami Lazare « d'une voix forte »: c'est la résurrection à travers la parole qui sera contemplée au long de l'histoire chrétienne et même figurée dans les peintures, là où la virga des fresques des catacombes[6] est remplacée et le geste « royal » du Christ renforcé par les mots peints qui sortent de sa bouche et se transforment en souffle de vie pour Lazare[7].

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[2] Alain Marchadour, *Lazare. Histoire d'un récit, récits d'une histoire,* 126-129 ; Régis Burnet, « Un Marseillais parmi les Pères latins : histoire de la réception du personnage de Lazare », dans Clémentine Bernard-Valette, Jérémy Delmulle et Camille Gerzaguet (éds.), *Mélanges offerts à Paul Mattei par ses élèves, collègues et amis*, IPM 74 (Turnhout, Brepols, 2017), 409-421.

[3] Andrew T. Lincoln, « The Lazarus Story : A Literary Perspective », dans R. Bauckham, C. Mosser (éds.), *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology* (Cambridge : Grand Rapids, 2008), 211-232.

[4] Aimé-Georges Martimort, « L'iconographie des catacombes et la catéchèse antique », *Rivista di archeologia cristiana* 25 (1949), 105-114 ; Martine Dulaye, *Symboles des Évangiles (Ier-VIe s.). Le Christ médecin et thaumaturge,* Le Livre de Poche, Références, Inédit Histoire, série Antiquité 613 (Paris : Hachette, 2007), 153-178.

[5] Voir Alain Marchadour, *Lazare*, 218-222, et pour plus des détails concernant les commentaires sur Jean aux IVe et Ve siècles : Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban, « The Resurrection of Lazarus in John Chrysostom's, Cyril of Alexandria's, and Augustine's Commentaries on the Gospel of John », dans *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 65. 3-4 (2021), 93-124.

[6] Martine Dulaye, „*Virga virtutis tuae, virga oris tui :* le bâton du Christ dans le christianisme ancien", dans « *Quaeritus inventus colitur* ». *Miscellanea in Onore di Padre Umberto Maria Fasola, B* (Città del Vaticano : Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia Cristiana, 1989), 237-245. Voir aussi György Heidl, « Early Christian Imagery of the *virga virtutis* and Ambrose's Theology of Sacraments », dans *Studia Patristica*, 59 (2013), 69-75

[7] Voir, par exemple, la peinture de Luca de Tommè (1362), actuellement à la Pinacothèque Vaticane.

À part les commentaires théologiques, concentrés sur la personne divino-humaine du Christ, les homélies et les écrits apocryphes qui auront une influence considérable sur l'hymnographie et l'iconographie de la résurrection de Lazare, essayent de combler les « lacunes » de l'Évangile, en imaginant un dialogue entre Jésus et Lazare[8] et, plus souvent, entre les personnages infernaux : la Mort, l'Enfer et Satan. Par exemple, Hésychius de Jérusalem célèbre à travers la lamentation de l'Enfer « la parole » qui fait bondir les morts de leurs tombeaux[9] et les réintègre dans la « danse » des humains :

> Quel est celui dont la voix réveille les morts de leurs sépulcres comme s'ils dormaient ? (…) Quel est celui qui affranchit ainsi aisément mes prisonniers ? Quel est celui qui m'arrache tous mes morts pour une danse ? (…) Il triomphe de moi ce corps de quatre jours qui, en vêtements funèbres, danse en chœur avec les vivants.

Chez Basile de Séleucie, cette « danse » devient dans la bouche de la mort effrayée « une parodie » de son rire : « Qui est celui-là, dont les prisons souterraines ne supportent pas la voix ? Celui-là qui fait trembler les tombeaux ? Il n'a qu'à parler, et je ne peux pas retenir ceux que je tiens »[10].

La voix du Seigneur reconnue par les puissances infernales est associée à « la bonne odeur de la Vie » qui restitue au corps de Lazare son intégrité et transforme le tombeau en « sein maternel » : « comme s'il avait été semé dans ses entrailles et non dans un tombeau, Lazare a sauté au-dehors, créature nouvellement modelée, l'homme tout ensemble ancien et nouveau »[11].

L'histoire de la réception du miracle de Béthanie ne finit pas avec les Pères de l'Église ou les théologiens médiévaux qui poursuivront les pistes herméneutiques antérieures[12]. La résurrection de Lazare traversera les siècles en préservant sa force d'attraction et d'inspiration même quand il ne s'agira

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[8] Hésychius de Jérusalem, *Homélie* XI met en scène un dialogue entre Jésus et Lazare, où Jésus assure Lazare de sa liberté nouvelle et Lazare répond, en s'adressant à ses témoins dans l'enfer : « la Vie m'appelle, et je ne supporte pas de demeurer (ici) ; elle m'attire, elle qui est verbe et parole de Dieu » (*Les homélies festales d'Hésychius de Jérusalem*, éd. M. Aubineau, t. I: *Les Homélies* I-XV, Subsidia hagiographica 59, Bruxelles : Société des Bollandistes, 1978, 411).

[9] « De même qu'un cheval à un signal, ainsi le mort, éperonné par la voix du maitre, bondissant hors du tombeau, tout à la fois appelé, modelé, rendu visible » (Hésychius de Jérusalem, *Homélie* XII, 453).

[10] P. Camelot, « Une homélie inédite de Basile de Séléucie (Vatic. Ottobr. gr. 14) », dans *Mélanges A. -M. Desrousseaux* (Paris : Hachette, 1937), 44.

[11] Hésychius de Jérusalem, *Homélie* XII, 451.

[12] Voir, pour les commentaires de Thomas d'Aquin ou de Bonaventure, J. Kremer, *Lazarus. Die Geschichte einer Auferstehung*, 169-175.

plus de s'inscrire dans la longue et prestigieuse tradition chrétienne mais plutôt de se constituer dans une contre-tradition où Lazare prendra finalement la parole pour témoigner de l'absurdité de la condition humaine[13].

Dans cet article, nous souhaitons traiter de l'interprétation de la résurrection de Lazare proposée par le père André Scrima (1925-2000) dans son commentaire sur l'Évangile de Jean (1964-1965) et dans une de ses homélies adressées à la communauté monastique de Deir-el-Harf au Liban (1973). La démarche d'André Scrima met en lumière à la fois la tradition de l'Église et la sensibilité moderne, le climat spirituel de la réception du texte biblique et sa lecture à partir des « signes des temps ». Le commentaire ne donne presque aucune référence extérieure à l'Évangile, tandis que l'homélie évoque explicitement « notre sensibilité de modernes », sans toutefois se situer dans une optique différente de celle de l'intelligence du cœur. Les réflexions rencontrées dans ces deux écrits publiés en français après 2000 seront comparées, sur certains points, avec celles développées de façon plus théorique dans le cours sur l'expérience spirituelle tenu par le père Scrima à l'Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth en 1977-1978[14].

Une « lecture intérieure » de l'Évangile

Notons comme point de départ que le commentaire est construit comme un cheminement spirituel à l'intention des moines du monastère Saint-Georges de Deir-el-Harf[15]. En maître de la lectio divina et passeur d'une expérience de prière qui l'avait marqué dès sa jeunesse, le père Scrima propose une « lecture intérieure »[16] comme initiation au « mystère de l'évangile de Jean – ce livre axial au sein de l'Écriture sainte »[17]. Il situe l'épisode de

[13] Alain Marchadour, *Lazare*, 243-259. Voir aussi Leslie M. Thompson, « The Multiple Uses of the Lazarus - Motif in Modern Literature », dans *Christian Scholar's Review* 7 (1978), 306-329.

[14] André Scrima, *Expérience spirituelle et son langage. La tradition chrétienne* (cours inédit en français, les Archives de l'Institut d'Études Islamo-Chrétiennes, l'Université Saint-Joseph de Beyrouth, et les Archives « André Scrima », New Europe College, Bucarest), traduit en roumain : *Experienţa spirituală şi limbajele ei*, éd. Anca Manolescu, avec la collaboration de Radu Bercea (Bucureşti : Humanitas, 2008), 20-193.

[15] André Scrima, *L'Évangile de Jean. Un commentaire*, traduction de Marcel Pirard et Anca Vasiliu, introduction par Anca Vasiliu (Paris : Cerf, 2017), 421. Voir, pour le contexte, Ioan Alexandru Tofan, *André Scrima, un « gentleman creştin ». Portret biografic* (Bucureşti : Humanitas, 2021), 68-70, 109-135, et pour la finalité de l'écriture chez André Scrima : Anca Manolescu, « André Scrima: Orality and Writing », *Review of Ecumenical Studies* 3 (2020), éd. Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban, 395-411.

[16] Scrima, *L'Évangile de Jean. Un commentaire*, 11.

[17] Scrima, *L'Évangile de Jean. Un commentaire*, 23. Voir aussi Michel Van Parys, « La croix théologienne. Notes en marge du commentaire du Père André Scrima sur l'évangile de Jean », dans Daniela Dumbravă, Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban (éds.), *André Scrima : expérience*

la résurrection de Lazare dans « la dynamique » de l'Évangile : avec le miracle accompli en Béthanie commence « la montée du Seigneur vers Jérusalem »[18], où l'histoire s'ouvre vers l'éternité et la Pâque du Christ transcende la Jérusalem terrestre vers la cité céleste. Il voit également les chapitres 11 et 12 comme un « prélude liturgique », « un dialogue précédant l'offrande, l'oblation des Dons »[19], au sacrifice du Christ sur la croix. Il fait dès le début une observation qui projette une lumière singulière sur les questions concernant le langage. Le récit de l'Évangile, dans cette dernière partie, s'insère entre « le silence de Dieu, d'avant et d'après les siècles », et le théodrame du salut : « L'éternité descend dans le temps et s'en empare, c'est pourquoi nous voyons que l'Évangile gagne progressivement en intensité jusqu'à atteindre une densité exceptionnelle »[20].

Un des premiers thèmes du commentaire – qui le distingue, nous semble-t-il, de la grande majorité des témoins de la tradition – est celui des visites du Seigneur. La familiarité des sœurs de Lazare et l'amitié de celui-ci avec le Christ sont regardées à travers ce thème prophétique[21] et mystique qui confirme l'intention fondamentale de cette lecture de l'Évangile. Les visites du Seigneur se trouvent – comme tout ce qu'il opère pendant son ascension vers la Pâque – à la croisée du temporel et de l'éternel. La présence historique du Christ chez ceux qui l'accueillent a comme but de leur communiquer la grâce, de les convertir et les sauver. Cependant, selon le père Scrima, cette présence n'est pas seulement d'ordre temporel ; elle est surtout « un prélude et un signe pour des visites intérieures », car la venue du Seigneur se parfait dans l'âme, là où elle devient de plus en plus intense, orientée vers la parousie pour qu'il reste « à jamais avec ceux qu'il aime »[22].

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spirituelle et langage théologique. Actes du colloque de Rome, 29-30 octobre 2008, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 306 (Roma: Edizioni Orientalia Christiana, 2019), 41-55.

[18] Scrima, *L'Évangile de Jean. Un commentaire*, 145

[19] Scrima, *L'Évangile de Jean. Un commentaire*, 153.

[20] Scrima, *L'Évangile de Jean. Un commentaire*, 146.

[21] Voir, par exemple, l'invocation du Psaume 106 (105), 4 : « Souviens-toi de moi, Yahvé, / par amour de ton peuple, / visite-moi par ton salut », et la bénédiction du cantique de Zacharie : « Béni soit le Seigneur, le Dieu d'Israël, / de ce qu'il a visité et délivré son peuple » (Luc 1, 68).

[22] Scrima, *L'Évangile de Jean. Un commentaire*, 146. Dans son très bel article « André Scrima : la vie philosophique d'un moine pèlerin contemporain (équivocité et paradoxe du témoignage) », Anca Vasiliu met en évidence le sens que donnait André Scrima à l'événement/l'avènement : « Tout événement, donc, est de fait un événement "trans-historique", et, j'ajouterai, "trans-mondain", dans le sens d'une "révolution" qui surpasse la fin. En tant qu'événement il constitue une forme de manifestation de l'Esprit, une "mise à nu", une "mise en lumière", en un mot, le "rendu visible" d'un projet inconditionnel dont le dessein s'accomplit invisiblement dans la vie de chaque être humain » (*Vie philosophique et vies de philosophes*, textes réunis et présentés par Bruno Clément et Christian Trottmann. Paris : Sens & Tonka, 2010, 102-103).

André Scrima y déploie une herméneutique augustinienne centrée sur le sens de la formule « interior intimo meo » des Confessions[23], car Dieu est « plus profondément en nous que nos propres âmes » : il est toujours là, plus proche de nous que nous-mêmes, présent même quand nous sommes absents. À part cette paraphrase du texte de saint Augustin, qui d'ailleurs n'est pas explicitement évoqué, Scrima établit une relation étroite entre visite et présence afin de proposer une interprétation anagogique : l'expérience intérieure de la présence du Verbe de Dieu prend la forme d'une visite, d'un dévoilement incomplet ou d'une inhabitation du Verbe qui semble se retirer afin qu'on éprouve « le désir de le chercher et de demeurer avec lui pour toujours ». On y retrouve des échos de la mystique de saint Bernard tout comme du drame augustinien at pascalien de la recherche de Dieu.

Plus traditionnelle apparaît la symbolique de Marthe et de Marie[24], vues comme « deux modes de l'accueil » complémentaires et solidaires, l'un visible et l'autre intérieur. L'interprétation joue sur le même registre du croisement du temporel et de l'éternel, sans toutefois les opposer : Marthe a une précédence pratique, qui correspond au Christ historique, tandis que Marie bénéficie du privilège de l'accueil « dans les profondeurs de l'être, où l'homme fait face à l'éternité »[25].

Une fois dressé le cadre, les dialogues de Jésus avec les sœurs de Lazare et avec ses disciples donnent lieu à des annotations qui concernent le rapport entre la parole de Dieu et le langage des hommes. Scrima ne voit pas dans le message que Marthe et Marie envoient à Jésus une demande, mais l'expression de leur amour et de leur confiance : elles « ont confié leur frère au Seigneur »[26]. La confiance deviendra dès lors un mot-clé pour déceler le sens spirituel du miracle de Béthanie. Elle marque la rencontre de deux sœurs avec Jésus et se manifeste surtout dans la confession de Marthe.

Pour André Scrima, les paroles de celle qui s'est distinguée par son accueil plein de sollicitude sont « belles, grandes et douces, dénotant une confiance absolue, l'enthousiasme féminin, la tendresse et le respect »[27]. L'attitude de Marthe est ainsi définie comme espace d'une réceptivité enracinée dans la connaissance de soi par rapport à Dieu (« humilité ») et manifestée par l'élan vers sa bonté sans limites (« confiance »). Les deux versants

[23] Augustin, *Confessions* III, 6, 11, éd. Pierre de Labriolle (Paris : Les Belles Lettres, 2002), 54.

[24] Voir, pour l'histoire de l'interprétation symbolique des sœurs de Lazare, Aimé Solignac, Lin Donnat, « Marthe et Marie », dans *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, t. 10, col. 664; Giles Constable, « The interpretation of Mary and Martha », dans *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 3-141; Allie M. Ernst, *Martha from the Margins. The Authority of Martha in Early Christian*, Tradition Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae* 98 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 50-58.

[25] Scrima, *L'Évangile de Jean. Un commentaire*, 147.

[26] Scrima, *L'Évangile de Jean. Un commentaire*, 148.

[27] Scrima, *L'Évangile de Jean. Un commentaire*, 151.

de cette approche de la présence du Christ se rencontrent dans le présent de l' « attente ». De cette façon, le père Scrima fait de Marthe, tout en préservant la prééminence contemplative de Marie, un symbole de la condition humaine qui se met à l'écoute de la parole divine. En revanche, la réaction des disciples, « rationnelle » et « fondée sur la peur », met en lumière leur faiblesse d'esprit et de cœur. Il y a une tension entre leurs raisonnements et sentiments, d'une part, et le dire du Christ, d'autre part, qui veut « ouvrir leurs yeux » en annonçant à travers la parabole des douze heures du jour « la confrontation entre la vie et la mort »[28]. Ils ne comprennent pas ce que Jésus leur dit. Même la réaction finale de Thomas est comme « un assentiment négatif, une résignation »[29]. La confusion autour de la mort – « sommeil » pose le problème de la réception des paroles du Christ dans toute son ampleur. Pour les disciples le « sommeil » de Lazare est un signe de guérison, tandis que pour le Christ il est le nom de la mort dans la perspective de la résurrection[30].

Si le langage devient, dans les rapports avec les disciples, un lieu d'incompréhension, quand l'intelligence et les sentiments humains n'arrivent pas à déceler le sens de la parole divine, la réponse de Marthe, bien qu'« indirecte », manifeste la confiance et l'espérance par lesquelles elle surpasse ses limites. C'est une « réponse de cœur », « sa manière d'adhérer à la vie »[31], signe d'une compréhension partielle, car la parole du Christ déborde, par sa plénitude effective, la capacité de Marthe de la recevoir.

Quel est le sens de ce que dit le Christ à ses interlocuteurs ? Son discours se manifeste comme un dévoilement progressif de ses intentions : il prépare, annonce, explique, encourage, révèle. « Une éloquence haute de sens », dit le père Scrima à propos de la première réaction de Jésus au message des sœurs de Lazare. Car la parole du Christ traverse et transfigure les mots humains afin de les faire signifier la vérité « d'en haut » dans l'ambivalence même du langage. André Scrima choisit de donner à la parabole des douze heures du jour le sens anticipateur qu'on vient d'évoquer. La parabole reste pourtant ouverte à d'autre interprétations possibles dont témoigne la tradition des commentaires de ce passage.

La même ambivalence du langage constitue l'espace du dialogue avec Marthe. Jésus lui parle de la « résurrection immédiate » de Lazare et se révèle comme ayant la même dignité que le Père ; il distingue entre deux sens de la mort, physique et spirituel. Son dire se trouve toujours entre

[28] Scrima, *L'Évangile de Jean. Un commentaire*, 149.

[29] Scrima, *L'Évangile de Jean. Un commentaire*, 150.

[30] Scrima, *L'Évangile de Jean. Un commentaire*, 150 : sur la façon divine de nommer la mort « sommeil » pour la première fois. Voir le commentaire de saint Cyrille d'Alexandrie sur la raison pour laquelle Dieu donne à la mort le nom de « sommeil » : *In Jo.*, 11.14, PG 77, 44C ; éd. Pusey 270.

[31] Scrima, *L'Évangile de Jean. Un commentaire*, 153.

« réalité immédiate » et « réalité future », entre le temps présent et l'eschaton, « comme un dialogue et un tiraillement entre les deux temps »[32]. Car lorsqu'il dit être « la Résurrection et la Vie », la résurrection est déjà présente et Lazare en sera la preuve éclatante et la préfiguration de ce qui s'accomplira à la fin des temps. Par sa parole Jésus fait entrer dans la succession temporelle le présent éternel du Logos divin ; il répond à l'espoir eschatologique par l'eschatologie réalisée dans Sa personne : présence totale et promesse déjà tenue. Le langage humain, défini par son extériorité par rapport à ce qu'il signifie, reçoit la capacité de rendre présente l'identité éternelle du Verbe « en tension unitive avec le silence infini du Père »[33]. C'est l'effet de la « radicalité » de l'incarnation dont le père Scrima traitera dans son cours sur l'expérience spirituelle. Cette assomption radicale de la nature humaine « abolit » – sans confusion – la distance ontologique et fait du langage des hommes le lieu de la révélation de la Parole de Dieu par elle-même[34].

« *Au-delà de la condition de Lazare* »[35]

Dans le miracle de Béthanie les mots et les faits forment ensemble un langage révélateur centré sur « le signe de Lazare ». Jésus annonce aux disciples que la maladie de son ami ne fera pas l'objet d'une guérison et qu'elle sera l'occasion de la manifestation de la « gloire de Dieu ». Il ouvre ainsi la perspective de la providence divine (sur laquelle ont glosé plusieurs auteurs anciens) et y définit le rôle de Lazare qui ne bénéficiera pas de son pouvoir thaumaturgique mais, par sa résurrection, laissera voir le Christ en tant que maître de la vie et de la mort[36]. Dans Lazare ce ne sont pas la maladie ou le péché individuel qui seront guéris ; c'est la mort elle-même, conséquence ultime du péché, qui commencera à être vaincue. Et le père Scrima se fait ici l'écho de l'hymnographie byzantine qui célèbre le samedi de Lazare le début de la victoire du Verbe incarné sur la mort et l'enfer. Lazare n'est pas seulement ranimé et offert aux regards terrifiés, incrédules ou émerveillés des témoins, mais resuscité spirituellement par la foi en Christ, la Résurrection et la Vie. Sur ce point André Scrima est héritier de la longue tradition herméneutique qui à partir d'Irénée de Lyon et d'Origène a vu en Lazare le

[32] Scrima, *L'Évangile de Jean. Un commentaire*, 152.

[33] Anca Manolescu, « Un langage de dépassement », dans Daniela Dumbravă et Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban (éds), *André Scrima : expérience spirituelle et langage théologique*, 151.

[34] Scrima, *Expérience spirituelle et son langage. La tradition chrétienne*, 78-79.

[35] Scrima, *L'Évangile de Jean. Un commentaire*, 152.

[36] Voir sur la différence entre guérison et résurrection Gustave Thibon, *L'ignorance étoilée* (Paris : Fayard, 1974), 147 : « *Ego sum resurrectio et vita*. Remarquez l'ordre des termes : la résurrection est nommée avant la vie, la vie découle de la résurrection par voie de conséquence. Le Christ veut nous dire : je suis la vraie vie, la vie qui suit la résurrection, c'est-à-dire une vie qui passe par la mort. Si le grain ne meurt ... Celui qui veut sauver sa vie la perdra, etc. – Mais les malades que nous sommes demandent la guérison, non la résurrection ».

symbole de la renaissance spirituelle[37]. Toutefois, il ne met pas cette dimension au centre de son interprétation, bien que le sens général de la lecture de l'Évangile de Jean soit celui indiqué auparavant, propre de façon éminente à la condition monastique : « Le gouter du texte inspiré doit cependant s'épanouir en sentir intégrale du mystère de Dieu »[38].

André Scrima préfère accentuer le caractère anticipatif de la résurrection opérée en Béthanie par rapport à la Résurrection du Christ. On pourrait y déceler une optique affine avec celle qu'on rencontre chez Amphiloque d'Iconium selon lequel « les prémices de la Résurrection » sont « préfigurées en la personne de Lazare »[39]. Selon Scrima, la maladie de Lazare accélère la « révélation des évènements futurs »[40] et s'inscrit dès le début « à l'intérieur du Mystère total, du Mystère de la Résurrection »[41]. Par Lazare, le Verbe incarné nous met en présence de « trois réalités eschatologiques » : la Résurrection (11, 25), le jugement du monde (12, 31) et la victoire sur le monde (16, 33) :

> Il existe en effet une correspondance secrète et de « réciprocité » anticipative entre la résurrection de Lazare et la Résurrection du Seigneur et entre leurs morts. (…) La résurrection de Lazare est le signe ultime avant le Signe du Fils de l'homme (qu'est la croix), signe ultime pour accélérer l'achèvement du plan de Dieu (…)[42].

Les autres scènes de l'épisode, essentielles pour la révélation de l'identité divino-humaine du Christ, sont interprétées toujours dans le sens de cette anticipation. Inspiré par le commentaire de Jean Chrysostome[43], le père Scrima considère les larmes du Christ devant la tombe de Lazare comme expression johannique de la kénose du Seigneur que les autres Évangiles ont voulu beaucoup plus mettre en évidence. Il choisit cependant de ne pas faire un commentaire dogmatique et de souligner seulement que c'est ainsi que « Jésus affronte de façon anticipative la réalité de sa mort »[44]. De

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[37] Irénée de Lyon, *Contre les hérésies* V, 13. 1.13 -14, éd. Adelin Rousseau, Louis Doutreleau, Charles Mercier, Sources Chrétiennes 153 (Paris : Cerf, 1969) ; Origène, *Commentaire sur saint Jean*, 28. 54, t. V (livres XXVIII et XXXII), éd. Cécile Blanc, Sources Chrétiennes 385 (Paris : Cerf, 1992). Voir aussi, dans le même sens, la description de la réalité d'où le Christ fait sortir Lazare : « Telle est la conséquence du péché : pestilence, laideur et ténèbres » (154).

[38] Scrima, « A l'intérieur du mystère de l'unité : le moine », dans *L'Église en plénitude*, Cahiers de la Pierre-qui-vire (Paris : Desclée de Brouwer, 1962), 198.

[39] Amphiloque d'Iconium, *Homélie* 3, 1, dans *Homélies* (1-5), éd. Michel Bonnet, avec la collaboration de Sever J. Voicu, Sources Chrétiennes 552 (Paris : Cerf, 2012).

[40] Scrima, *L'Évangile de Jean. Un commentaire*, 148.

[41] Scrima, *L'Évangile de Jean. Un commentaire*, 153.

[42] Scrima, *L'Évangile de Jean. Un commentaire*, 148.

[43] Jean Chrysostome, *Homélies sur Jean*, 63, 2. André Scrima ne le cite pas, mais ses remarques portent indubitablement les traces de la tradition chrysostomienne.

même, l'appel fort du Christ, « Lazare, sors », qui a beaucoup intéressé les commentateurs anciens de l'Évangile, est mis en lumière, de façon plutôt brève, comme « un cri de victoire que lance le Maître de la vie et de la mort »[45]. Il est vrai que le commentaire est complété là-dessus par deux observations : d'une part, le renversement du triomphe éphémère de la mort par « la gloire et la puissance de Dieu, qui sont plus fortes que la mort », et d'autre part, une comparaison suggestive entre l'amitié de Jésus pour Lazare et la filiation divine du Verbe : « Lazare était son ami bien-aimé, comme lui-même est le Fils aimé du Père »[46]. C'est ainsi qu'on est amené à saisir dans la voix forte de Jésus le pouvoir divin aussi bien que son amour pour l'homme.

Une des dernières remarques sur l'épisode de Béthanie regarde une dimension fondamentale de la lecture de tout l'Évangile que propose le père Scrima : le caractère liturgique de la parole du Christ. La prière que le Verbe incarné adresse au Père avant d'opérer le miracle, « donné de toute éternité », est une « prière eucharistique, d'action de grâce »[47]. Scrima ne manque pas de préciser, fidèle au texte biblique, que le but de la prière était celui de dévoiler la condition de Jésus-Christ en tant qu'envoyé du Père. Il souligne cet attribut du Fils, tout johannique, d'être « envoyé », scandé au long de l'Évangile de Jean, et le situe au centre de la foi chrétienne. Ce commentaire concis d'un acte de Jésus qui avait beaucoup interpellé les lecteurs des premiers siècles, relie la parole qui se trouve à l'origine de l'Écriture avec celle qui l'actualise dans le sens propre du mystère du Christ : Verbe de Dieu envoyé dans le monde et grand prêtre de la nouvelle Alliance. Pour le père Scrima et les destinataires immédiats de son commentaire, « l'Écriture se transmue en liturgie, du mouvement même de la Parole de Dieu qui est descendue du Ciel pour être élevée en Croix, pour tout attirer à elle »[48].

Une homélie sur la résurrection de Lazare

L'homélie sur Lazare accorde une place prépondérante au thème du langage. Elle débute, en effet, avec une réflexion sur la fonction performative du texte biblique dans une perspective toute spirituelle, centrée sur « le cœur profond ». Scrima ne reprend pas explicitement l'herméneutique d'inspiration augustinienne de la « présence comme visite », mais il laisse entrevoir les

[44] Scrima, *L'Évangile de Jean. Un commentaire*, 154.

[45] Scrima, *L'Évangile de Jean. Un commentaire*, 155. Voir, pour comparer, Jean Chrysostome, *Homélie* IX, dans *Sur l'égalité du Père et du Fils*, éd. A.-M. Malingrey, Sources Chrétiennes 396 (Paris: Cerf, 1994).

[46] Scrima, *L'Évangile de Jean. Un commentaire*, 154.

[47] Scrima, *L'Évangile de Jean. Un commentaire*, 155.

[48] Scrima, « A l'intérieur du mystère de l'unité : le moine », 198.

traces d'une autre possible source augustinienne, cette fois-ci directement liée à la résurrection de Lazare. Dans un de ses commentaires sur le Psaume 101, saint Augustin glosait sur la signification de « déliez-le et laissez-le aller ! », en la trouvant dans la délivrance « des liens des péchés »[49]. Dans cette interprétation pénitentielle, la force de la voix du Christ opère encore dans le cœur : « un mort ne peut ressusciter que par le cri intérieur de Jésus-Christ : c'est Dieu qui agit ainsi au-dedans de nous »[50]. Le récit s'actualise avec chaque lecture et les paroles ne laissent pas indifférent le récepteur : elles « percent » et « troublent » car elles agissent en substitution ou en représentation de leur source ; elles ne transmettent pas seulement un contenu historique, mais le rendent effectif. Ce que le père Scrima décrit à propos de l'épisode de la résurrection de Lazare c'est ce que saint Ambroise disait en 378 dans la lettre sur la mort de son frère :

> ce n'est pas uniquement Lazare qu'il a ressuscité, mais la foi de tous ; parce que, toi, si tu crois quand tu lis, ton esprit, qui était mort, revit en ce Lazare. Qu'est-ce que cela veut dire que le Seigneur aille au tombeau et s'écrie d'une voix forte : Lazare, viens dehors sinon qu'il nous fournit une image de la résurrection à venir, qu'il nous en donne un exemple[51].

Le même principe sera mis en œuvre par Dostoïevski dans le chapitre sur la conversion intérieure de Raskolnikov à travers la lecture médiatrice de Sonia. Père Scrima ne cite pas saint Ambroise, ni un autre Père de l'Église, bien qu'il s'inscrive par son herméneutique dans cette grande tradition, mais il choisit, tout au début de l'homélie, d'évoquer Dostoïevski par André Malraux, « témoin de notre commune angoisse humaine »[52] et marqué lui aussi par la figure sempiternelle de Lazare. Dostoïevski et Malraux, le premier entièrement voué à l'interprétation traditionnelle, tandis que le second décidément du côté du destin contemporain de Lazare, sont comme deux emblèmes de la tension qui définit la réception de la parole divine chez les Modernes.

L'homélie s'y trouve en syntonie avec le cours que Scrima va donner dans les années 1977-1978 à l'Institut d'Études Islamo-Chrétiennes :

> On pourrait dire que, incontestablement, la dimension spirituelle du réel est, peut-être, actuelle aujourd'hui, mais « en creux » et

[49] Augustin, « Deuxième discours sur le Psaume 101 », dans *Discours sur les Psaumes* II (reprise de la traduction faite sous la direction de M. Raulx, Bar-Le-Duc : Éditeur Louis Guérin, 1869-1872), Paris : Cerf, 2008, 411.

[50] Augustin, « Deuxième discours sur le Psaume 101 », 412.

[51] Ambroise, *Sur la mort de son frère* 2, 77, éd. O. Faller, CSEL 73 (1955), 291 (trad. Régis Burnet, *Lazare*, Supplément *Cahiers Évangile* 192, juin 2020, 18).

[52] Scrima, « La résurrection de Lazare (Jn 11, 1-45) », *Contacts* 207 (2004), 250.

> non pas « en plein ». Elle n'est pas évidente et majoritaire. Il y a le signe de ce qui est absent, qui représente un type de présence, d'actualité, autrement important que ce qui est en « trop plein », trop établi et qui risque de devenir souvent insignifiant[53].

Pour Scrima, Lazare ressuscité signifie la liberté restituée à l'homme par la grâce divine, la liberté qui renverse « la pesanteur du monde »[54], la nécessité, la mort, l'échec. On entend dans ces brèves remarques l'écho des réflexions de Simone Weil[55] et de Nicolas Berdiaeff[56], avec ses antithèses entre nécessité implacable de la nature et liberté de l'esprit.

Quel est l'effet du récit de la résurrection de Lazare sur le cœur ouvert à la parole de Dieu ? Ce cœur[57], « lieu de passage unique entre l'Homme et Dieu »[58], est à même de « saisir les profondeurs peut-être ultimes (…) de notre énigme humaine »[59]. Il est convoqué devant une tâche radicale : se confronter avec « la condition humaine jusqu'à ses extrêmes limites » afin de rencontrer « ce Dieu terriblement humain lui-même ». Par le « signe de Lazare », dont père Scrima parlait dans le commentaire sur Jean, le cœur réceptif de l'homme s'achemine vers la connaissance véritable du Christ, de sa compassion et de sa « force immense, calme, lumineuse comme un autre Orient sur le monde, sur nos vies, sur l'univers tout entier »[60]. Ce n'est pas le Christ qu'ont vu les témoins du récit évangélique, mais le Ressuscité, le Christ cosmique, communiqué par la grâce du Saint-Esprit. C'est ainsi que le père Scrima ouvre sa réflexion sur la dimension pneumatologique de l'efficacité du langage biblique.

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[53] Scrima, *Expérience spirituelle et son langage. La tradition chrétienne*, 4.

[54] Scrima, « La résurrection de Lazare (Jn 11, 1-45) », 250.

[55] Simone Weil, *La pesanteur et la grâce* (Paris : Plon, 1947).

[56] Voir, pour une comparaison avec Berdiaeff, Anca Manolescu, « Lo straniero spirituale : il marginale opposto all'esclusione. Il gruppo monastico del Antim e Nikolaj Berdjaev », *Religioni e società*, 39 (2001), 84-95.

[57] Scrima, *Expérience spirituelle et son langage. La tradition chrétienne*, 30 : « Donc, cette interrogation, au sujet de la réalité de l'homme, me met en mouvement vers un "lieu" où l'homme puisse se définir dans sa totalité et dans son "essentialité". Les traditions spirituelles ont donné à ce lieu essentiel de l'homme, le nom du "Cœur", et ceci d'une façon convergente et unanime. C'est le lieu "essentiel" de l'homme d'où tout le reste découle, à partir duquel tout le reste se déploie et vers lequel tout le reste de l'homme converge. Le cœur équivaut donc à la notion essentielle du "Centre" ; le Cœur c'est le centre d'Homme ». Il y a une surprenante convergence, dans l'espace de la même problématique qui relie le langage et le cœur, avec l'approche phénoménologique de Michel Henry dans *Paroles du Christ* (Paris : Seuil, 2002). Voir, pour une approche historique, Antoine Guillaumont, « Les sens des noms du cœur dans l'Antiquité » et « Le "cœur" chez les spirituels grecs à l'époque ancienne », dans *Etudes sur la spiritualité de l'Orient chrétien* (Bégrolles-en-Mauges : Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1996), 13-80.

[58] Scrima, *Expérience spirituelle et son langage. La tradition chrétienne*, 35.

[59] Scrima, « La résurrection de Lazare (Jn 11, 1-45) », 249.

[60] Scrima, « La résurrection de Lazare (Jn 11, 1-45) », 249.

« Trois chemins convergents »

Langage de la compassion

La résurrection de Lazare révèle le Christ dans sa double nature divine et humaine. Ce n'est pas le pouvoir divin que Scrima choisit de mettre en lumière, mais l'expression paradoxale de ce pouvoir qu'est la compassion. Le Dieu incarné assume intégralement l'humanité et son émotion n'est pas la marque d'une faiblesse, mais l'expression de l'amour pour l'homme. Lazare est l'ami du Seigneur et devient la figure de celui que Dieu aime. Devant la tombe de Lazare, Jésus déplore la condition mortelle de l'homme et son amour pour Lazare accomplit ce que les prophètes avaient annoncé pour la fin des temps. C'est la révélation du visage compatissant de Dieu, un Dieu qui « frémit », « qui est avec l'homme », qui est présent dans les souffrances humaines pour les transfigurer « en gloire »[61].

Dans ce « face-à-face » avec la mort, celle-ci est dévoilée à la fois comme commune condition humaine et comme ce qui se trouve aux antipodes du projet divin pour l'homme. Le langage biblique nous met sous les yeux cette contradiction de la mort et l'ambivalence de nos sentiments : solidarité dans l'implacable fin et refus de l'absurdité du « néant, de tout ce qui est méchant, laid, mensonger, de tout ce qui est finalement faux »[62]. La lumière des paroles du Christ ne porte pas seulement sur le visage inouï de Dieu compatissant, mais également sur la vérité de l'homme aimé par Dieu et sur la fausseté de la mort. La réponse de Dieu devant la laideur mensongère de la mort ne peut être que la résurrection, car l'homme est l'effet de son amour et « celui que Dieu aime ne peut pas mourir »[63]. Lazare sort du tombeau comme préfiguration de la condition eschatologique des hommes, certes, mais aussi comme victoire de la vie qui est amour. Dieu se donne à voir aux hommes comme amour-compassion car l'accès à la vraie vie ne saurait se réaliser qu'à travers ce « pâtir-avec », ce partage de la souffrance et des conséquences ultimes de la condition humaine déchue.

Langage de vérité

La compassion du Verbe incarné est une autorévélation, donc une ouverture vers la vérité même de Dieu. Le langage que le Christ adopte ne réduit pas, pour des raisons pédagogiques, l'altitude et la radicalité de sa source

[61] Scrima, « La résurrection de Lazare (Jn 11, 1-45) », 251.

[62] Scrima, « La résurrection de Lazare (Jn 11, 1-45) », 250.

[63] Il y a un écho de la fameuse phrase-emblème de la pensée de Gabriel Marcel, mise dans la bouche d'un personnage du drame *La mort de demain* : « Aimer un être, c'est lui dire : toi tu ne mourras pas ». Voir Xavier Tilliette, « Gabriel Marcel et l'autre Royaume », dans Emmanuel Lévinas, Xavier Tilliette et Paul Ricoeur, *Jean Wahl et Gabriel Marcel*, présentation de Jeanne Hersch (Paris : Beauchesne, 1976), 38.

transcendante. Il est comme habité par un sens qui se heurte à l'indifférence, au manque d'attention et, en fin de compte, « au manque du désir de Dieu »[64]. D'où vient-elle cette incompréhension de la parole « tellement simple, absolue de Dieu »[65] ? Comment est-ce qu'on peut manquer la signification des paroles du Christ ? La réponse du père Scrima vise la racine même de l'échec de toute rencontre : on est trop occupé de soi-même, trop plein de ses raisons, trop « sophistiqués » devant la parole de vérité. Il voit dans les dialogues successifs qui composent l'épisode de la résurrection de Lazare une parabole de l'incapacité de l'homme d'être réceptif à la révélation de Dieu qui n'utilise pas un langage étranger, inaccessible ou hermétique. Bien au contraire, le Christ parle avec des mots simples qu'il remplit d'un sens nouveau. Or, c'est l'habitude qui met en sourdine cette nouveauté restauratrice. La routine mentale et langagière constitue un obstacle devant l'altérité. Elle ne sait pas se mettre à l'écoute de l'autre et lui confère par réflexe ou par commodité un sens à disposition. C'est la situation où se trouvaient les apôtres auxquels Jésus parlait du « sommeil » de Lazare :

> Pour eux, le langage de Dieu est encore insaisissable parce qu'ils entendent, dans les paroles de Dieu, résonner leurs paroles humaines. (…) sachons qu'il faut un certain silence, en nous, pour que les paroles qui viennent jusqu'à nous résonnent avec leur sens nouveau, et non pas avec leur sens à nous[66].

Contre la commodité et l'habitude qui se constituent comme un brouillage intérieur, alimenté par l'amour-propre, se dresse une attitude d'attente et de réceptivité qui a besoin du silence intérieur comme d'un réceptacle de la présence de l'autre que soi-même. Cette brève réflexion sur le rapport entre le dire de Dieu et les paroles des hommes, occasionnée par le récit de la résurrection de Lazare, préfigure ce que le père Scrima va développer toujours dans ses cours sur l'expérience spirituelle, là où il fait la distinction fondamentale entre « la parole 'parlante' » et « la parole 'parlée' » : la première « suscite la réponse créatrice de l'Autre, en moi, ou dans l'autre », tandis que la seconde se réduit à un simple réflex langagier, en se transformant en « objet ». La parole du Christ est par excellence vive ; elle déborde les frontières « de son dire » et convoque l'homme à être d'abord le témoin du sens qui dépasse les mots. Faire résonner le langage de Dieu dans son cœur, c'est l'attitude qui restitue au langage sa fonction primordiale de communication réelle et efficace[67].

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[64] Scrima, « La résurrection de Lazare (Jn 11, 1-45) », 253.

[65] Scrima, « La résurrection de Lazare (Jn 11, 1-45) », 251.

[66] Scrima, « La résurrection de Lazare (Jn 11, 1-45) », 251-252.

[67] Scrima, *Expérience spirituelle et son langage. La tradition chrétienne*, 14 : « Si la métaphore relève d'une sorte d'opération locale, ponctuelle, de nature affective, poétique, le symbole,

L'appel adressé à Lazare par la voix du Christ devient le symbole de la parole divine qui revivifie et libère l'homme des contraintes qu'il s'est imposées. C'est pourquoi, comme le dit très franchement le père Scrima, « il n'est pas toujours commode de parler à Dieu ». D'abord, parce que l'homme se complait dans ses artifices et son confort. Cependant, il y a une autre difficulté, illustrée par les sœurs de Lazare et relevant de l'impréparation ou de la limite humaine. Or, ce que Marthe nous montre par sa confession au moment de la rencontre avec Jésus c'est que la réponse de la limite humaine à l'infinité de sens de la parole divine ne peut être que la confiance. Marthe n'est pas encore préparée à recevoir l'éclatement de la parole du Christ en se révélant comme « la Résurrection et la Vie ». Toutefois elle sait s'adresser avec une grâce toute féminine – on reconnait les mêmes remarques du commentaire sur l'Évangile de Jean – en dépassant la frontière du langage et du visible pour exprimer sa foi dans ce qu'elle ne voit ni ne comprend parfaitement. À travers la parole, Dieu s'expose dans sa vérité et l'homme, qui ne veut pas manquer cet appel, fait confiance à ce que Dieu lui dit. L'homme se lance par sa capacité d'espérer – laquelle devient par-là une vertu[68] – vers ce qui déborde le voir et le dire[69]. C'est le sens même des paroles du Christ car « croire en Lui signifie ne plus goûter à la mort »[70] de l'âme en tant que « manque du désir de vraie vie »[71]. On retrouve ici, dans le sillon des Pères de l'Église, explicitement invoqués comme expression collective de la tradition, la signification des visites du Verbe proposée dans le commentaire : présence qui donne le goût de la recherche, du cheminement intérieur et du progrès infini en Dieu dont parlait saint Grégoire de Nysse[72].

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lui, est objectif. Il a pour fonction essentielle de réunir et de permettre la communication, le passage objectif (c.à.d. ne dépendant pas de moi, ou de vous qui m'écoutez, mais, de sa propre structure et de sa propre destinée entre plusieurs niveaux de l'être, entre plusieurs degrés de la réalité) à la limite, entre tout le domaine de l'être. » Voir sur la question du langage théologique chez André Scrima, Daniela Dumbravă, « Religioni e teologia – isomorfismo necessario? Brevi acceni morfologici sul linguaggio teologico di André Scrima », dans Daniela Dumbravă et Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban (éds), *André Scrima : expérience spirituelle et langage théologique*, pp. 75-91.

[68] Ce qui n'est pas sans rappeler les vers de Ch. Péguy, *Le porche du mystère de la deuxième vertu*, préface de Jean Bastaire (Paris Gallimard, 1986), 89 : Péguy : « Tous les sentiments, tous les mouvements que nous devons avoir pour Dieu,/ Dieu les a eus pour nous, il a commencé de les avoir pour nous./ Singulier retournement qui court au long de tous les mystères,/ Et les redouble, et les agrandit à l'infini,/ Il faut avoir confiance en Dieu, mon enfant, il a bien eu confiance en nous./ Il nous a fait cette confiance de nous donner, de nous confier son fils unique ».

[69] Scrima, « La résurrection de Lazare (Jn 11, 1-45) », 252.

[70] Scrima, « La résurrection de Lazare (Jn 11, 1-45) », 252.

[71] Scrima, « La résurrection de Lazare (Jn 11, 1-45) », 253.

[72] Grégoire de Nysse, *Cant* 8, GNO VI, 246,20 ; *Vit Moys* II, 225. Voir Lucas Francisco Mateo-Seco, « Epektasis », dans Lucas Francisco Mateo-Seco and Giulio Maspero (éds.), *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, trans. Seth Cherney (Leiden-Boston : Brill, 2010), 263-268.

Dans une homélie de la même série, Scrima va développer cette relation entre le dire de Dieu, qui inaugure « un commencement sans fin », et la confiance comme réponse de l'homme :

> Telle est la nouveauté du Christ : le commencement est toujours à l'avant. Pourquoi ? Parce que j'ai confiance ! (…) Quand vous dites con-versation, confiance, on est deux, on est ensemble. Le commencement, désormais, c'est d'être à jamais avec le Christ. Faire confiance comme Simon (…) c'est entrer dans un réflexe de raisonneur que nous avons tous. Mais quand je fais vraiment confiance, je suis arraché à moi-même, je suis désormais à jamais avec Dieu, avec le Dieu vivant. Et c'est pourquoi tout acte de commencement, tout acte de haut niveau de ma vie, non seulement je ne le regrette jamais pour moi et pour les autres, mais, basé sur la confiance, j'avance et progresse dans cette confiance, dans cette évidence, éblouissante intérieurement, que je ne suis plus seul désormais, et que je ne peux plus lâcher le Christ qui est à côté de moi (…)[73].

Langage restaurateur : le « face-à-face »

Tout en évitant, notamment dans son homélie, les sentiers battus de l'exégèse, André Scrima choisit comme clé de l'interprétation qu'il donne à la résurrection de Lazare le thème de la rencontre, du « face-à-face ». Car la compassion du Verbe incarné s'exprime dans ses rencontres et irrigue la trame du miracle accompli pour Lazare et ses sœurs. Ensuite, c'est par le langage de vérité que Dieu appelle l'homme à une nouvelle vie de liberté et d'amour. Cependant, le « face-à-face » a lieu entre « deux visages » : celui du Christ, Dieu et homme, et celui de Lazare « défiguré » par la mort.

Le frémissement qui accompagne la compassion et la vérité qui habite le dire divin convergent vers cette tension fondamentale de la mission du Christ. Dans ce « terrible face-à-face »[74] Jésus se montre comme « ce Dieu terriblement humain » qui est venu rencontrer l'homme en état de décomposition et le restaurer par sa parole créatrice. La radicalité de l'amour divin pour l'homme se manifeste, devant la tombe de Lazare, par une victoire com-patissante sur la mort, prélude de la grande confrontation sur la croix, tout comme la résurrection de Lazare n'est qu'« un signe avant-coureur de la véritable Résurrection »[75]. André Scrima trouve une formule heureuse afin de mettre en lumière la portée spirituelle du miracle : « L'homme qui perd sa face, et Dieu qui la lui restitue maintenant »[76]. On

[73] Scrima, « Avancez en eaux profondes (Lc 5, 1-11) », *Contacts* 207 (2004), 261.
[74] Scrima, « La résurrection de Lazare (Jn 11, 1-45) », 253.
[75] Scrima, « La résurrection de Lazare (Jn 11, 1-45) », 253.

est loin du goût macabre des homélies qui se plaisaient, en connaissant la curiosité de leurs auditeurs, à décrire le processus de ranimation du cadavre[77]. Ce qui compte à travers les temps c'est le sens des paroles du Christ à Marthe, car la foi en Christ est capable de recréer l'homme, de le soustraire à la mort spirituelle, de lui restituer le visage – signe de sa personne. C'est le même message que nous transmettent les fresques ou les mosaïques anciennes sur lesquelles le voile de Lazare est enlevé et ses yeux sont toujours ouverts[78]. On pourrait se demander si cette troisième signification de l'épisode ne serait pas trop concentrée sur le visible. Où est la place du langage dans ce « face-à-face » restaurateur ? Or, il ne faut pas oublier que le moment central du miracle consiste dans la « voix de puissance et de majesté » qui rappela « aussitôt Lazare de la mort à la vie »[79]. Le miracle a eu lieu à travers le langage car la parole de Dieu est par excellence un événement créateur.

En ressuscitant Lazare, le Christ lui redonne un visage. Selon la tradition, c'est le même Lazare qui sort du tombeau, mais aussi un Lazare « modelé », renouvelé, participant à une vie qu'il ne connaissait pas auparavant. Il voit de nouveau avec ses yeux de chair et participe à un banquet où sa sœur Marie accomplira un geste prophétique. Pourquoi se tait Lazare ? Il est comme le nouveau-né[80], témoin silencieux mais non moins glorieux du pouvoir restaurateur du Christ :

> Il nous fait comprendre que cette Résurrection est déjà venue, et que, adhérer au Christ c'est aller au-delà de toute défiguration de la mort : c'est aller au-delà de toute faiblesse, au-delà de tout échec dans cette unique, immense fête qui tressaillit au fond de l'âme la plus misérable, cette fête de la communion, cette fête de la confiance, cette fête de l'espérance, déjà, dans la lumière de la Résurrection[81].

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[76] Scrima, « La résurrection de Lazare (Jn 11, 1-45) », 253.

[77] A. Wilmart, « Le *De Lazaro* de Potamius », *Journal of Theological Studies*, 76 (1918), 289-304 ; Régis Burnet, « Un Marseillais parmi les Pères latins : histoire de la réception du personnage de Lazare », 414-417.

[78] Martine Dulaey, « L'évangile de Jean et l'iconographie : Lazare, la Samaritaine et la pédagogie des Pères », dans Cristian Bădiliță et Charles Kannengiesser (éds.), *Les Pères de l'Église dans le monde d'aujourd'hui* (Beauchesne-Curtea Veche, Paris-București, 2006), 142.

[79] Chromace d'Aquilée, *Sermon* 27, 4, dans *Sermons* II, texte critique, notes et index par Joseph Lemarié, o.s.b., traduction par Henri Tardif, Sources Chrétiennes 164 (Paris : Cerf, 1971), 113.

[80] Dans *Symboles des Évangiles (Ier-VIe s.). Le Christ médecin et thaumaturge*, 178, Martine Dulaey considère que le rapprochement entre la représentation de Lazare comme momie et « le nourrisson emmailloté des scènes de la nativité » ne connaît pas un témoignage textuel antérieur à l'homélie sur Lazare d'Hésychius de Jérusalem que nous avons évoquée au début de cet article.

[81] Scrima, « La résurrection de Lazare (Jn 11, 1-45) », 254.

En guise de conclusion

Notre analyse a essayé de mettre en lumière les constantes de l'approche herméneutique du père Scrima : les grandes orientations, les thèmes préférés et les motifs qui scandent ses textes. La résurrection de Lazare est vue comme « signe » et « anticipation » de la véritable Résurrection. Le commentaire sur Jean souligne leurs « correspondance » tandis que l'homélie en fait une distinction très marquée. À part les sources que nous avons cherché d'identifier et de mettre en valeur, nous avons suggéré des approfondissements de la réflexion d'André Scrima à partir d'autres auteurs du XXe siècle qu'il aurait pu lire ou qui comportent des convergences significatives avec sa pensée.

Ce qui apparaît comme trait distinctif du commentaire et de l'homélie c'est la place accordée au langage et les ouvertures vers une réflexion sur la parole de Dieu, qui sera abordée plus systématiquement dans les cours tenus aux universités libanaises. Les deux textes qui ont fait l'objet de notre enquête nous semblent être des témoins particulièrement éloquents du thème du langage qui traverse les écrits d'André Scrima et qui connaît son expression consommée dans un article comme « Le Nom-Lieu de Dieu »[82]. Dans le commentaire et plus explicitement dans l'homélie on peut trouver les conditions de l'écoute de la parole divine qui crée l'évènement de la rencontre salvifique et fait coïncider les trois moments du temps dans le présent. Elle s'adresse aux « profondeurs de l'être », là où Dieu est déjà présent, en suscitant le désir de le chercher et de le connaître. Les dispositions d'âme qui accompagnent cette recherche sont la confiance et l'espérance[83], à la fois conditions préliminaires et réponses de l'homme devant la révélation qui excède « le voile du langage »[84].

En même temps, le père Scrima nous conduit, à travers son exégèse, vers la compréhension des conséquences de la « radicalité » de l'incarnation sur le statut du langage, car entre Dieu et l'homme n'existe plus d'autre médiateur que la Parole qui « s'est fait chair ». La résurrection de Lazare montre, dans son développement narratif, les tensions entre le dire de Dieu et la pratique langagière de l'homme, mais aussi le choix de Dieu de se communiquer à travers le langage afin qu'il soit « mu et inspiré par le Logos divin »[85].

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[82] André Scrima, « Le Nom-Lieu de Dieu », dans *Débats sur le langage théologique*, organisés par le Centre international d'études humanistes et par l'Institut d'études philosophiques de Rome, aux soins d'Enrico Castelli (Paris, 1969), 213-220.

[83] Nous avons été souvent penchés à faire appel à la pensée de Gabriel Marcel envers laquelle celle d'André Scrima manifeste une affinité particulière. La façon dont ce dernier introduit les deux termes, *confiance* et *espérance*, notamment en relation avec le langage et le temps, nous semble très proche du sens de l'espérance comme « mémoire du futur » (Gabriel Marcel, *Homo viator*, Paris : Aubier – Editions Montaignes, 1944, 72).

[84] André Scrima, « Le Nom-Lieu de Dieu », 216.

[85] André Scrima, « Aperçu sur l'hésychasme » (cours inédit en français, tenu en 1970-1971 à la Faculté de Théologie de l'Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik, Liban), 115.

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Open hermeneutics: André Scrima's «éclatement de la parole "en moi"» (I)[1]

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Abstract. Towards the end of the 1960s, in the well-known Enrico Castelli (1900-1977) colloquia, while intensively discussing the topic of demythologization, scholars concluded that theological language is fundamental in exploring it. Thus, the topic of *the analysis of theological language: the Name of God*, became prevalent for them and they began to think that a distinction between the terms *religious* and *theological* would be desirable, avoiding scandalous formulas for the field of theology. According to Karl Jasper, God is just a chest of something *indicible*. André Scrima presents himself in the debate with an original proposal, namely to think of theological language, in the broadest sense of this concept, as enclosing religious discourse. In the beginning, speaking theologically should happen in the *Name of God*, Scrima asserts; at Jasper's antipodes, he places the *Name of God* as the origin and mystery that generates speaking theologically. This article aims first of all to bring the question of theological language back into the academic space that is more interested in the phenomenological issues promoted in Enrico Castelli's thought laboratory in Rome.

Keywords: theological language, religious discourse, religions, Name of God, phenomenology, Castelli Colloquia, André Scrima.

I. 1 Note on Enrico Castelli's thought laboratory. Towards the end of the 1960s, in the well-known Enrico Castelli colloquia, while intensively dis-

[1] This article was initially presented in the form of a presentation within the panel: *The resilience of the Science of Religion(s) between hermeneutics and history*, coordinated by Prof. Giuseppe Maiello and Prof. Giovanni Casadio, at the 18th annual Conference of the European Association for the Study of Religions (EASR): *Resilient Religion* – Pisa, 30th August-3rd September 2021. This special issue as well as this article is published through the project grant PN-III-P4-ID-PCE-2020-2309: *Building resilience through comparative religions during the Civil War. André Scrima's intellectual legacy in Lebanon* – UEFISCDI, Exploratory Research Projects - PCE-212.

cussing the topic of demythologization, scholars concluded that theological language is fundamental in exploring it. Thus, the topic of *the analysis of theological language: the Name of God*, became prevalent for them and they began to think that a distinction between the terms *religious* and *theological* would be desirable, avoiding scandalous formulas for the field of theology. By reading and re-reading fundamental volumes such as "Hermeneutics and Tradition" (1963), "Le Mythe et la Foi", (1966), "The Analysis of Theological Language. The Name of God" (1969), and the volume of debates derived from the proceedings: "Débats sur le langage théologique" (1969), to mention only those closely related to language issue and the years when André Scrima attended these colloquia, I realised that the choice of topic opened up a consensual methodological orientation, but more than a consensus, it was a refined and varied spectrum of thought. Moreover, the most vivid and interesting part of this laboratory of Roman thought proved to be the debates. The tones were extremely erudite, no less cutting, severe, in a stage where key ideas or concepts were 'polished' on all sides, like diamonds, all prepared to accurately render their ideas for the specialised or non-specialised public. Bringing together philosophers, epistemologists, theologians, historians of religions, phenomenologists, each of them very distant in their disciplines in the Castelli Colloquia, yet brought together to deal with common themes of great relevance to the post-conciliar period (Vatican II), seemed to me a kind of counter-tendency to the continuous division of disciplines, as well as a remarkable effort to recode the language of each discipline in such a way as to coagulate the thought and issue on which they were reflecting. Of course, there is a dynamic of ideas within the Roman laboratory itself, I will summarise a brief part of this atmosphere here.

The European mentality of a humanist tradition open to the European history of ideas, combined with the ideas of scholars such as Ernesto Grassi or Eugenio Garin, set the tone for thematic volumes open to *Hermeticism*, *Rhetoric*, *Machiavellianism*, *Esotericism*, etc., all in the period from the 1950s to the 1960s. The term phenomenology appears for the first time in the 1951 volume *Archivio*. One of the major contributions directed towards traditional metaphysics, and not towards Husserlian phenomenology, was attributed to the Italian philosopher Gustavo Bontadini, *alma mater* Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano, who contributed to the formation of philosophers such as Angelo Scola, Emanuele Severini, Giovanni Reale, among the best known. The so-called return to Parmenides, especially to classical, Aristotelian and Thomistic metaphysics, made Bontadini one of the most important exponents of the theory of the identity of being and thought, an epistemic approach based on two constitutive elements: experience and the principle of non-contradiction. This was the ideological basis of the first monographic issue of *Il compito della fenomenologia*, published in 1957 in the *Archivio*

Filosofico, a space where the vicissitudes of European humanism at that time were to be exposed.

Phenomenological analysis, as long as it was research into the meanings of "common sense", i.e. research aimed at proving the truthfulness of the key to reading the openings of religious experience, was perfectly in line with Castelli's intentions. A few names to mention here, just to emphasise the multifaceted background, I mean both humanistic and scientific, of various exponents of these meetings: Erch Przywara (1889-1972), theological philosopher, highly original for his idea of the tension between divine and transcendent immanence (unity in tension) and remembered for his *Analogia Entis* (1932); Gerhard Funke (1914-2006), a student of Heidegger, later professor at the *École Normale Supérieure*, Paris; Roman Ingarden (1893-1970), a Polish-born mathematician and philosopher, one of Husserl's best students and doctoral students (during his time at Göttingen), influential especially for his volume *The Literary Work of Art*, but also for his contributions to epistemology, ontology, metaphysics, phenomenology. Beyond their simple enumeration, I think it is good to imagine the transversal line of the germinal stage of the Roman phenomenological laboratory, at least enough to understand what kind of perspectives and hermeneutic sensibilities are taking shape within the group where Scrima's contribution will be incorporated, or at least, to understand what kind of phenomenology is being discussed in the background of the colloquia where he was also present. If we were to consider Castelli's philosophy strictly, I invoke here the voice of Federica Pazzeli:

> [...] la sua è una filosofia della vita, il cui obiettivo è di superare la solitudine (il solipsismo) del soggetto proposto dalla filosofia (specialmente neoidealistica) per guadagnare, attraverso un 'senso comune', l'intesa intersoggettiva.[2]

Before the Italian philosopher Castelli died, the proceedings of the colloquium *L'herméneutique de la philosophie de la religion* had already defined the thematic directions, the hermeneutical priorities. The Castelli Colloquia were coordinated by the founder until 1977, and after his death he was succeeded by the philosopher Marco Maria Olivetti (1943-2006). Subsequently, the President of the Castelli Institute was Jean-Luc Marion, who continues to organize these colloquia at the Department of Philosophy of *La Sapienza*, University, Rome. The ambition of the founder of these colloquia was that through the authority of the contributions made by philosophers, theologians, sociologists, or historians of religions, a European pole of thought in the field of philosophy of religions would be generated and developed, privi-

[2] Federica Pazzelli, *Enrico Castelli e i Colloqui sulla demitizzazione* (1961-1975), Monte Porzio Catone, 11t^{h}-14t^{h} July 2016, 1.

leging this discipline, precisely because philosophy did not seem to respond to the major questions of those years.

A powerful stimulus for this group, as mentioned above, was the Second Vatican Council, chronologically speaking, in the same period of the heyday (1940s-70s) of the Roman School of Religious History, founded by Raffaele Pettazzoni in the first decades of the 20th century, both institutions of reflection on religious phenomena living under the same university area *La Sapienza*, Rome. These institutions were truly at the antipodes, but no less distinguished and influential globally in the history of the disciplines of religious studies. On the one hand, there were the Castelli Colloquia that focused on the philosophy of religion, a continental philosophy expanded to a kind of post-conciliar phenomenology, if we can call it that, and on the other hand, the Pettazzonian school of the history of religions, where phenomenology had a completely different strain. This is a separate chapter, which will have to be dealt with at some point, since many of the scholars present at the Castelli Colloquia were also present at European or international congresses of the History of Religions. It is a fact that among the participants in the Castelli Colloquium were many representatives of the various Christian denominations at the work of the Council, such as Father Andre Scrima who was an Orthodox monk, as well as the historian of religions and the brilliant classicist of Romanian-Hungarian origin Károly Kerényi, for example. Faith and religion, faithful or not, nothing was excluded, as long as their intellectual horizons included philosophical reflection and the thematic challenges of their Roman meetings.

Moreover, Castelli's preference for *colloquia* rather than the title of *congress* or *symposium* was precisely to give these meetings the character of an informal gathering of the reflections of those present, *mutatis mutandis* just like those of Eranos, where Mircea Eliade was present, as well as Károly Kerényi. Among them, perhaps the most famous, not necessarily the most effective, were scholars such as Gershom Scholem, Guido Calogero, Yves Congar, Jean Daniélou, Gaston Fessard, Paul Ricoeur, Hans-Georg Gadamer, Ugo Bianchi, and later Umberto Eco, Jean-Luc Marion, etc. In considering the publication of the proceedings of the Castelli Colloquia, it is also important to note the publication, as early as 1961, of the journal *Archivio di Filosofia* [*AF*] dedicated to the philosophy of religion, coordinated since 1977 by Marco Maria Olivetti.

Olivetti's epistemological imprint was that there was a way of doing philosophy, rather than generating a philosophy, as is evident from the *AF* issues from the period of the colloquia organised by Castelli. Scrima has an epistolary exchange[3] with Olivetti in the eighties, but all by virtue of the

[3] Letter from Rome, 3rd April 1980**, Prof. Marco Olivetti, Istituto di Studi Filosofici "Enrico Castelli" to A. Scrima,** at Mme de Menil, 7 rue Las Cases, Paris**,** 1 p. hand written

memory of the years he frequented with Castelli. This chapter is by no means the end of the story, about the colloquia, about Castelli, about those post-conciliar years that strengthened and motivated many scholars, conservative or less so, religious or less so, to frequent this environment, deserves a monograph in itself, partly already undertaken by Frederica Pazzelli.[4]

I. 2 Atmosphere at Villa Mirafiori, a hint: *hospitality and hermeneutic of bonne chère*. Inherent to the organization of the colloquium, in Villa Mirafiori, the hospitality perfectly complemented by the gardens of the Hotel Fenix, near the palm-lined streets of the area of the headquarters of the Faculty of Philosophy, *La Sapienza* University, where it is still located today, was highly appreciated by the participants, giving a unique note to an environmental area such as the Peripatetics, in full contemplation of nature and the Roman architectural beauty of Via Nomentana and the Trieste district. Thus, no impediment could have slipped in to "disturb the philosophical creativity" of this group,[5] Andreas Speer confesses. He also mentions l'*herméneutique de la bonne chère*, referring to a remark by Ludwig Feuerbach: *l'homme est ce qu'il mange*!, but against the background of the discussions of these colloquia in an "anti-dualist" framework, wishing to emphasize that the study days were structured in vast recreational areas, with good quality wine, with an exceptional hospitality at the Hotel Fenix. Around the round tables, participants from many parts of the world had the opportunity to get to know each other, to communicate, to maintain or to form lifelong friendships, to join in the continuity of what might be called a symposium, a salon culture, where the verbs *to savour* and to be wise literally enjoy possession of the same Latin root *sapere*, and the issues of the journal *AF* testify to this in their very essence.

I. 3 The Gordian knot of debate around the demythologization issue. I would like to point out that demystification is at the core of many of the topics discussed at the Castelli Colloquia. I cannot propose a full exposition of this argument in this article, I will limit myself to summarising it. Demythologizing, in Bultmann's terms, is primarily about communicating what is essential about the Christic salvific message, leaving behind biblical mythological language, the language that "wraps" the sacred content, in

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and envelope, CS 202; Rome, 12th September 1980, **Marco Olivetti, Istituto di Studi Filosofici "Enrico Castelli" to A. Scrima**, 1 p. hand written, CS 203, according to the PAS-NEC/DCEC quotation.

[4] Federica Pazzelli, *La genesi dei Colloqui. Una prospettiva su Enrico Castelli*, (Pisa-Roma: Fabrizio Serra Editore, 2018), 435.

[5] Andreas Speer, "Sapida Scienzia. Observations sur la vie au Colloque Castelli", in *Archivio della Filosofia*, special issue: *Cinquant'anni di Colloqui Castelli* 79, no. 2, 2011, 59-62.

biblical texts. The mind, too much directed towards scientific objectivism, will not be otherwise magnetized, unless it considers the *kerygma*: the sharing of the biblical message with one's neighbour or the deep and essential message of the Bible through the minimalist Protestant grid. Anyone who has ever visited the Dome of Utrecht will understand this kind of 'minimalism' quite well visually.

No matter how we put it, this kind of problematization has become obsolete even within the historical-religious disciplines, the pressure of desacralization of theological languages in the 20th century and beyond is indeed a major one. The clear separation between faith and the interpretation of traditions or religious systems is already a matter of rallying to a minimal scientific ethics (Raffaele Pettazzoni). Demystification, in Castelli's terms, would be defined by the fact that by separating myth from message, from the specific linguistic envelope, everything is reduced to a barren morality, commonly accepted but irrelevant to deeply spiritual Christian existence.

Replacing the ontological content of knowledge with the formal articulation of discourse (after all, the foundation of existentialist theories starting with Heidegger!), is the basis of the critical thinking with which André Scrima launches into many of the debates of the "Enrico Castelli" colloquia, succeeding in pointing out the Gordian knot of the question: on the one hand, the positioning of the symbol as the constitutive referent of that which transcends language, the indicible; on the other hand, the word circumscribed to the configuration of the symbol leads to deciphering of meaning.[6] His argumentative and discursive approach is partly the subject of the following pages.

II. 1 The language of André Scrima according to André Scrima. A few remarks on his intellectual contribution to the Castelli Colloquia. Most of the time, in historiographical literature, the terms in which Scrima establishes his own epistemological approach are not identified as such, but are passed through an analytical filter specific to the mind of the person who intends to approach different aspects of Scrima's work, particularly his hermeneutical approach in the sixties. It is an excellent approach in interpreting Scrima language, there are no misunderstandings here.[7] But my approach is intended, for the moment, as an exercise in familiarity with the layered terminology and semantics of Fr Scrima's language. Very little and scattered, but mostly in extremely inaccessible volumes, have his writings been pub-

[6] **MEI** 1966, 83.

[7] For an annotated and comprehensive bibliography, see Daniela Dumbravă, Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban (éds.), *André Scrima : expérience spirituelle et langage théologique. Actes du colloque de Rome, 29-30 octobre 2008*, Orientalia Christiana Analecta 306 (Roma: Edizioni Orientalia Christiana, 2019), 241-249.

lished in the original French. His contributions to the Castelli Colloquia appear either as contributions as such in the form of philosophical essays published in the proceedings of the colloquia, or as incisive and even exhaustive interventions in the colloquia, in response to or problematizing the contributions of other thinkers, published in the debates, or as personal notes or preparatory to occasions when he was unable to participate, but corresponded with the organizers of the colloquia, in particular E. Castelli.[8] There is therefore a strong motivation to return to the language of father Scrima, attempting a precise systematisation of his interventions at the Castelli Colloquia.

II. 2 Word. Scrima considers language to be "the unique faculty of placing human experience into form [...] the unequivocal place of the manifestation of meaning."[9] Thus, he continues, it is not possible to trust the word that closes and structures the world in which it lives: it is only in itself, [i.e. the word], that one can escape the non-sense through which the temptation of irresponsibility insinuates itself, that of the impossibility of questioning and responding. Scrima's analysis is not concerned in examining the extent to which the prevalence of Western thought permeates, by one tendency or another, already knowing about the substitution of its ontological content with the formal articulations of discourse. The transformation of knowledge into the determining conditions of knowledge is a constant in the destiny of the Western spirit, from the earliest analyses of the Greek sophists to the lived experience – the *abendländische Wendung* – in our own time.[10]

Language, constituted by the word embedded in a system of communication, has as many limits as the world itself, Scrima says, referring again to Heidegger: "[...] being comes towards language. Language is the place where being is housed."[11] The world is in language, everything being the word of what exists. Scrima's considerations overlap exactly, at least to some extent, with Heideggerian thought. The paradigm shift from the German philosopher comes when Scrima states that language resides in man as the subject of divinity, as part of divine otherness, the word under the sign of freedom and, ultimately, of love.[12] From his perspective, it follows that, in fact, the function of the word is to generate communication, it is the instrument of understanding between people. From a strictly historical perspective, the *word* is situated in a universal framework, that is, until the

[8] A brief presentation of the sources in the archives is been included in the bibliographical section (primary sources) of this article.

[9] **MEI** 1996, 83.

[10] **MEI** 1966, 84.

[11] **ESL-TC**, 47; see also Martin Heidegger, *Repere pe drumul gândirii*, trans. Thomas Kleininger and Gabriel Liiceanu (Bucharest: Ed. Politică, 1978), 297.

[12] **ESL-TC**, 49.

Incarnation of the Logos in history, namely under the sign of a Greek logos combined with the Hellenic philosophical and cultural tradition. This is the most dominant in European culture, generating predictable operational thoughts structured on a few precise rules: the principle of identity (A=A), the principle of non-contradiction (A cannot be both A and non-A), the principle of the excluded third (apart from A and non-A, there is no possible third hypothesis).[13] Scrima calls them operations of the spirit which have the force of universality, but which suppress the other, absorb his otherness: "[...] the West reduces the other, reabsorbs his otherness: if the other wants to have a place in the world, he must speak - since the world is language - the logos of the West."[14] The revelated word, however, comes from an entirely different dimension, and since the origin of language is not in the possession of being (Heidegger), then it is left with only one circumstance, that of speaking itself:

> […] Dire que je connais l'origine du monde signifie que je suis en même temps et en-deça de l'origine et avant l'origine. Donc si je suis avant l'origine, cela veut dire qu'il y a une autre origine et ainsi de suite. Pareillement pour le langage. Or, la Parole révélée se pose avec un statut absolument unique une prétention que certains de ses représentants (St. Paul, par exemple) n'hésitaient pas à assumer très nettement en tant que Folie. La Parole n'a pas elle-même une origine dépistable, situable à l'intérieur du monde, elle est "originale." Elle est l'Origine.[15]

This revelated word is also its Origin, moreover, it has an originating function: in turn, it opens up meaning. Scrima, even in practical terms, operates with the same categories and considerations about language, differentiating their exposition only according to the interlocutor: e.g. in the courses taught in Beirut in the seventies, or the Castelli colloquia, where they are explained much more elaborately and in a language appropriate to the phenomenological environment. Irrevocably, human experience is a generator of meaning, or of the manifestation of meaning: it has a horizon, an infinite opening of meanings, manifestations of meaning.[16]

II. 3 Symbol, energy and configuration. Scrima states that the symbol constitutes and manifests its structure within a double movement, and the value that gives meaning to the symbol reveals a triple function: of passage, of manifestation, of establishment. What does André Scrima mean when

[13] **ESL-TC**, 48.
[14] **ESL-TC**, 48.
[15] **ESL-TC**, 49-50.
[16] **ESL-TC**, 50.

he refers to the structure of the symbol? First of all, he does not propose a taxonomy of the different uses of the notion of symbol, or of its degree of legitimacy, but responds by referring to Gaston Bachelard: "Shouldn't a symbol mean something beyond its expression? Does it not imply an essential relationship between two meanings: a manifest meaning and a hidden one?"[17] If a symbolic datum (whatever in itself its expression may be) implies a constitutive reference to its own "world beyond", it is because its intentional vision is fulfilled in and through the passage of what appears (or is said), what remains invisible (or indicible), and vice versa. The concept speaks of the "zone of disruption" between the indicible, over which its expressive mode of being prevails, the symbol communicates by virtue of the reversible translation of the meaning of these two poles. As long as the symbol is alive, it remains open to the "world beyond" where it captures *l'énergie assimilatrice*, which could be translated, in the linguistic system, by pairs of associative notions or images according to the rule of analogy or contrast. In all the rigor of terms, the essential word he says is "a word of passage." A second movement within the structure is the word circumscribed by the configuration of the symbol: it is supposed to be deciphered and assimilated in such a way that the translation of the meaning could be achieved, Scrima claims.[18]

Scrima implies that even in the full equivocalness of the symbol, the possibility of containing simultaneously, a unity of structure, as well as multiple manifestations of what it signifies; at the opposite pole the logical, algorithmic symbol, eliminating any kind of equivocation (of interpretative, semantic variation), is inscribed in a formal linearity, where the sign univocally substitutes the symbol in the system. Based on Wittgenstein's statement: *Es gibt allerdings Unaussprechliches. Dies zeigt sich, es ist das Mystische*.[19] Somehow, the meaning of the world must lie outside of it and by this it is manifest whether it is a mystical one. On the other hand, if we were to reiterate Heidegger's words in his letter to Elisabeth Blochmann,[20] namely

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[17] Scrima quoting Bachelard in **MEI**, 85.

[18] **MEI**, 85.

[19] "However, there is the ineffable. This shows itself, it is the mystical." (*Tractatus Logico-philosophicus*, 6.522).

[20] "[...] Conferința mea se limitează intenționat și unilateral la o anumită problemă, ale cărei coordonate mi-au fost livrate chiar de scopul conferinței, care era să arate ce poate și ce nu poate învăța un teolog de la fenomenologie. [...] S-a pus desigur întrebarea, pe parcursul discuției, dacă teologia este într-adevăr o știință. Semnificativ este faptul că, la Marburg, ea a venit tocmai din partea elevilor mei. Eu unul sunt, ce-i drept, convins că teologia *nu* este știință, însă în momentul de față nu sunt încă în stare *să arăt cu adevărat* acest lucru, pentru că, prin aceasta, importanta funcție a teologiei în istoria spiritualității să fie concepută *în mod pozitiv*. Simpla negare este o treabă ușoară, însă a spune ce este știința însăși și ce este teologia – dacă ea nu este nici filosofie, nici știință – toate acestea sunt probleme pe care nu le-aș dori târâte într-o discuție de moment. [...] Sunt convins de asemenea, că distincția

that the philosopher's endeavour converged towards a knowledge of theology through philosophical terms, without reducing it to philosophy, or distorting it, perhaps this is also to some extent in line with Scrima, namely with his efforts to unravel some of the meanings of myth, of symbols, including here those relating to Christian theology. On another occasion, however, Scrima laments the inability of Western metaphysics to integrate the transcendent, and this is because it must be "discovered" in a relationship of personal communion, where the values and all the "ingredients" of the transcendent are "embodied" in man, simply assimilated. Nothing is transcendent if man does not live it, if he does not experience it. A very interesting comparison found in his published notes refers to the doctrinal, visionary beauty of Indian spirituality (e.g. Hinduism and Mahāyāna Buddhism), associated with a "frightening decadence" of the masses, the emptiness of the soul. In fact, Scrima often incorporates elements of Hindu metaphysics into his reflections on Eastern metaphysics,[21] more specifically, notions that underlie an anthropological construction of contemplation, a search for the self. This metaphysics includes, paradoxically, the search for the transcendent plane, assimilated existentially, but coupled with a decentralisation of man, an anthropological decomposition suspended in the desire to be one with the transcendent, but which does not recompose itself so as to see its face restored, as in Christianity.

"Original time", "myth of creation", "causal function", "bipolarity and genesis of evil" all end up in the plane of a meaning that takes literary form and is grafted onto an anthropological framework. The fact that myth is a narrative that refers to a trans-worldly reality, to an Other as a symbol that assumes to be equivocal, ambiguous, transparent, as well as constituting religious systems. The reciprocity of the planes - mundane and transcendent - objectifies myth. Scrima sharply demarcates the planes: there is an ontological distance between them, the discourse of myth does not fully personalize either the Other or the human.[22]

Returning to Scrima, the phenomenologist of the miracle, and to his exposition *Le Mythe et l'épiphanie de l'indicible*, he brings to the fore a completely unusual concept, namely that of semantic energy overflowing over the world, more precisely where a myth, or an immanent identity, is founded. Until we move to the plane of Christianity, this semantic energy refers to the poetic imaginary, to the archetype, as understood in pre-

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tradițională dintre științele naturii și cele ale spiritului este, în orice formă ar fi ea făcută, una superficială. Din punct de vedere metafizic nu există decât o singură știință.", Martin Heidegger & Elisabeth Blochmann, *Corespondență 1918-1969*, ed. Joachim W. Storck, traducere din germană de Ileana Snagoveanu-Spiegelberg (București: Humanitas, 2006), 38-42.

[21] André Scrima, "Noțiuni antropologice", in Vlad Alexandrescu (ed.), *Antropologia apofatică* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2005), 204-206.

[22] **MEI**, 87.

Socratic thought; if we want something analogous, we can think of the original meaning of the word *physis* which derives from the verb *φῠ́ω* (*phúō*, "to grow"), with the ending *-σῐς* (-sis), the original etymology indicating the process of growth of plants, from seed to maturity, designating a precise process of development, a power of their becoming, often used by the naturalistic pre-Socratics. It is rarely found in Homeric texts, but with Thales and Anaximenes, this noun is assimilated to the soul, most likely due to the orphic inspiration of this resemantization of the term. Well, Scrima, when he refers to *semantic energy*, at least as it emerges from his text, mentioned above, thinks this kind of dynamics, intrinsic to the term, as well as its resemantization. The association of *logos* with *physis* in the Presocratics, could not leave indifferent an expert like André Scrima in the fundamental patristic texts, such as those of St. Maxim the Confessor or those of the Cappadocian fathers.

Scrima also often invokes Foucault's idea of the archaeology of knowledge, and Indo-European etymology is at his fingertips, like a natural tool. Of course, Scrima's exposition does not stop at either the *physis* or the *logos* of the pre-Socratics, but it is the perfect tool, by analogy, to introduce conceptually the force of the revealed *Logos*, its dynamics, even far beyond the objectification that man, anthropology, the human logos conjugates. A. S. delimits his discourse in terms of the meanings of myth as they are constructed from "intra-worldly determinism or what is the para-signification of a *Weltbild*" constructed by historians of religion such as Moses Gaster, G. Dumézil, R. Pettazzoni, M. Eliade, but this is not because he despises their exclusively rationalist construction or the historical-comparative approach; on the contrary, they serve him as useful tools for his own exposition. His aim is to show what the major support of the Christian *kerygma*, as it appears through the revealed Word.

Father André's thesis is that God is irreducible to human discourse and structures, more precisely, that God is a symbol in Himself and is not constituted to be part of a discourse about the world, or to constitute Himself as a "zone of disruption" between a sacred and a profane world. Calling on an assertion of St. Maxim the Confessor (*Ambigua*, P.G. 91, III6D) - God becoming a symbol of Himself – the *Incarnate Logos* – Scrima reiterates in phenomenological terms the assertion of the 7th -century theologian and says that the Logos makes its place in history, becomes incarnate, through inference, becomes a revealed symbol, objectifying primordial meanings: spirit, life, light, God...:

> [...] Le champ d'instauration ontologique de la parole est corrélatif à sa puissance symbolique; comme cette puissance est ici totale, l'assimilation sans confusion entre Dieu et l'homme le sera également. La foi exprime l'entrée dans l'ordre ontolo-

> gique déployé par l'énergie assimilatrice de la manifestation de l'Absolu de cette manifestation.[23]

Reading the work of Fr. Scrima, especially the texts on the topic of language, I noticed a strong patristic argumentative support. These are first of all the texts of Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium* (II), relating to language, as well as the texts of Maximus Confessor, already quoted in this article. André Scrima's exegesis, for example, as it emerges from his text dedicated to the *Scrisoarea Pelerinului Străin*,[24] emerges from a "before having been", a horizon of "before being said", a weaving of the text that is not so much an evocation of biographies as an advent, an anamnesis that turns into recognition. Above a *Nachlass* - however memorable it may be - it is therefore not memory that is fixed, but the present of a presence-symbol perfectly integrated into the plan of an eternal, soteriological time, a present perfectly compatible with liturgical times, more precisely the opening times of another world. The hermeneutics of Fr. Scrima's various texts, he says explicitly, often does not combine with the contemporary history of such an event, but becomes a transcription into writing of the data of a unique, singular experience, lived and seen at its end: an essential function in the construction of a meaning is to ensure the *avènement* of intelligibility, both of mental becoming and of things. Therefore, the second part of my article will be oriented towards the understanding of the texts of André Scrima where the father presents himself as a hermeneut, an understanding perfectly correlated with those already exposed in this article, with the difference that, this time, his language [i.e. Scrima] is given the arguments of a perfect knowledge and an original reading of the patristic sources.

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[23] **MEI** 1966, pp. 88.

[24] André Scrima, *Timpul Rugului Aprins. Maestrul spiritual în tradiția răsăriteană*, Anca Manolescu ed., Andrei Pleșu (introduction) (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2000), 23-96.

[25] I have limited myself to presenting only the primary sources closely related to the topic of my article, however, the need for a detailed analysis of the primary sources of the writings of Fr. Scrima, seems to me very necessary indeed as there are some uncertainties concerning the datation of his writings, and I refer especially to his notes that were introduced in the volume *Antropologia apofatică*, the so-called anthropological notations. Also with regard to his presence and contributions to the Castelli Colloquia, there is still much to investigate and my research period at the Romanian Academy in Rome, in 2020, a period in which the restrictions for Covid-19 seriously impeded access to the Roman archives, was

tory by Anca Manolescu [abrev. **PAS-NEC**]. Dossier *Colloqui Enrico Castelli* [abrev. **CEC**], organised by André Scrima, with notes, unpublished annotated texts, published texts, documentation, miscellaneous. [abrev. **PAS-NEC /DCEC**]; [AIEIC] ***Archives of the Institute d'Etudes Islamo-Chrétiennes***, Beirut, Lebanon.

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6 pages in typescript (one with a handwritten note on the back), DN.CAS 2, according to the PAS-NEC/DCEC quotation.

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not one of the best, we must return in later times to investigate further. The serious problem with several of Fr. Scrima's writings, it seems to me, stems precisely from the fact that their dating does not tally with many secondary publications that use them. Fortunately, however, many published texts of Fr. Scrima have been under his own care, especially after the 1990s, and are texts that lend themselves to being cited in academic publications as well. For this article, I proposed to focus mainly on archival sources, most notably, the André Scrima Papers, New Europe College Bucharest, as well as the Archive of the Institute of Muslim-Christian Studies, Saint Joseph's University, Beirut. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the constant and solicitous help of Dr. Anca Manolescu, head of the PAS-NEC, Dr. Mihaela Danca, the tireless librarian who facilitated me hundreds of pages in digital form; furthermore, I am indebted to Prof. Anca Oroveanu - Academic Director of the PAS-NEC - for her help. Prof. Anca Oroveanu - Academic Coordinator and Prof. Andrei Pleșu - President of the New Europe Foundation, as well as to the Director of the ISIC, R.P. Salah Aboujaoude s.j. and Prof. Roula Talhouk, who have been so helpful throughout the entire course of my research mission in Beirut in 2021. My thanks are extremely grateful for their efforts in responding to my countless requests for documentation.

Notes A. Scrima for the Colloquium "Demythisation et image", 10-18 January 1962, 3 pages, 1 note, 1 manuscript envelope, DN.CAS 3, according to the PAS-NEC/DCEC quotation.

b. Interventions A. Scrima - Colloquium "Demythisation et image", 10-18 January 1962.

6 p. dactilo (with a handwritten note on the back), DN.CAS 2, according to the PAS-NEC/DCEC quotation.

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Patristic Apophaticism and the House of Being

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Abstract

This essay proposes a brief reflection on language, considering Patristic apophaticism, as seen in the works of the Cappadocian Fathers, Dionysius and Maximus the Confessor. It discusses Heidegger's critique of onto-theology and his *Letter on Humanism*, where language is called "the House of Being". It tries to show that, according to Patristic apophaticism, the human *nous* is instead the "House of Being". The difference between Heidegger and Patristic thought lies in how Being is understood. It also notes that the *Letter on Humanism* displays a potential openess to the "energetic theory of language", which characterises Patristic apophaticism.

Keywords: Patristic apophaticism, Dionysius, Maximus, energetic theory of language, Heidegger, *nous*, the House of Being, language

> Socrates: "How to learn and make discoveries about the things that are is probably too large a topic for you or me. But we should be content to have agreed that it is far better to investigate them and learn about them through themselves than to do so through their names".[1]

Has Orthodox theology thematised language and developed a systematic theory of language? We should probably answer this question in the negative. The main reason for this could be the subordination or reduction of reflection on language to the more important topic of the knowledge of God.[2] If Orthodox systematic theology seems to lack a theory of language

[1] Plato, *Cratylus* 439b; transl. C.D.C. Reeve in John M. Cooper (ed.), *Plato. Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 154. I wish to thank dr. Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban for the invitation to contribute to this thematic issue of Diakrisis.

[2] This is what we find, for instance, in prominent theologians such as Vladimir Lossky, *Essai sur la théologie mystique de l'Eglise d'Orient* (Paris: Cerf, 2008 [[1]1944]), 21-41 and Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologie Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. 1 (București: EIBMBOR, 1996[2]), 81-99; English

so far,[3] patristic theology came closest to a self-standing theory of language in two moments of its history: the Cappadocian refutation of Eunomius of Cyzicus and Dionysius the Ps.-Areopagite's apophatic theology.

In the first instance,[4] Eunomius was claiming (embracing probably the naturalist conception of language from Plato's *Cratylus*) that trinitarian terms such as "ungenerated" or "born" name the very essence of God.[5] At the same time, the Cappadocians denied that God's essence could be known or expressed in any way. We can learn and name God's activities,[6] through which God acts in creation and manifests Himself as a communion of Persons towards created persons. While averting that words cannot name the essence of any existing individual – neither the essence of God nor of created persons or things – but only their activities or manifestations, the Cappadocians were not embracing a purely conventional theory of language: the personal activities, through which the Trihypostatic God or human persons manifest themselves, express their being. The energies/activities (ἐνέργειαι) are not foreign to what persons are in themselves; therefore, through their energetic manifestations, all entities, especially persons, communicate something true about themselves.[7]

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version: *The Experience of God. Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. 1: *Revelation and Knowledge of the Triune God*, transl. and ed. by Ioan Ioniță and Robert Barringer (Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2000), 95-125.

[3] Although a response to the modern linguistic turn is emerging, *cf.* Nikolaos Loudovikos, 'From the Daydreams of a Private Religious Language to Its Ecclesiology: Wittgenstein and Maximus the Confessor', in his book *Church in the Making. An Apophatic Ecclesiology of Consubstantiality*, transl. Norman Russell (Yonkers NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2016), 233-249; Stylianos G. Papadopoulos, *Theologie und Sprache. Erfahrungstheologie – konventionelle Sprache* (Göttingen: V&R Unipress, 2007 [1988[1]]); John Milbank, 'The Linguistic Turn as a Theological Turn', in his book, *The Word Made Strange. Theology, Language, Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 84-120.

[4] "The Cappadocians stopped short of developing their understanding of the human invention of language into a coherent, systematic, philosophical, metaphysical/post-metaphysical understanding", Scot Douglass, *Theology of the Gap. Cappadocian Language Theory and the Trinitarian Controversy* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2005), 11.

[5] "When we say 'Unbegotten', then, we do not imagine that we ought to honour God only in name, in conformity with human invention; rather, in conformity with reality, we ought to repay him the debt which above all others is most due God: the acknowledgement that he is what he is… So, then, if, as shown by the preceding argument, 'the Unbegotten' is based neither on invention nor on privation… then 'the Unbegotten' must be unbegotten essence", Eunomius, *Liber apologeticus* 8 (ed. Richard Paul Vaggione, *Eunomius. The Extant Works* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), 40-42). I borrow this text and its translation from Douglass, *Theology of the Gap*, 99.

[6] Basil the Great, *Ep*. 334, 3.

[7] The energetic constitution of everything that exists will be later fully articulated by Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua ad Thomam* 5 (CCSG 48, 19-20), where he defines the natural energy (ἐνέργεια φυσική) as the constitutive power (συστατικὴ δύναμις) of nature, the first and proper characteristic of nature, the most general movement of nature, that which gives it a specific shape (εἰδοποιὸς κίνησις), that which comprises all the natural

In the second instance, even though Dionysius' apophatic theology may seem to develop a more appropriate language to talk about God, his focus is not on language but on the highest knowledge of God, which is attained through the union (ἕνωσις) with Him. From the point of view of this supreme and ineffable existential knowledge-union, we perceive the inadequacy of any rational concept concerning God. Any natural analogy or commensurability between God's nature and creatures' nature is excluded. God descends to us through His processions and bestows being on creatures through the divine paradigms (θεία παράδειγμα), which are further specified as definitions (λόγοι), predeterminations (προορισμοί) and divine acts of will (θεία θελήματα). These processions correspond to the Cappadocian divine activities. They are the only source of the attributes we predicate about God, yet God, Himself in His being, remains wholly transcendent to His processions and manifestations towards creatures. Consequently, there is no proper attribute for God in human language: "Hence, with regard to the supra-essential being of God – transcendent Goodness transcendently there – no lover of the truth which is above all truth will seek to praise it as word or power or mind or life or being".[8] Dionysius' apophatic theology represents much more an invitation to attain the supreme union with God, than a positive theory of language.[9]

In both these instances, extensive considerations of the use of language in theology were deployed, yet the main concern was the knowledge of God and not language *per se*. Dionysius's apophatic theology gave supreme articulation to St Gregory the Theologian's reversal of Plato: to Plato's belief that it is difficult to know God and even more difficult to express such knowledge (*Tim*. 28c), the Theologian replied that "it is impossible to express God and even more impossible to know Him".[10] The lack of a theory of language

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properties of nature. He specifies that non-being alone has no natural energy, which means that all kinds of individuals have a natural energy/activity, including a stone, for example.

[8] Dionysius, *De divinis nominibus* 1, 5; transl. Colm Luibheid, *Pseudo-Dionysius, The Complete Works*, The Classics of Western Spirituality (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 54.

[9] "Not only learning but also experiencing the divine things", *De div. nom.* 2, 9. Dionysius presents his very clear plea at *De div. nom.* 1, 1 (transl. Luibheid, 49): "Here too let us hold on to the scriptural rule that when we say anything about God, we should set down the truth 'not in the plausible words of human wisdom but in demonstration of the power granted by the Spirit' (1Cor. 2, 4) to the Scripture writers, a power by which, in a manner surpassing speech and knowledge, we reach a union superior to anything available to us by way of our own abilities or activities in the realm of discourse or of intellect. This is why we must not dare to resort to words or conceptions concerning that hidden divinity which transcends being, apart from what the sacred Scriptures have divinely revealed. Since the unknowing of what is beyond being is something above and beyond speech, mind, or being itself, one should ascribe to it an understanding beyond being. Let us, therefore, look as far upward as the light of sacred Scripture will allow, and, in our reverent awe of what is divine, let us be drawn together toward the divine splendor".

[10] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 28, 4 (PG 36, 29C): ἀλλὰ φράσαι μὲν [Θεὸν] ἀδύνατον... νοῆσαι μὲν ἀδυνατώτερον.

considered in itself is easily explainable in those theological contexts: theology is fundamentally preoccupied with the proper knowledge of God and the salvation of humankind brought about by such knowledge. From this standpoint, any reflection on language appears secondary or even instrumental.

However, one common feature implicit in the Cappadocian and Dionysian attitudes to language is represented by their intermediary position between a naturalist conception of language (names capture the essence of things) and a conventionalist one (names are conferred by joint agreement): although words do not express the essence of things named, they are the result of knowing the energies/powers/activities/manifestations of those things. They are not wholly arbitrary. This is all the more true for persons, divine or human. The philosophical presupposition of this standpoint is that through their energetic manifestations, all entities, especially persons, communicate something true about themselves, which is part of their nature, representing what they are according to their essence.

We may call this intermediary position between naturalism and conventionalism the energetic theory of language.[11] It remains underdeveloped in patristic theology (and it appears like an alternative to Plato's *Cratylus*), but we may spell out some of its features. According to this theory, we can give names to anything only because we can grasp their manifestations or natural energies/activities. These bear and express the essential traits of any existent. In Dionysius, the divine processions are the source of the divine names. In the Cappadocians, the divine activities prompt us to call God in different ways. According to Gregory of Nyssa, even the name God – Θεὸς – refers to a specific divine activity, that of seeing (θεάομαι) or of governing (θέειν, running over). Thus, on the one hand, we do not name God's essence or nature, and on the other, the names we attribute to God or any other individual are not merely arbitrary or purely conventional, but are derived from the knowledge of an individual's natural energies/activities. In the Cappadocians, this energetic theory of the origin of names appears alongside reflections on the human invention of names,[12] a view which supports conventionalism and instrumentalism with respect to lan-

[11] I am not aware of the presence of this expression in previous studies. It does not, however, constitute a new view, it only puts a label on the Cappadocian and Dionysian insight that when we say that God is life, for instance, we name one of His activities towards creation, the life-giving activity. I am grateful to dr. Daniela Dumbravă for pointing out that André Scrima wrote about the revelatory energy ("énergie révélante") and the energetic field ("champ énergétique") of the symbol: "Son énergie révélante ouvre la voie à l'avènement du sens qui constituera l'horizon spécifique de l'existant dans l'être", André Scrima, "Le Mythe et l'Epiphanie de l'Indicible", in Enrico Castelli (ed.), *Mythe et Foi*. Actes du Colloque organisé par le Centre International d'Études Humanistes et par l'Institute d'Études Philosophiques de Rome, Rome, 6-12 Janvier 1966 (Aubier: Montaigne, 1966), 85-86.

[12] *Cf*. Douglass, *Theology of the Gap*, 60-68.

guage. On the other hand, the energetic theory of the origin of language counterbalances the mere instrumentalism of the cataphatic in theology.[13]

The energetic theory of language allows for a specific interplay between the cataphatic (the use of language) and the apophatic *in theology*. The cataphatic represents what we may affirm about God (for instance, God is good and Goodness itself). The apophatic is not simply the negation of the cataphatic (*i.e.*, it is more adequate to say that God is not good because He is, in His being, dissimilar to anything in the created realm) but represents a superior knowledge of God through union with Him by means of His energies/activities – what Dionysius calls the divine splendour. The apophatic represents a "positive" knowledge of God through the gift of God's power, supernatural knowledge of God, which surpasses our natural power of thinking or speech. It is a knowledge through which God reveals Himself more profoundly and in which He appears to overcome any created attribute infinitely. Within the apophatic knowledge, the transcendence of God reveals itself as infinitely more properly transcendent than within the cataphatic knowledge (either in its affirmative or negative form, which are both rational human activities). Within the apophatic knowledge, as the conscious experience of God's energetic presence, the perfect revelation of God Himself and His providence takes place, as well as the deification of the knower (you become like the One whom you now properly know).

Patristic apophaticism has not grown into a theory of language in the modern sense, despite its immediate result, the energetic approach to language. It remained implicit. These two patristic notions fared well through the centuries until new developments in humankind's intellectual history gradually pushed them to the surface of thinking. Duns Scotus' doctrine of the univocity of being (God and creatures fall under the same concept of being, the difference between them is ultimately one of degree, not quality, which means that whatever ontological attributes creatures have, God has them infinitely) with its afferent semantics led to an onto-theological construction of metaphysics,[14] which is the opposite of patristic apophaticism and its energetic semantics. The critique of onto-theological metaphysics was conducted initially, not from a recovery of patristic apophaticism or the perspective of an energetic theory of language.

Heidegger's deconstruction of Western metaphysics as onto-theology was among the most influential. Onto-theology is presented as a specific construction of both metaphysics and God. Thus the collapse of this metaphysics calls forth the death of that "god". The onto-theological "god" falls

[13] A position defended by Papadopoulos, *Theologie und Sprache.*

[14] *Cf.* W. J. Hankey, "Why Heidegger's 'History' of Metaphysics is Dead", *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 74 (2004), 425-443; Thomas Williams, "John Duns Scotus", in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*.

under the power of human knowledge (under the category of being) and is built up out of concepts as the supreme being in the continuous chain of being. The onto-theological "god" *grounds* ontologically particular beings and the being-in-beings. In return, it *is grounded* by beings as the necessary ultimate cause of everything, the *causa sui*. The most precise and complete exposition of Heidegger's view of the onto-theological constitution of metaphysics is found in *Identity and Difference*, a book which sums up a seminar on the metaphysics of Hegel, published in 1957 and considered by him his most important writing after *Being and Time*. To quote a central text,

> Metaphysics thinks of the Being of beings both in the ground-giving unity of what is most general, what is indifferently valid everywhere and also of the unity of the all that accounts for the ground, that is, of the All-Highest. The Being of beings is thus thought of in advance as the grounding ground. Therefore all metaphysics is at bottom, and from the ground up, what grounds, what gives account of the ground, what is called to account by the ground, and finally what calls the ground to account.[15]

Although Heidegger claimed that throughout its entire history, from Thales to Nietzsche, Western metaphysics is onto-theological (it ends positively with Hegel and negatively with Nietzsche), intense scholarship in the history of philosophy during the second half of the twentieth century – stimulated precisely by Heidegger – proved that his reading of critical philosophers was historically rushed.[16] We know today that the metaphysics of Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus and other (neo-)Platonists – Christian Neoplatonism included – display no onto-theological structure, mainly because they do not dissolve the ontological difference between the First Principle and beings:[17]

> One of the strategies for gaining freedom from Heidegger's history has been to specify the criteria of onto-theology precisely. Although this strategy accepts the criticism of metaphysics implicit in the category, it finds that most of the history of Western thought, certainly its ancient or mediaeval history,

[15] Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, transl. Joan Stambaugh (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1969), 58. For Heidegger on onto-theology, see I. D. Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology. Technology and the Politics of Education* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 7-43.

[16] W. J. Hankey, "Why Heidegger's 'History' of Metaphysics is Dead", *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly* 74 (2004), 425-443. The author provides a comprehensive overview of the emerging scholarly consensus that philosophy has liberated itself from the horizon of onto-theology at the beginning of the new millennium.

[17] *Cf.* J.-M. Narbonne, *Hénologie, Ontologie et Ereignis (Plotin-Proclus-Heidegger)* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2001).

> does not fulfil the criteria. It is only fulfilled by post-Scotistic philosophy and theology, especially as developed by Suárez.[18]

The onto-theological deconstruction of metaphysics faces, besides the historical, a philosophical problem, which Heidegger himself, according to one of his best exegetes,[19] called "one of the deepest problems": given that metaphysics endorsed an onto-theological form since its very beginning with the Presocratic thinkers, which was subsequently fully formalised by Plato and especially by Aristotle, Heidegger asks why this happened. Was this merely an arbitrary event, or was there a necessity hidden behind the process? Heidegger rejects the arbitrary effect hypothesis as phenomenologically unsatisfying: there was perhaps something in the original self-manifestation of Being which made it appear as ground (for Heidegger, Being means always the Being-in-beings). But on the other hand, Heidegger is compelled to reject the *necessary* character of the original self-manifestation of Being as ground (otherwise, metaphysics as onto-theology will not have distorted its self-manifestation) and claim that the original philosophical project (or better, *projects*) of metaphysical grounding is underdetermined, that is, the self-showing of Being is insufficiently described in the works of Thales, Anaximander and other Presocratics. It is with this procedure that the philosophical troubles begin. Once we perceive that there is a distinction between the disclosure of Being and the philosophical description of this disclosure (as Heidegger more or less implicitly does), it becomes necessary to analyse this disclosure itself and not its philosophical description to reach an explanation regarding the arbitrariness or necessity of metaphysics as onto-theology.[20] Heidegger tries instead to recover the "original" *self-*

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[18] Hankey, "Why Heidegger's 'History' of Metaphysics is Dead", 432. This strategy was championed by J.-L. Marion, who has spelt out the characteristics of onto-theology with reference to God: « on ne saurait parler d'onto-théo-logie à moins de voir jouer une triple fondation: la fondation conceptuelle de l'étant par l'être (*Gründung*), la fondation des étants par l'étant suprême selon la causalité efficiente (*Begründung*), enfin de la fondation conceptuelle par l'efficiente. *La question reste bien entendu ouverte* (my italics, MP) (bien que Heidegger n'en décide pas explicitement) de savoir si l'onto-théo-logie exige que ces trois fondations fonctionnent simultanément, ou une seule, ou deux, et lesquelles. (…) (i) « Le dieu » doit s'inscrire explicitement dans le champ métaphysique, c'est-à-dire se laisser déterminer à partir d'une des déterminations historiques de l'être en tant qu'étant, éventuellement à partir du concept d'étant; (ii) il doit y assurer une fondation causale (*Begründung*) de tous les étants communs dont il rend raison; (iii) il doit, pour ce faire, assumer toujours la fonction et éventuellement le nom de *causa sui*, c'est-à-dire de l'étant suprêmement fondateur parce que suprêmement fondé par lui-même », Jean-Luc Marion, *Dieu sans l'être* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2013[4] [1978[1]]), 285, 287. *Cf*. also Jean-Luc Marion, "The Idea of God", in D. Garber, M. Ayres (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 265-304.

[19] Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, 23-38, whose interpretation I adopt here, while the identification of the difficulties implicit in Heidegger's exposition is mine.

disclosure of Being from its different philosophical *descriptions*. This way, not only is Heidegger's intellectual project utterly dependent on a particular historical reading of the history of philosophy (which in many cases was not accurate, as we have seen), but also his onto-theological deconstruction of metaphysics is philosophically problematic because it works with an understanding of Being, namely Being as the Being-in-beings, shaped within the very same metaphysics that he accused of distorting the self-manifestation of Being. The deepest metaphysical problem remains as acute after Heidegger's deconstruction of Western metaphysics as onto-theology as it was before: how do we understand/describe Being?

Heidegger's deconstruction of Western metaphysics leads partly to the question concerning language. In *Letter on Humanism*,[21] a work published in 1947 (ten years before *Identity and Difference*), Heidegger tries to recover the meaning of the word "humanism". In doing so, he delineates himself from all available "humanisms" of the moment: Sartre's existentialism (from his *L'existentialisme est un humanisme,* 1946), Marxism and Christianity. "For this is humanism: meditating and caring, that man be human and not inhumane, 'in-humane', that is, outside his essence. But in what does the humanity of man consists? It lies in his essence" (200). Care, as a fundamental characteristic of man's existence, tend to bring man back to his essence, in the nearness of Being. Humanism is recovered when man lives in accordance with his essence by thinking about the truth of Being in a way that is not "metaphysical" (that is, onto-theological) and does not lose sight of the difference between Being and beings. How is then Being understood in *Letter on Humanism*? Being is not a "god" or any cosmic ground. "It is It itself", it is "the lighting itself" which lets the truth of Being appear to man (210-211). Being is the enabling (*das Vermögen*), which enables thinking to be thinking. Thinking is the thinking of Being. "Such favouring (*Mögen*) means to bestow essence as a gift. Such favouring is the proper essence of enabling […] From this favouring Being enables thinking […] Being itself, which in its favouring presides over thinking and hence over the essence of humanity" (196). On this understanding of Being, "Thinking accomplishes the relation of Being to the essence of man. It does not make or cause the relation. Thinking brings this relation to Being solely as something handed

[20] "Indeed, it is precisely at this juncture – his deconstruction of metaphysical foundationalism having taken him back to the beginnings of Western metaphysics – that the later Heidegger, rather than trying to take another, diachronic step back in time, as though back behind the 'inception' of Western metaphysics, instead makes a lateral or synchronic historical move, turning to other Presocratic thinkers in an attempt to illuminate further aspects of the original self-manifestation of being in the West", Thomson, *Heidegger on Ontotheology*, 39.

[21] Transl. in Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, ed. David Farell Krell (New York: Harper&Row, 1977), 189-242. Henceforth, I will indicate the page number in the text for any quotation or reference.

over to it from Being. Such offering consists in the fact that in thinking Being comes to language. Language is the house of Being. In its home man dwells" (193). Through language, man stands in the lighting of Being, and this ecstatic dwelling Heidegger calls "the ek-sistence of man" (204). Ek-sistence is not identical to *existentia*, which in the traditional metaphysical language signifies actuality as opposed to potentiality (*essentia*). "Man occurs essentially in such a way that he is the 'there' (*das "Da"*), that is, the lighting of Being. The 'Being' of the *Da*, and only it, has the fundamental character of ek-sistence, that is, of an ecstatic inherence in the truth of Being" (205). This implies that "language is the lighting-concealing advent of Being-itself" (206) and that man's essence is defined from the ek-static character of Dasein: "As ek-sisting, man sustains Da-sein in that he takes the *Da*, the lighting of Being, into 'care'" (207). Heidegger adorns the quartet ek-sistence – Being – thinking – language with catchy metaphors: "the word's primordial belongingness to Being" (198), "language is the house of the truth of Being" (199), "man is the shepherd of Being" (210), language is nearness to Being (212), "Man is not the lord of beings. Man is the shepherd of Being" (221). In a word, the humanism Heidegger proposes is one that "thinks the humanity of man from nearness to Being" (222).

Heidegger's understanding of Being in *Letter on Humanism* resembles much with Parmenides' dictum ἐστι γὰρ εἶναι (which he discusses, 214-215) and Parmenides' identification of being and thinking (*cf*. "But the lighting itself is Being", 211). Perhaps similarly to Parmenides' absolute monism, which collapses into absolute dualism, Heidegger's ontological immanentism is threatened by conceptualism,[22] onto-theology,[23] and a pronounced dependency of his concept of Being on language: "The usage 'bring to language' employed here is now to be taken quite literally. Being comes, lighting itself, to language. It is perpetually under way to language. Such arriving in its

[22] Conceptualism stems from the unclear degree of reality of such 'Being', which seems to supervene on thinking and language. Heidegger mentions that there is 'a thinking more rigorous than the conceptual' (235). Still, it is unclear how his philosophical argument – the thinking governed by 'Being' is 'recollection of Being and nothing else' (236) – raises 'Being' and thinking above the conceptual sphere. Elsewhere, some ambiguity creeps in, if through the 'house of Being' language is understood: 'Thinking builds upon the house of Being' (236) 'And yet thinking never creates the house of Being' (237).

[23] *Cf*. 'Only from the truth of Being can the essence of the holy be thought' (230). In this phrase, the concept of Being seems to be superimposed on the idea of divinity, an approach which resembles the Scottistic univocity. Let us add the argument of a thinking that grounds or gives foundation: 'For ontology always thinks solely the being (*on*) in its Being. But as long as the truth of Being is not thought all ontology remains without its foundation' (235). Somewhere, Heidegger clarifies that through such an understanding of humanism and Being nothing is decided concerning the existence of God, that his view represents no atheism and no teaching of indifferentism regarding God; instead, 'the thinking that thinks from the question concerning the truth of Being questions more primordially than metaphysics can' (229-230). Still, God appears to fall under Heidegger's (new) concept of Being.

turn brings ek-sisting thought to language in a saying. Thus language itself is raised into the lighting of Being. Language *is* only in this mysterious and yet for us always pervasive way. To the extent that language which has thus been brought fully into its essence is historical, Being is entrusted to recollection. Ek-sistence thoughtfully dwells in the house of Being" (239). This intermingling between Being and language creates the history of Being, which "comes to language in the words of the essential thinkers" (215; *cf.* also 241). It was natural that this new connection between Being and language, or between Being and the historical saying of Being, bring language, the essence of linguistic expression and hermeneutics as an approach to Being to the forefront of reflection; in other words, a linguistic turn of philosophy.

Heidegger's refutation of (onto-theological) metaphysics was conducted in ignorance of patristic apophaticism. The response of Ch. Yannaras[24] is based on this observation. Yannaras argues that Dionysian apophaticism escapes Heidegger's criticism and, at the same time, offers an understanding of God which does not exhaust the mystery of God through its philosophical or theological articulation. Dionysian apophaticism overcomes post-Nietzschean nihilism by proposing a special kind of apophatic knowledge as a personal relationship with God. This personal erotic relationship is fulfilled through union (ἕνωσις) with Him. In his response, however, Yannaras does not address the linguistic turn of Heidegger's new science of Being, nor the energetic theory of language implicitly present within Dionysian apophaticism and patristic theology more broadly. We may generally say that a systematic answer of Orthodox theology to the modern philosophical linguistic turn is yet to be expected.[25]

So let us return to an implicit distinction in Heidegger's deconstruction of Western metaphysic as onto-theology: the distinction between the self-disclosure of Being and the philosophical description of its self-disclosure. This distinction seems to have something substantial in common with the Cappadocian and Dionysian energetic theory of language: that the self-disclosure of Being or the revelation of the personal God, respectively, determines human knowledge and language. When Heidegger writes that "thinking overcomes metaphysics by climbing back down into the nearness of the nearest" (*Letter on Humanism*, 231), he appears to be potentially open to the central tenets of the energetic theory of language. What prevents him from being actually so is his concept of Being, which seems to supervene on thinking

[24] Christos Yannaras, *On the Absence and Unknowability of God: Heidegger and the Areopagite*, transl. Haralambos Ventis (London: T&T Clark, 2007).

[25] *Cf.* Loudovikos, "From the Daydreams of a Private Religious Language"; Maximos Constas, 'A Greater and More Hidden Word: Maximos the Confessor and the Nature of Language', in S. Mitralexis *et al.* (eds.), *Maximus the Confessor as a European Philosopher* (Eugene OR: Cascade Books, 2017), 95-109; Papadopoulos, *Theologie und Sprache*; Milbank, 'The Linguistic Turn as a Theological Turn'.

and language rather than have a sufficient degree of separateness and transcendence to illumine language without this illumination be the Being itself. The absolute transcendence of God and the complete transcending of speech within the apophatic knowledge of God according to Dionysius' apophaticism require that the house of Being be the human νοῦς, not the human language.

To understand the relationship between the νοῦς (mind/heart) and the λόγος (rational intellect/word and, by extension, language), let us recall one of the clearest expositions in patristic theology of the postulate that νοῦς is the house of Being: it pertains to St Maximus the Confessor, who raises Dionysian apophaticism to new heights of insight. In a relevant passage of *Mystagogy* 5, Maximus describes the pairs that the mind (νοῦς) and its activities form with the reason (λόγος) and its activities. These are 1. mind and reason; 2. wisdom and prudence; 3. contemplation and action; 4. knowledge and virtue; 5. knowledge without forgetfulness and faith. These five pairs move around the pair that points to God: truth and good. If mind and reason are paired, we understand the same pairing for truth and good in the soul and God as the Archetype of the soul. Through the five pairs, the soul progressively advances towards God by strengthening and stabilising its habituation in the good through the repeated choice of his free will (διὰ τῆς ἐν τῷ καλῷ παγίας καὶ ἀμεταθέτου κατὰ τὴν προαίρεσιν ἕξεως). At the end of this ascent, God is known as unchangeable according to being (τὸ ἄτρεπτον τῆς οὐσίας) and beneficent according to His energy/activity (τὸ εὐεργετικὸν τῆς ἐνεργείας).[26] Within this context, Maximus offers precious hints concerning the relationship between the human νοῦς and language:

> Consequently, he had his mind (νοῦς) illuminated by the divine rays and therefore, it was capable of seeing what many cannot see. He had his reason like a most accurate interpreter of the things contemplated by his mind (τὸν λόγον ἑρμηνευτὴν ἀκριβέστατον τῶν νοηθέντων) and like a mirror which is not obscured by any stain of the passions; it [his reason] was able to both understand and speak with supreme clarity (ἀκραιφνῶς […] καὶ φέρειν καὶ λέγειν) about things which others could not perceive, so that those who listened to him could see, on the one hand, that his entire mind is united with his reason (ὅλον μὲν τῷ λόγῳ τὸν νοῦν ἐποχούμενον), and on the other hand, that all the things contemplated are reflected clearly in his whole mind are transferred to his listeners through the mediation of his words, in such a manner that they could receive them.[27]
>
> For reason (λόγος) is the activity and manifestation of the mind (νοῦς) related to the mind as effect to cause, and prudence is the

[26] Maximus the Confessor, *Myst*. 5 (PG 91, 676AC).

[27] Maximus the Confessor, *Myst*., *prol*. (PG 91, 661CD; transl. mine).

> activity and manifestation of wisdom, and action of contemplation, virtue of knowledge, and faith of knowledge without forgetfulness. Through these is produced the inward relationship to the truth and the good, that is, to God. This relationship he used to call divine science, and knowledge without mistake (γνῶσιν ἄπταιστον), and love, and peace in which and by means of which there is deification. Science because it is the achievement of all knowledge concerning God and divine realities which is accessible to men and the embracing without mistake of the virtues. Knowledge because it genuinely lays hold of the truth and offers a lasting experience of God. Love because it shares by its whole disposition in the full happiness of God. Finally, peace inasmuch as it experiences the same inward state as God and prepares for this experience those who are judged worthy to come to it.[28]

Maximus reveals here what may be called an anthropological structure of truthfulness in contemplation and language: reason or intellect (λόγος) represents our power of rational understanding, thinking and speaking; mind (νοῦς) represents our power of spiritual contemplation, which may attain to illumination and deifying union with God through His hypostatic energetic presence. When the intellect and the mind are cleansed from passions and passionate thoughts, on the one hand, the νοῦς is illuminated by the divine light and receives the gift of spiritual contemplation and understanding, or, in Dionysius' terms, of apophatic theology; on the other, the λόγος is illuminated by the contemplative mind (νοῦς) and receives the gift of expressing through words and without mistake the realities contemplated by the mind. When νοῦς and λόγος become one through God's grace and are illuminated by His light and deified by His uncreated energies/activities, our words spring from both and become theandric. The human νοῦς has become the house of Being, and the human language shares in the truthfulness of the Logos-Christ.[29]

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[28] Maximus the Confessor, *Myst*. 5 (PG 91, 680BC; transl. G. C. Berthold, in Maximus Confessor, *Selected Writings* (Mahwah NJ: Paulist Press, 1985, 193-194, with my alterations).

[29] The same distinction between νοῦς and λόγος is attested by St John Damascene. Among the five types of natural energy/activity, he identifies the mental natural energy/activity and the rational natural energy/activity: the former is characteristic of angels and all incorporeal beings who exercise their noetic faculty through a simple impulse; the latter is typical to humans, who are composed of an immaterial soul and a body, who do not exercise their noetic faculty through a simple impulse, but through a many-coloured, manifold, changeful and discursive one, *cf*. St John Damascene, *Elementary introduction into dogmas*, 8 (ed. B. Kotter, *Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. I (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1969), 25, ll. 7-11): ἡ νοερὰ [ἐνέργεια φυσική] ὡς ἐπὶ ἀγγέλων καὶ πασῶν ἀσωμάτων οὐσιῶν ἁπλῇ προσβολῇ νοούντων· ἡ λογικὴ ὡς ἐπὶ ἀνθρώπων τῶν ἐκ ψυχῆς ἀσωμάτου καὶ σώματος συντεθειμένων, οὐχ ἁπλῇ, ἀλλὰ ποικίλῃ καὶ διαλογιστικῇ προσβολῇ νοούντων. It is significant that when St John refers to the activity of the human mind, he does not use a verb derived from λόγος or λογικός; instead, he resorts to the same verb he employed to

Within Maximus' apophaticism, the two elements of Heidegger's implicit distinction between the self-disclosure of Being and the philosophical description of its self-disclosure become aspects of the same spiritual event, of the same "lighting of Being". Being transcends its lighting, which represents one of His energies/activities. Language appears as the discursive lighting of the contemplative lighting. Since the lighting of Being takes place primordially within the human νοῦς, νοῦς and not language is the house of Being. This translates into the paradox that patristic apophaticism, which essentially denies the adequacy of language about God, can also lead to a better language or way of speaking about God. If Heidegger has shown that the very condition of speech about God is not onto-theology, he has equally missed seeing that it is patristic apophaticism and its energetic theory of language. It is not excluded nor surprising that Heidegger himself seems potentially open to it: "Everything depends upon this alone, that the truth of Being come to language and that thinking attain to this language. Perhaps, then, language requires much less precipitous expression than proper silence. But who of us today would want to imagine that his attempts to think are at home on the path of silence?" (*Letter on Humanism*, 223).

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describe the mental activity of the angels, νοέω. This linguistic choice may imply first that human reasoning is a manifold and discursive apprehension, qualitatively not discontinuous with angelic apprehension, and second, that human manifold apprehension may become a simple apprehension by changing the mode of its manifestation, not its nature.

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The Absolute Discourse of Theology

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Abstract

This article first defines the absolute discourse, then discusses its possibility in theology, as well as the relationships between language, thought, and reality as they derive from the spirituality and life of the Eastern Church. Theology must face several problems—including the paradox of transcendence, the violence of metaphysics, onto-theology, and the duplicity of language itself—, but the Revelation of the Absolute itself legitimizes the theological discourse. By using both affirmations and negations, theology reveals an iconic structure of discourse that opens itself towards life and spirituality. The conclusion is that, in the absolute discourse of theology, words, even ineffable ones, are insufficient without life.

Keywords: Eastern Orthodox Theology, Religious Experience, Spiritual Life, Diacritical Language, Christian Dogmas, Apophaticism

The Absolute Discourse

There is a discourse on the absolute that is not religious. It first says something about us and about our enigmatic inclination to speak in absolute terms, before dealing with boundary-related issues, such as transcendence and the abyss, everything and nothing, death and love, and so on. When we attribute them a value that resembles the religious pathos, these issues—along with other, more mundane ones—can take the place of the sacred and even the place of God, according to Mircea Eliade's idea that contemporary man camouflages the sacred in profane attitudes.[1]

When the discourse on the absolute becomes religious, however, it uses a different logic. In the tradition of the Church—and we will continue to deal with that of the Eastern Christian Church in particular—, it must

[1] "But the modern man who feels and claims that he is nonreligious still retains a large stock of camouflaged myths and degenerated rituals." Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York: A Harvest Book, 1963), 204–05.

express the difference between creation and the uncreated God, as well as the possibility of man's deification. By using words with mundane referents to express the ineffable, this discourse resorts to various types of displacement (stylistic, semantic, syntactic, pragmatic, etc.) in an attempt to say something meaningful about the inexpressible. Words try to convey more than an additional excess of the same order as that of non-absolute referents and meanings; they are uttered around a *meta-* or a *supra-*, toward a beyond of a different order. So long as no dialectic can suppress what remains outside the horizon of linguistic expression and experience, the language used to convey this difference will be improper and insufficient. The poetry of the givenness of the absolute through words, no matter how successful, cannot close what does not truly reach the text, but only announces itself through it.

Let us call this discourse oriented towards an absent referent, towards an overcoming of limits, or towards God – *absolute discourse*. Let us also concede that, by using language, we bring these limits into the realm of linguistic visibility only as limits, without expressing that beyondness of mystery, whether it be a simple mystery of idolatry, capable of transforming language itself or the one who utters it into an absolute, or the impenetrable mystery of God. Finally, let us understand that what we cannot say through words can have a crucial relevance for the meaning of what we can say[2] and, at the same time, for our being and our becoming as humans.

The absolute discourse reveals several forms of mystery: the mystery of who we are ourselves (a mystery of our own unconscious sometimes), the mystery of the world we live in, and the mystery of God, which our world and our words cannot comprehend. In the latter case, the absolute discourse takes the form of *theology*: by using a language of mystery, theology speaks of me and refers to myself from the point of view of my destiny, all while speaking of God and of the world as His creation. An insufficient and kenotic language, uttered by myself and by God alike, this language of theology is a window onto the face of mystery, through which one can glance at what is outside the text and even outside of thought. Let us conclude that, by entering the revelatory movement of the Absolute, the absolute discourse of theology is not the Absolute Himself, but rather the icon that points to Him. We will talk about this very meaning of the utterance/writing of the absolute discourse in the following pages.

[2] Wittgenstein realized the importance of the mysterious and of the inexpressible for the meaning of what we can say in words. See Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Însemnări postume 1914–1951 [Notebook* 1914–1951*]*, trans. Mircea Flonta and Adrian-Paul Iliescu (București: Humanitas, 2005), 44.

Four Issues

We begin by addressing certain issues that the absolute discourse raises. The first issue refers precisely to the paradox of transcendence, which applies to the transcendence of God as well: if knowledge can be expressed through language, how can one know and express transcendence without annihilating it through this very knowledge and without diminishing it through this very expression? In what words could one express "the wholly other"?[3] How can we describe "the good above all words"[4] by using words?

The second issue has to do with the violence of metaphysics. Nietzsche accused metaphysics of the will to power, whereas Marx pointed to the connection between metaphysics and political domination. Following in the footsteps of Heidegger, who proposed the destruction of metaphysics, postmodern philosophy seeks, with Derrida, to deconstruct metaphysics and, with Vattimo, to replace strong thought with a form of thought that is weak, relativistic, and subjectivistic. When applied to theology, the idea that the violence of metaphysics can also be seen in the violence of language turns into an even more serious accusation. Does religious discourse conceal any dominating intentions when it speaks about truth, freedom, and God?

A third issue, related to the previous one, is the onto-theological issue, which Martin Heidegger pointed out: do the concepts used by the language of metaphysics not enclose the divine in themselves, idolizing it by this very enclosure?[5] What can assure us that the names of God—such as "causa sui" or "being"—do not become conceptual gods, by which reason reduces God to a concept? How could the absolute discourse—be it metaphysical, philosophical, or religious—avoid this pitfall of identifying the living God with the great concepts of the metaphysical tradition? If onto-theology were to prove the existence of God only through the use of concepts, as defined by Kant and as described by Heidegger, then would experience, understood as a supra-conceptual experience, be a solution?

Because of its neutrality, language has the advantage of being able to convey very different ideas; however, in religious and ethical contexts, it has the disadvantage of expressing *any* position, be it theistic or atheistic, ethical or unethical. This versatility becomes problematic due to the subtle

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[3] Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, trans. John W. Harvey (1924).

[4] Sf. Grigorie Palama, *Opere complete* [The Complete Works], vol. 3, trans. Cornel Coman et al. (București: Gândul Aprins, 2015), 1, 1 [1].

[5] The idea of the onto-theological constitution of metaphysics can be found in Martin Heidegger, *Identity and Difference*, trans. Joan Stambaugh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 60 *sqq*.

ambiguity it proposes: used in propositions, words can express both truth and untruth. The question now is how to get out of this duplicity in a way that makes it possible to differentiate between truth and falsehood; between "sound words" (Tim 1:13), words of consolation (1 Thessalonians 4:18) on the one hand, and "empty words" (Eph 5: 6) or "plausible arguments" (Col 2: 4) on the other.

Why Words?

Revelation and Words

The words used in the absolute discourse are of an indisputable relevance. If we lose the absolute in an inaccessible transcendence, these linguistic signifiers are apparently all that is left to us. Naturally, the relationship between a radical transcendence and the words that try to express it is not the only possible figure. Thus, the pattern changes when transcendence is a personal God: God reveals Himself as He utters the words of the call.[6] In this second case, the importance of words is, once again, undeniable.

The Holy Scripture states that the words of God apply to both power and truth. Power is visible because God brings the entire seen and unseen reality from non-being to being; He creates everything by word alone. The Word of Christ also astonished people, because it "possessed authority" (Lk. 4:32) and had a power that lay in its divine origin and in the promise of defeating suffering and death, in the announced hope of gaining freedom and truth. Otherwise, if we break the connection between word and power, then power becomes more important, "For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power" (1 Cor. 4:20). (Note that this creative "power" of God's words is not the same as the historical "domination" of one social class over another).

The primary meaning of the truth of the words of Scripture goes through the acceptance of their divine origin:[7] the words are of the Father, of the Son, who is Himself an arch-original Word, and of the Holy Spirit, who inspires them. Words of a God who "is love" (1 John 4: 8), they articulate the call that must be interpreted, heeded, and transformed into life.[8]

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[6] For an interpretation of overcoming radical transcendence by appealing to the Revelation, see Nicolae Turcan, "Transcendence and Revelation: from Phenomenology to Theology," *Dialogo* 2, no. 2 (March 2016), https://doi.org/10.18638/dialogo.2015.2.2.8.

[7] See Michel Henry, "Cuvânt și religie: Cuvântul lui Dumnezeu" [Word and Religion: The Word of God], in *Fenomenologie și teologie* [Phenomenology and Theology], by Jean-Louis Chrétien et al. (Iași: Polirom, 1996).

[8] See, for the topic of religious call, Nicolae Turcan, "Religious Call in Eastern Orthodox Spirituality: A Theo-Phenomenological Approach." *Religions* 11, no. 12 (2020): 653. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel11120653.

There are numerous scriptural contexts that emphasize the importance of words and their divine origin. God speaks in the words of men, yet His words are "trustworthy and true" (Rev. 21:5). They are prophetic words that are fulfilled, put by God in the mouths of men (Jeremiah 1:9), words whose meaning is a perpetual calling to faith and which help to gain faith: "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." (Rom. 10:17). Then, they are words to be heard: "And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him" (Deut. 18:19). They are commandments and teachings that become a covenant, thus having a dual structure, religious and ethical:[9] "And the Lord said to Moses, 'Write these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel" (Ex. 34:27); "And he wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments" (Ex. 34:28). The ethical function of these words, even when they are human and not divine, turns them into a criterion of judgment: "for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned" (Matt. 12:37). Last but not least, the words of God are the words of eternal life: "Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life'" (John 6:68). When uttered by God, these words are eternal: "but the word of the Lord remains forever. And this word is the good news that was preached to you" (1Pet. 1:25); "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). Therefore, the relevance of words also extends to man's relationship with God.

The First One

In a well-known paragraph, Wittgenstein stated that "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence."[10] The Revelation and the Incarnation, however, demand the opposite.

God spoke in the Old Testament—"the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision" (Gen. 15:1); Christ, the Word, spoke in the New Testament; therefore, man cannot be silent, even when he understands the role that silence plays in his speech, on the edge even when he talks about silence. It is just as legitimate to speak of silence in our discursive and predicative language as it is to be silent about the Word, in the contemplation that succeeds pure prayer, where words are left behind. Although silence has its role, opening towards the incomprehensible and ineffable mystery, it does

[9] Giorgio Agamben calls this ethical involvement of the speaker in his word the "sacrament of language". See Giorgio Agamben, *Sacramentul limbajului. Arheologia jurământului* [The Sacrament of Language: An Archaeology of the Oath], trans. Alex Cistelecan (Cluj-Napoca: TACT, 2011), 83.

[10] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (London & New York: Routledge, 2001), 7.

not nullify the legitimacy of words. Words and silence have different and complementary functions, and the absolute discourse of theology is based on the priority of the absolute discourse of God. Revelation itself provides the conditions of possibility for our speaking about God.

Therefore, we can speak about God because He spoke first.[11] „God has the initiative in the dialogue through the word."[12] The prologue to the Gospel of John says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Christ, the Logos, first spoke to us and His words express, according to patristic interpretation, the ideas by which He has created the world. When He speaks, the Word establishes a difference between Himself and the beings that He brings into existence. It is the difference between created and uncreated, an insurmountable ontological difference, which words express and which faith celebrates.

Words pave the way for a communion between God and man. As such, they are a part of life and they give voice to a transcendence that would otherwise remain incomprehensible. Not meant only for theoretical, denotative discourses, God's words are effective, performative, opening the door to true life for those who believe in them. The message of the Gospel of John is that "the Logos is life". It does not matter here whether the Logos-Christ and the logos of Greek philosophy are similar, as the apologists of the first centuries of Christianity believed,[13] or different, as Heidegger asserted;[14] all that matters is that the logos meets life[15] and that the purpose of words lies precisely within this true, divine life in communion with God.

Man is called to respond to God's words through his life and love and through his analogous words—as truth and justice: "Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." (1Pet. 4:11)

Following the same divine pattern, our words turn towards the Word, crossing through dialogue, to a certain extent, the abyss between created

[11] "If we affirm that 'we love, because he first loved us' (1 John 4:19), we can also affirm that we speak, because he has first spoken." James K. A. Smith, *Speech and theology: language and the logic of Incarnation* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 155.

[12] Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia ortodoxă* [Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy], 2 ed. (București: Institutul Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 2004), 147.

[13] Sf. Iustin Martirul și Filosoful, "Apologia a doua în favoarea creștinilor. Către Senatul roman" [The Second Apology], in *Apologeți de limbă greacă* [Greek Apologists], PSB (București: Institutul Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1980 1980), 2, 13.

[14] Martin Heidegger, *Introducere în metafizică* [Introduction to Metaphysics], trans. Gabriel Liiceanu and Thomas Kleininger, Paradigme, (București: Humanitas, 1999), 180–81.

[15] Michel Henry, *Cuvintele lui Hristos* [Words of Christ], trans. Ioan I. Ică jr (Sibiu: Deisis, 2005), 90.

and uncreated. Man speaks of / with God from what he has received, namely from the Revelation and the work of grace, even if his speech happens to contain his own words as well.

Heidegger's idea that "we are a dialogue"[16] expresses both the unity achieved through dialogue and the importance of this dialogue for the human Dasein. According to father Stăniloae, this dialogue includes not only words, but also nature itself.[17] Therefore, man responds to the absolute discourse of God with his own absolute discourse, an answer that engages more than mere utterance: it engages a change of self, passion, and deification. When it becomes prayer, the desire to establish a connection that transcends words motivates the absolute discourse, seeking a communion of life and love with the Beloved. Words have their own way of building the way back, but their power to give life—the life of God—comes from beyond their icons.

Diacritical Language

Multiple Styles of Theology

And, indeed, theology speaks of God through prayer: "the theologian is the one who prays and the one who prays is the theologian."[18] The language of God cannot be merely representational, for God does not stand as an empirical referent and descriptions of Him are never sufficient. Could we say that language is "constructive", "fictional", having a productive role, creating God from the bottom up, from our transcendental conditions? The present text answers this question in the negative. With its ambitious aim of comprehending the incomprehensible, theological language should be understood iconically as a language that continuously refers to what is beyond itself, although not in pure arbitrariness. Through the references it proposes, theological language rather creates the outline of a meeting, the place of waiting, the prerequisites for recognizing the divine by the same measure as those for knowing it. The paradox of theology is that it is both

[16] Martin Heidegger, *Originea operei de artă* [The Origin of the Work of Art], trans. Thomas Kleininger and Gabriel Liiceanu (București: Humanitas, 1995), 228.

[17] See Olivier Clément, "Cel mai mare teolog ortodox din secolul XX" [The Greatest Orthodox Theologian of the Twentieth Century], in *Omagiu memoriei Părintelui Dumitru Stăniloae* [Tribute to the Memory of Father Dumitru Stăniloae], ed. Ioanichie Bălan (Iași: Mitropolia Moldovei și Bucovinei, 1994), 136.

[18] Evagrie Ponticul, "Cuvânt despre rugăciune" [Discourse on Prayer], in *Filocalia* [The Philokalia], ed. and trans. Dumitru Stăniloae (București: Harisma, 1993), § 60. Jean-Louis Chrétien also wrote about the importance of prayer for the foundation of the religious: "With prayer the religious appears and disappears." Jean-Louis Chrétien, "Cuvântul rănit" [The Wounded Word], in *Fenomenologie și teologie* [Phenomenology and Theology] (Iași: Polirom, 1996), 37.

discernment—because it accurately distinguishes truth from untruth, starting from Revelation and from the life of the Church—and *ineffability*, because it admits that can express the mystery of divine existence and love only partially, allowing the experience of language to be enriched by the experience of God.

As a polyphonic and diverse language,[19] passing from narration to hymns, through epistles, prophecies, ethical commands, fragments of wisdom, etc., religious language expresses more than facts and references. Despite the multiplicity of genres, the discourse on God is called to become a discourse of praise, doxology, and prayer. Different periods favored different types of discourse which were more or less adequate to religious thought. The type of language only becomes a problem insofar as it wants to take center stage and consider itself the only one entitled to create a meaningful theology. But, like the Holy Scripture, theology accepts multiple discourses.[20] The problem is not that one discourse would be more appropriate than another, because each could have a different and complementary function, possibly in a hierarchy ranging from prose and narrative to prayer; rather, the danger lies within the dominant claim of philosophical discourse to be able to express everything in the name of reason. It is not unintelligible for the truth and falsehood of an absolute discourse to be decided elsewhere, by the Absolute—and clearly this is not the truth that is decided at the level of the utterance,[21] but the religious, existential one.

As I have said, absolute discourse is also the discourse of God Himself, whose words have come all the way down to us and establish a tradition regarded as sacred by those who belong to it. Hence, one should evaluate the absolute discourse of man according to its hermeneutic agreement with this tradition, which continues the Biblical Revelation. One could decide the veracity of the words about God by appealing to the Tradition of the Church, to that context of the "game of language"[22] specific to spiritual life, to the existence of true faith, and to the worthiness of the utterer (worthiness that inevitably involves experience, ethics, asceticism, and liturgy).[23] It is time to rediscover the movement that flows through all the discourses of

[19] Paul Ricoeur emphasized this polyphony of Scripture in Paul Ricœur, "Experiență și limbaj în discursul religios" [Experience and Language in Religious Discourse], in *Fenomenologie și teologie* [Phenomenology and Theology] (Iași: Polirom, 1996), 26–36.

[20] See Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Prezență și parusie* [Presence and Parousia], trans. Sorin Ovidiu Podar (Cluj-Napoca: Viața Creștină, 2012), 151–70.

[21] See Platon, *Sofistul* [Sophist], in *Opere* [Works], vol. VI, trans. Sorin Vieru et al. (București: Ed. Științifică și Enciclopedică, 1989), 261–62c.

[22] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Cercetări filosofice* [Philosophical Investigations]. trans. Mircea Dumitru, Mircea Flonta, and Adrian-Paul Iliescu (București: Humanitas, 2004), § 7.

[23] See Nicolae Turcan, "Liturgy and Apophaticism," *Religions* 12, no. 9 (2021), 721, https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12090721.

theology; the movement that, while passing from one discourse to another, does not invalidate the previous discourse, nor does it throw it into nothingness or synthesize it to recover it dialectically somewhere else, but rather enriches it in this back-and-forth of religious experience expressed in words.

There is a language that has a diacritical role, which expresses the defining truths of faith for the members of a community, a language whose function is to distinguish between truth and untruth, according to its agreement with the orthodoxy of tradition. This is the antinomic language of dogmas. At the same time, there is also the Reality beyond dogmas, one which words try to express as much as they possibly can.

Christian Dogmas: Truth and Accuracy

Writing, as Derrida said, is "the element of any revelation."[24] For the absolute discourse of theology—whether written or oral—, the separation between truth and untruth that words delineate is of a definite importance. The significance of a religious sentence may be true, but that sentence might not be verified according to the criteria of scientific knowledge; its plausibility will then be tested in the conditions of a future world. Meanwhile, on this side of the *eschaton*, the Tradition of the Church becomes the criterion of judgment.

The Ecumenical Councils have formulated the main dogmas of Christian faith in the most appropriate language possible. Undoubtedly, dogma is both the language and the meaning that language conveys; it is both signifier and signified. While the signifier (the word) has its relevance—for example, Hellenistic philosophy has provided terms for dogmatic formulations—, the truth exceeds the expression. The additional understanding that experience brings is infinite compared to the concept. As benchmarks for an experience of the truth of faith, dogmatic paradoxes testify that theology is, in fact, a "mystical theology."[25] Dogmas try to communicate the mystery that they partially express; they are "antinomies transfigured by the mystery they want to represent."[26]

Although related to the historical and philosophical context in which it appeared, the language used in dogmas expresses the truth of faith with a certain precision and, as a result, has become normative for the Church. This is a virtue meant not to close thought once and for all, for thought can

[24] Jacques Derrida, *Credință și Cunoaștere. Veacul și iertarea* [Faith and Knowledge], trans. Emilian Cioc (Pitești: Paralela 45, 2004), 10.

[25] Vladimir Lossky masterfully emphasized this connection between theology and mysticism in Vladimir Lossky, *Essai sur la théologie mystique de l'Église d'Orient* (Paris: Cerf, 2005).

[26] Lucian Blaga, *Eonul dogmatic* [The Dogmatic Aeon] (București: Humanitas, 1993), 47.

gloss through complementary and multiple hermeneutics, but to call to life, to experience, and even to make mystical experience possible for the generations to come. If we accept that no formulation by concepts and without experience can fully express the dogmatic truth—which is the Kantian definition of onto-theology[27]—, then no one should consider dogmas as onto-theological traits. Based on God's Revelation, the dogmas point to spiritual life and their truth, though formulated, needs the syntheses and the agreement of personal experience with the spiritual tradition of the Church.

The constructivist question may return: if dogmas are so necessary and if their language has become normative, isn't experience a result of them? The answer is, once again, negative, because dogmas delineate an experience and certify it to a certain extent as not being a non-Christian experience, such as the experience of an impersonal sacred. Apart from their epistemological prestige, dogmas also have a *diacritical* function for spiritual life, because they help to discern between different experiences; they are both the *knowledge* of the truth and its *recognition*. Not all religious experiences are divine, even if they may be exceptional phenomena of limit and mystery or, in the language of Jean-Luc Marion, "saturated phenomena."[28]

The multiplicity of theological styles and discourses—from the predicative one all the way to prayer—does not impose a multiplicity of contradictory meanings that would throw theology into relativism and conflict with dogmas. The discernment of dogmas belongs to Tradition, whose purpose is to transmit the original faith in Christ, as the Church has preserved it from the beginning. The diacritical language of dogmas requires a certain understanding and a certain way of living. By pointing to life and not declaring itself self-sufficient, the diacritical discourse of dogmas is kenotic. When the dogma says something about God, it does not intend to say everything that could be said, but rather to emphasize the truth of Revelation. The words of theology teach and follow the kenosis of the Word Himself, without weakening the truth or the calling formulated through words.[29]

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[27] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hacket Publishing Company, Inc., 1996), A 632, B 60.

[28] Jean-Luc Marion, *In Excess: Studies of Saturated Phenomena*, trans. Robyn Horner and Vincent Berraud (New York: Fordham University Press, 2002), 31–53. See a comment in Nicolae Turcan, *Apologia după sfârșitul metafizicii. Teologie și fenomenologie la Jean-Luc Marion* [Apology after the End of Metaphysics: Theology and Phenomenology in Jean-Luc Marion] (București: Eikon, 2016), 257–71.

[29] Gianni Vattimo proposes an interpretation of *kenosis* as a continuous *kenosis* of God in history. According to this postmodern interpretation, God humbles Himself so much that He accepts sin and secularization as a fulfillment of Christianity. Christianity can give up morality, the Church, truth, but not charity. I provided a critique of this postmodern opinion in Nicolae Turcan, *Postmodernism și teologie apofatică* [Postmodernism and Apophatic Theology]

Church Tradition is, therefore, normative. By encompassing not only the transmission of certain teachings and ways of life, but also the continual work of the Holy Spirit in the Church, the Tradition is a tradition of life and witness. Father Georges Florovsky wrote: „Christological formulas are fully meaningful only for those who have encountered the Living Christ, and have received and acknowledged Him as God and Saviour, and are dwelling by faith in Him, in His body, the Church."[30] As a hermeneutics appropriate to Revelation and, therefore, not reduced solely to man's interpretive ability, the hermeneutics of the holy text involves both the dialogue with the Referent to whom the text refers and the moral and religious transformation of man, which can be seen in the *metanoia* (change of mind, repentance). In this hermeneutics, the interpreter asks for the grace of the Holy Spirit to help him understand, which makes it more than a philological, historical-critical, or philosophical work. The transcendental, constituted by the conditions of possibility for a hermeneutics, is an achieved transcendental: the grace of the Holy Spirit. "It is not the text that gives us access to the truth, but the Truth that gives us access to Himself,"[31] according to Michel Henry.

We have seen that the dogmatic language, as an iconic language, is both paradoxical and adequate. Dogmas are antinomic, using the formula "both…, and…"; they accept, with the power of the Revelation, truths that change logic into theology. Such a way of thinking, born at the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325, brings about the beginning of antinomy into European thought or, in the words of Constantin Noica, the "birth of Europe"[32] as a way of thinking different from that of Antiquity. Is this a different logos than the Greek one, as Michel Henry suggested? The presence of the dogmatic paradox does not cancel out how thought normally works, so the Greek logic was enriched by another logic, an antinomic one, whose purpose is to express faith. Even if the paradox appears wherever life appears, because life goes beyond logic, it only temporarily suspends logic and it does not apply to all of reality. One could state the principle: "to different realities, different logics." God's Revelation made itself explicit with the help of the dogmatic antinomy, of the logic of "both…, and…," which violated the principle of non-contradiction. Here are a few examples: both the Father is God, and the Son is God; Christ is both the true God and

(Florești, Cluj: Limes, 2014).

[30] Georges Florovsky, *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View* (Belmont, Massachusetts: Nordland Publishing Company, 1972), 109.

[31] Michel Henry, *Eu sunt Adevărul. Pentru o filozofie a* [I am the Truth: Toward a Philosophy of Christianity], trans. Ioan I. Ică jr (Sibiu: Deisis, 2000), 47.

[32] Constantin Noica, *Despre demnitatea Europei* [About the Dignity of Europe], 2 ed. (București: Humanitas, 2012), 62.

the true man; Christ has both divine will and human will—and the list could go on. Dogmas enjoy the unanimous appreciation of the theology of the Church because they are precise enough to express the mystery and to preserve, through formulation, an opening towards the fullness of life to which man is called.

Overcoming, Referral, and Negations

The Reality and the Experience of Words

There are several transcendences that the word itself proposes; the first of these transcendences is that of the reference or reality that the words speak of through concepts. The Aristotelian tripartition between language, thought, and reality is involved here.[33] An experience of words that describe reality (and therefore an experience of language), no matter how poetic, is not on the same level as the experience of meeting reality itself, a truth even more obvious as it refers to more than the objective world and the empirical phenomena. So, the question is not whether language says something about reality—because it obviously does—but whether language can recreate an experience of reality, whether it can be an experience identical to that of living that reality. The short answer is that it never succeeds completely. Of course, one should accept the creative function of language: words produce experience and they can become experience. But this experience of language differs from the experience of the original reality. The creative experience of words takes place either in the space of analogy, when it says something about the original experience, or in the space of difference, when it uses words as a starting point to create a new experience, an experience that deviates from the original one.

Ethics, Asceticism, and Language

Apart from the experience of external reality, we must also consider an internal experience of self-affection, which appears as a new overcoming of words by experience. Ethical and ascetic commitment, as well as the questioning one's own self in the adventure of meeting God, transcend language. Levinas radically critiqued ontology by affirming ethics as a primary philosophy. Suspecting the Same while affirming the Other gives rise to a philosophy of otherness that meets both religious thought and the language of the Scripture. Ethics, however, involves asceticism as an inner experience, a renunciation of oneself in favor of the other, a capacity for sacrifice.

[33] Aristotel, *Categorii. Despre interpretare* [Categories. On Interpretation], trans. Constantin Noica (București: Humanitas, 2005), 20v–21r.

St. Gregory of Nazianzus said that speaking of God is commendable, but more commendable is "suffering for God."[34] But knowledge is not limited to language or expression; it also encompasses the act of taking upon oneself, in one's own body, in one's own suffering, the truth of the One who has suffered for us. It is an ascetic assumption by which the analogy of suffering doubles the analogy of language. The shift in emphasis is enormous: we cannot speak about language when language speaks of suffering.

The overcoming of words by experience is even more visible in apophatic theology. Negating the concepts that describe God does not reveal nothingness, but rather He who is above any name and word. Viewed as more than a celebration of mystery as a mystery, apophatic theology speaks of the ineffable and over-discursive experience of meeting the personal God. In apophatic theology, there is no human transcendental that produces the experience; this becomes possible only through the work of grace.

There is a significant difference between the genuine experience of *unio mystica* and the language that attempts to describe this experience. Many authors in the Christian tradition affirm the ineffability of the mystical experience and the inability of words to describe it properly. For example, the Greek patristic tradition forever denies the ability to know and to describe God in His being;[35] however, it affirms the possibility of knowing God and the real experience of God through His uncreated energies.

Language expresses the mystical experience insufficiently. The difference between language and reality reveals the inability of words to produce a similar experience and to express it adequately by using the absolute discourse. There is a constant back-and-forth between experience and language in a reciprocal, indefinite, and unequal inception, an oscillation that captures the one who thinks, believes, and prays. It also reveals an essential transcendence for the absolute discourse: through the addition of knowledge, even inexpressible knowledge, mystical experience transcends language.

Words as Icons

We call *iconic* those concepts that do not objectify, do not reify the ineffable, but only refer to it, through a structure common to the index, the religious symbol, and the icon.[36] The icon, unlike the index and the symbol, is high-

[34] Sf. Grigore de Nazianz, *Cele 5 cuvântări teologice* [Five Theological Orations], trans. Dumitru Stăniloae (București: Anastasia, 1993).

[35] Marion called such a statement "negative certainty," see Jean-Luc Marion, *Certitudini negative* [Negative Certainties], trans. Maria-Cornelia Ică jr (Sibiu: Deisis, 2013).

[36] It is the tripartition proposed by Charles S. Pierce to describe the relationship between the sign and its object Charles S. Pierce, *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), 102–03. Although we start from this trichotomy, we

lighted by a resemblance to what it looks like, through a sort of non-arbitrariness. From a religious standpoint, the difference between icon and idol is a defining feature. Jean-Luc Marion describes this difference as the distance that the icon shows in relation to the prototype that it represents. The idol turns its gaze towards the viewer, turning into self-idolatry, whereas the icon looks further towards the prototype visible in it.

If we think of religious language as iconic, then we can say that it is a space of passage, a sort of non-place.[37] Stored in language, a religious experience only remains there with the sole purpose of becoming something other than language—an experience similar to the one described. The dignity of language as a non-place of passage does not come from its location, but rather from its iconicity. Man feels the force of that which comes from beyond language and which is revealed in part by language, as a call. The absolute language of theology is, therefore, deeply intentional: its importance is given more by what it refers to rather than what it can adequately describe.

Affirmations and Negations

Lucian Blaga argued that dogmatic thought and apophatic theology are different. Dogmatic thought affirms concepts which fall into antinomies that overcome logic, whereas apophatic theology denies concepts, but its thought remains within the boundaries of logic.[38] Logically, when dealing with contradictions, they are both antinomies: the former violates the principle of contradiction and the latter violates the principle of the excluded third. From the point of view of religious experience, dogmatic statements are antinomic because they attempt to express a mystery, an ineffable reality. But apophatic theology, through its negative concepts, aims, in fact, at the same reality that escapes thought, at the same ineffable mystery of God, who is irreducible to language. Thus, from the perspective of a phenomenology of overcoming, we can answer that dogmatic statements and apophatic negations have in common the intentional structure of overcoming towards an experience of a different order than the linguistic one. Both dogmatic antinomies and the negations of apophatic theology express the unlimited mystery of the living God that words cannot truly express.

As an exaggeration, one might argue that, while antinomic statements are the manner in which God speaks to us, the side of the divine Revelation

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will use theological considerations to understand the iconic structure. Also, from a philosophical point of view, we will rely on the phenomenology of Jean-Luc Marion, who proposes, in accordance with the tradition of the Church, a fundamental distinction between icon and idol.

[37] Foucault spoke of the "non-place of language." Michel Foucault, *Cuvintele și lucrurile* [Words and Things], trans. Bogdan Ghiu and Mircea Vasilescu (București: RAO, 2008), 41.

[38] Blaga, *The Dogmatic Aeon*, 79–84.

oriented towards the world, apophatic denials are man's way back to the ineffable God. In fact, if they share the same referral structure, one can affirm more precisely that both refer to mystical experience. God's grace works both in the human exercise of apophatic negations and in the dogmatic antinomies and truths of faith revealed throughout history. In both situations, working together is involved. How much man works and how much God works has to do with the truth of a dynamic that depends on many factors, such as man's spiritual age or the providence of God. What matters for the absolute discourse is that this path is no longer language, but the transcendence of language, with the goal of meeting God in mystical experience. The affirmations of faith (cataphatic theology) and the negations (apophatic theology) are not in fact opposed to each other, as St. Dionysius the Pseudo-Areopagite asserted.[39] The absolute discourse of man transcends itself as it is uttered and the all-benevolent grace of Transcendence itself works in this transcendence, which seeks an experience beyond words.

Answers and Experience

Some Answers

Throughout these pages, I have highlighted several answers to the issues presented at the beginning of the text. First of all, God's choice to reveal Himself overcomes the paradox of transcendence. This means that language will describe what it can describe without canceling out what it cannot express—the indescribable, the ineffable, the unknowable. Because we need to consider both dimensions—dogmatic antinomies and apophatic theology—, language describes without exhausting, without closing, without the pride of exhaustive knowledge; language makes way for super-conceptual experience, without annihilating it, without reducing it to nothingness. Apophatic theology uses the language of negations, but those negations do not annihilate; they are the iconic negations that refer to the non-place where language is no longer heard and where only silence can still understand something. Although this is an experience of a different order than language, it is an experience prepared to a certain extent by both the diacritical language of dogmas and by the apophatic negations that Scripture formulates.

The experience of God is both knowledge and lack thereof, even if, as a last resort, the former may appeal to the latter. The richness of the Revelation establishes the possibility of an infinite hermeneutics, but it does not invalidate the difference in nature between God and man, between uncreated

[39] See Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, "The Mystical Theology," in *Pseudo-Dionysius: The Complete Works* (New York: Paulist Press, 1987), 1000B.

and created, just as it does not annihilate the unknowability of God's being. When it speaks of both knowledge and ignorance, the Church Tradition does not give voice to two spiritual traditions, but rather speaks of a single, paradoxical one, in which the transcendent God reveals Himself out of love for His creation. Between the transcendence of God and human knowledge there are not only concepts and analogies, but also the existential reality of divine grace. The experience of God is blinding and ineffable. Even when words do have a role, that role is fulfilled by the work of grace.

Secondly, there are several answers to the issue of the violence of metaphysical language. (1) The modern violence of the concept in relation to the phenomenon it reduces does not mean that it is impossible to reinterpret concepts outside the metaphysics of its presence and violence. Such hermeneutics could rely on a non-objectifying, iconic language.[40] (2) Weak thought, proposed by Gianni Vattimo, is not the only solution to the violence of metaphysics, nor is it the most appropriate one, especially as long as he views religious relativism as a solution. Over time, theology has overcome the violence of metaphysics in the name of peace, of love, of the kenosis of Christ, as well as in the name of the mystical experience that apophatic theology proposes.

Thirdly, when faced with the onto-theological criticism of metaphysics, we might answer that it involves a problematic view of language. It is at least inappropriate to believe that language can replace experience, especially when speaking about God. Precisely through metaphor and paradox, the language of theology reveals its "intersubjective dimension"[41] and its extralinguistic purpose: that of calling and leading, to a certain extent, to the personal encounter with God. Of course, it is not just a matter of saying and listening to what is being said; what happens is a body-and-soul commitment on man's behalf with the purpose of gaining divine life.

The role of the absolute discourse of theology, as diacritical thinking, is to free the Absolute from the idolatry of reason. A philosophy that confuses the Divine Absolute with its various worldly forms — most of which are of the order of excess and limit — is a non-religious philosophy. Even when viewed only in terms of horizontality, even without a transcendent referent, the movement towards the absolute—absolutism—is present in the logic of the world. And absolutism is the false form of the absolute, the one which has lost its relationship with God; it is another idol that, sometimes paradoxically, refers to the one who builds it precisely through deconstruction.

[40] That is what Smith proposes in *Speech and theology*, 79.

[41] Coşeriu distinguished between the objective dimension of language, that of being object-oriented, and the intersubjective one. Eugeniu Coșeriu, *Istoria filozofiei limbajului: de la începuturi până la Rousseau* [The History of the Philosophy of Language: From the Beginnings to Rousseau], trans. Eugen Munteanu and Mădălina Ungureanu (București: Humanitas, 2011), 43.

God is mystery, an incomprehensible mystery, but this mystery does not become an idol, nor does it become nothing. The mystery also does not take the place of God; through mystical experience, theology speaks of the manifestation and encounter of the personal God, not of the mystery without the divine, of nothing, or of the negation as negation.

Fourthly, when faced with the question of the ambivalence and even the ambiguity of language, capable of equally expressing truth and falsehood, one could answer that, in the religious context analyzed here, i.e. the Christian one, the origin and the source of the text are the ones that give the truth: if the text is revealed, then the truth is revealed. By accepting that we need to read the text with the firm belief that God is its author, the truth beneath the words reveals itself in their linguistic meaning and in their super-linguistic call, which is the call to deification (*theosis*).

What all these answers have in common is the relationship between language and experience: in each case, *words refer to what is beyond them, having an iconic function, towards an ineffable, mystical, and interpersonal experience*. Thinking and speaking in the absence of this experience can be an exercise in transmitting a tradition or a truth; however, this truth would be insufficient, for the role of words in the life of the Church is to sustain this life and to make people sons of God. And words, insofar as they express this life, do not exhaust it, but formulate its call and point to what is beyond them, just like icons do. Although inevitable, absolute language remains insufficient. It refers to the experience of meeting the One who is impossible to name in the same way in which we name the things and realities of this world.

Experience and Words

To conclude, there are several moments in understanding the absolute discourse of the Revelation and, by extension, of theology. The *hermeneutic moment* involves the understanding of the meanings of words and of the commandments of the Holy Scripture, of expressions and calls; in short, of the apostolic kerygma, as a proclamation of the truth of faith and as a calling to the fullness of life. The *moment of faith* means believing in the truth of these words, in their divine origin, in their exceptionality and in their impossibility for us, which is possible for God—"for all things are possible with God" (Mark 10:27). We could then speak of the *ethical and ascetic moment*, in which man responds to the words of the call by his own ministry—from liturgy and prayer to the service of his neighbor—, by constantly engaging in asceticism and self-denial, regardless of his level. Last but not least, we can talk about the *moment of joy*, of living the mysterious presence of God through the work of His grace unknown to the world, "whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him" (John 14:17). A view of two extremes accompanies this moment: on the one hand, there is

the view of one's own nothingness, according to which man is little more than nothing, earth meant to return to earth, dust and ashes; on the other hand, there is the view of the greatness of the call: man is, by the work of God's grace, destined for deification and communion with his Creator. No dialectic suppresses either extreme, for humility deepens as we progress in our work towards deification.

This presentation is certainly neither unique nor exhaustive; it does, however, have the advantage of following a path that is not just of words. There are, of course, words that accompany the moments mentioned earlier, just as there are moments of silence that carry more meaning than words could express. Regardless of the form and level at which it appears, the absolute discourse reveals the iconic structure of the words used, as well as the difference between expression and experience. But words become richer and richer in meaning as experience ignites and enlightens them. Mystical experience can be certified and confirmed by the meaning that dogmas express in words; but this experience cannot be replaced by the words resulted from it. In the absence of the iconic understanding of the words of the Revelation and in the absence of the experience that gives them legitimacy, the absolute discourse ultimately remains insufficient. Without experiencing God, words lose their authentic meaning and can be manipulated by the onto-theological ego, which is defined precisely by the refusal of experience. They can serve violence and idolatry, ambiguity and lack of meaning, evil and falsehood. Ultimately, only mystical experience and spiritual life give value to the absolute discourse of theology, transforming its words and meanings into linguistic and conceptual icons that point to the Absolute Referent, simultaneously called Word and Being, Life and Love.

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The Divine Word and its Expression in Sanskrit: Continuity and Change in Vedic and Classical India

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Abstract

The Vedas are said to be not a human creation (*apauruṣeya*), but Revelation imparted to the Vedic sages who have put it down in inspired verses. Vedas' words are therefore divine and eternal, and thus extensively praised. *Vāc*, the Vedic word, is eulogised in several hymns, among which *Vāk Sūkta* (X.125) is by far the most illustrative of all. In some teachings of the Upanishads, *Vāc* is equated to *Brahman* alongside other interpretations.

When analysing the nature of the word, centuries later, philosophers and grammarians refer to it as *śabda*, and no longer as *Vāc*, the latter remaining confined to a rather poetical and mystical reality. Yet, the idea of the eternal and divine character of the scriptures is superimposed on the Sanskrit language also, despite certain historical change remarks on the grammarians' side. In the 5th century CE, Bhartṛhari displays a genuine linguistic and philosophical thought of the folding and unfolding of Reality and its understanding as Word-Principle (*brahman śabda-tattva*). From an auxiliary science of preserving the correct forms of the Vedas, Sanskrit grammar acquires a hermeneutical role and empowers itself as a way to salvation, an idea supported by previous evidence of grammar's role in producing celestial happiness (*abhyudaya*), merit and righteousness (*dharma*).

I seek in this paper to analyse and point out the strongholds that underpin Sanskrit as a divine language and how continuity and change coexist to support over millennia this undaunted approach.

Keywords: Veda, Sanskrit, Vāc, śabda, *brahman śabda-tattva*, Bhartṛhari, history of Sanskrit

It is a matter of common understanding that God chooses to "speak" to people in their own language. The Biblical tradition records the descent

of the Holy Ghost upon Jesus' disciples fifty days after the resurrection, making them able to be speaking and impart the words of God in all languages of the crowd.

> And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and begun to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our own tongues the wonderful works of God."[1]

It is therefore perfectly reasonable that God's messages are expressed in accordance with everyone's innate linguistical competence, to create easy understanding, urging, and abiding by them. Yet, there is also a recurrent pro domo understanding that some languages express God's word in a more profound way. Is it their antiquity, and yet their pervasiveness, their rich cultural load carried on and on for centuries with the help of either oral or written tradition, their refinement or simply their capacity to transform themselves by safeguarding certain historical forms and at the same time giving way to new forms to rise and flourish? Even so, what is the difference between a cultured, refined language and a primitive, tribal dialect when it comes to expressing oneself, his world and what is above and beyond his grasp but witness in awe? What makes one language more refined than another? What does "refined" means, according to which universal linguistic criteria? Is there anything like universal linguistic criteria applied to all phyla and language families? Is the capacity of the Kivunjo, a Bantu language spoken in Kilimanjaro villages, in which the verb has seven prefixes and suffixes, two modes, fourteen tenses and which agrees with both its subject,

[1] *King James Bible. New Testament. Acts 2.1-11*. https://www.kingjamesbibleonline.org/Acts-Chapter-2/.

its object, and its benefactive nouns, each of these having sixteen genders,[2] less refined than the ninety-nines verbal forms[3] of what is likely to assume almost any verbal root in Sanskrit?

For many, beginning with the Vedic seers and the brahman priests, and ending with any supplicant of the yore or today who has been imparted a mantra in Sanskrit of which meaning (not to mention grammatical forms) remains rather obscure, Sanskrit is considered a divine language. The name of the script too, Nāgarī (the urban script) was also amended in this light, duly named thereafter "Devanāgarī" (the script of the god's city)[4]. From the Indo-Europeans lens perspective, classical Sanskrit falls in line with old Greek and Latin. The last two old languages where the medium of an extremely rich and impressive literary as well as scientific tradition that lay the foundation of the western European cultural mapping, which also has imprinted in later centuries most recognisable cultural patterns across the whole world. Likewise, and fortunately, Vedic and then classical Sanskrit too have produced not only an impressive literary tradition, and an extensive grammatical literature, but a significant religious and philosophical corpus that has cast into cultural patterns for almost two millennia a significant part of Asian civilisations. The linguistical introspection and speculations into the nature of language and word of the old Indian grammarians and philosophers is by and large one of the most impressive of all similar efforts of other cultures. The enquiries about the nature of word and language were persistent and systematic, yet, nonetheless pervaded by an acute sense of reverence as toward a divine gift to the Indian race.

This paper, however modest, aims to point out and analyse from an historical and analytical perspective some of the strongholds that helped and

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[2] See more S. Pinker, *The Language Instinct: How the Mind Creates Language*, Penguin Books, 2015, 25–26.

[3] These comes as a result of having in Sanskrit ten conjugations, three persons, three numbers (singular, dual and plural), eleven verbal tenses (*lakāras*).

[4] Based on the Brāhmī script, Nāgarī (the city script) superseded other scripts and was in use by 7 century CE. The earliest available epigraphic example is a royal inscription of a text written entirely in Nāgarī of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa king Dantidurga 754 CE. As pointed by many early scholars, writing in India was attributed divine origin (Brāhmī too is an eloquent example), and thus extending the Nāgarī into Devanāgarī (the script of the city of gods) falls into the pattern" to invest the script with a divine provenance" N. Brassey Halhead, *A Code of Gentoo Law*, London, 1776, xxiv, *apud* Walter H. Maurer, "On the Name Devanāgarī," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 96, no. 1 (1976): 101–4. According to Maurer the two terms are not exactly interchangeable, as Nāgarī seems to cover a wider texts typology, whereas Devanāgarī does not always apply to some Nāgarī script varieties, but the latest seems to have better satisfied the need of pursuing the Indian religious commitment. More technical insights on the topic S.Rath, "The Evolution of Inscriptional Nāgarī from Early 7th till 12th CE", *Epigraphica Vostoka (Epigraphy of the Orient)* Moscow: Russian Academy of Science, 29 (2011): 187–201.

maintained the perception of Sanskrit as a divine language and how continuity and change coexist to support over millennia this undiminished approach. Many exquisite and comprehensive accounts of the history of Sanskrit are filling large spaces of libraries. Similarly, there are many papers dealing with the topic, some from very sound scientific/linguistical grounds, others culturally or politically biased which mean to emphasize upon the prominence and status of Sanskrit over other languages or cultural expressions. From a down to earth perspective, on synchronic and diachronic levels, to uplifting spirited eulogies, there have been many efforts to disclose and reveal the strong foundations and well-inbuilt structures that made possible the extant of Sanskrit for such a great span of time.

The divine origin of speech, the speech divine and the uncreated Veda

In the Ṛgveda, the word is termed *Vāc*[5]. It is not uncommon to have the word looked upon and venerated as a deity under several names in the Vedic literature. Interestingly, the word and by it the speech, are highly praised and described in some of the riddle-like hymns (*brahmodya*) I.164.45, 4.5.83 or openly in word praised manifesto hymns (X.71, X.125). The linguistic speculation on language is anchored as expected in a divine origin of language. The myth says that when gods created speech, it was distributed equally among men and animals. In the yore days, humans and animals could communicate with one another, but somehow, animals have misused their speech and the goods took it away from them and leaving it to humans alone[6].

The word that we use, either in Vedic mantra (*vaidika*)[7] or in our daily transactions (*laukika*), is, to all appearances, only the fourth part of the mystic Vāc, which represents the speech given to mortals alone: "Speech is measured in four feet [quarters]. Brahmins of inspired thinking might know these. They do not set in motion the three that are imprinted in secret; the sons of Manu speak the fourth (foot/quarter) of speech." (*catvāri vāk paramitā padāni/tāni vidurbrāhmaṇā ye manīśiṇaḥ/guhā trīṇi nihitā neṅgayanti/turīyaṁ*

[5] The *Nigaṇṭu*, a collection of difficult Vedic words on which is based the oldest available etymological treatise *Nirukta* of Yāska, gives a list of fifty-seven names for word. Vāc is a feminine noun. Sarasvatī is also listed among the fifty-seven names.

[6] RV 8.100.11 *devīṁ vācaṁ janayanta devāḥ/tāṁ viśvarūpaṁ paśavo vadanti*// Gods generated divine speech. Animals of all kinds speak her.

[7] It is also impossible (except for some *silentio* (*tūṣṇīm*) situations) to carry on a full ritual in the absence of words/ mantras. It can be Sarasvatī[7], primarily in the Ṛg Veda period the river goddess, and identified with Vāc in the Brāhmaṇa period (Sat.Br. 3.9.1.7, Ait.Br.3.1.(11).7), the poetical meters such is Gāyatrī.

vāco manuṣyā vadanti// Ṛgveda 1.164.45[8]. Next to it, the often-quoted lines of another hymn-riddle which literally runs: "Four are his horns, three his feet, two heads, seven hands are his. Triply bound, the bull keeps on roaring. The great god has entered mortals" (*catvāri śṛṅgā trayo asya pādā/ dve śirṣe sapta hastāso asya/ tridhā baddho vṛṣabho roravīti/ maho devo martyām ā viveśa// Ṛgveda* IV.58.3) is commonly read in purely grammatical terms with certain variations as the four types of words nouns and their substitute (*nāma*), verbs forms (*ākhyāta*), connectors (*upasarga*), and particles (*nipāta*) for the four heads, the three persons, the first (*prathyama*), the second (lit. the middle) (*madhyama*) and the third (lit. the utmost one) (*uttama*) stand for the three feet, the two heads are to be the verbal aspects active (*parasmaipāda*) and passive reflexive (*ātmanepada*), the inflectional system of seven case endings (*vibhaktī*) could be interpreted as the hands, and the triple bonds the numbers: singular, dual and plural. Later grammarians like Bhartṛhari, Nāgeśa Bhaṭṭa, philosophers such as Gaudapāḍa, or Sāyaṇa in his commentary on the Vedas are inclined to give the fourfold partition a more specialised approach by interpreting it as the four stages of the word: *vaikharī*, *madhyamā*, *pasyantī* and *parā*[9]. Yet, before jumping to these terms belonging to a later stage theory of language interpretation, it is worthwhile to read one of the many Vedic interpretations[10] of these riddle verses, given by the Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā, and quoted in the Nirukta:

> The speech, thus created, became fourfold. The three parts went to the three worlds and the fourth one into beings. The speech that was in the earth is seen in the fire as well as in the *Rathantara*

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[8] The *RigVeda. The Earliest Religious Poetry of India*, trans. by Stephanie W. Jamison and Joel P. Brereton (Oxford University Press, The University of Texas, South Asia Institute, 2014), 359. When not indicated otherwise, I use the English translation of S. Jamison and J. Brereton for the Vedic verses.

[9] *Vaikharī* is the word that is audible to others. At this stage, the sound sequence is differentiated, and it is the place where the utterance, as well as the perception, takes place. It represents the speech itself with all its particularities according to every speaker. *Madhyamā* is the stage where meaning and the word are differentiated, but together still form a unity. The meaning of the word, the signifié, is constructed with the help of a mental representation. *Paśyantī,* which is called otherwise *pratibhā* or *prakṛti,* is the stage where there is no sound sequence, nor conceptualised word. It is considered the source of all manifested words and their meanings. One of the most explicit and earlier descriptions of these stages is made in the *Vākyapadīya* of Bhartṛhari. The commentary, *Vṛtti*, mentions the fourth and supreme stage, *Parā,* where all sequences and modifications are completely absorbed. It is a highly explored linguistical construction of speech analysis phonetic, semantic, and cognitive aspects. The Kaśmir Śaivism tantric tradition is building a massive textual interpretation of this fourfold word/speech grades on metaphysical and ontological layers.

[10] N. Kulkarni gives a well-documented account of these interpretations in "The Vedic Interpretation of the Verse *catvāri vāk parimitā padāni* (*Ṛgveda 1.164.45)*", in *Indian Theories of Language*, ed. B.K. Dalai (Pune: Centre of Advanced Study in Sanskrit, 2008), 1-9.

> *sāman*. The speech that was in the sky is seen in the wind and in the *Vāmadevya sāman*. The speech that is seen in the heaven is seen in Āditya, in the meter Bṛhatī and in the clouds, The speech that was extra in the beings was placed in the Brahmins. Therefore, Brahmins speak both the languages, that of the gods and that of the human beings.[11]

This account not only tries to shed light upon the shares of the fourfold word by equally linking all the four elements but also serves the purpose of explaining and reinforcing the divine aspect of the speech in its utmost form. It is said to be the gods' language communicated as the language of the Vedic hymns, but it also shares a resemblance to the language of men. Could this dichotomy be understood in terms of refined and sacred Sanskrit as opposite the unrefined, uncouth Prakrit, which, as plastic and available to change as it was, gave rise to the Indian vernaculars? As for the god who has entered the mortals, the 5th century CE grammarian-philosopher Bhartṛhari, who translates the word-speech poetic description into linguistical and philosophical developments, touches upon this union in the following terms: "It has been said that Self, which is within the speaker, is the word, the great Bull with whom one desires union"[12].

The prominence of the Vāc as sacred speech that must be mastered by the priests when performing Soma sacrifices is clearly shown in the hymn X.81. The sacred word sets upon the most competent among the seers who gave a name (*nāmadheya*) to the surrounding. The divine word/goddess speech was picking the one who was to be revealed according to his merit, righteousness, and capacity to capture her into the Vedic mantra. But we also find out from the hymn that the worthy ones have brought the divine word into the world and dispersed it into many places, conjointly in their efforts to sing her out. Thus, we have not only a passive attitude but an active one of willpower over the hidden word: "1. O Bṛhaspāti, (this was) the first beginning of Speech: when they [=the seers] came forth giving names/What was their best, what was flawless – that (name), set down in secret, was revealed to them because of your affection (for them)…3b. Having brought her here, they dispersed her in many places. The seven husky-voiced singers together cry her out". The share in goddess Speech

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[11] *Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā* 1.11.5: *sā vai vāk sṛṣṭā caturdhā vyabhavat/eṣveva lokeṣu trīṇi, paśuṣu turīyam/yā pṛthivyāṁ sāgnau sā rathaṁtare/yā'ntarikṣe sā vāyau, sā vāmadevyai//yā divi sādityai sā bṛhati sā stanayitnau/ atha paśuṣu tato yā vāgatiricyata tāṁ brāhmaṇeṣvadadhuḥ/ tasmād brāhmaṇā ubharyāṁ vācaṁ vadanti yā ca devanām yā ca manuṣyāṇām iti// Apud* N. Kulkarni *vide* supra note.

[12] VP I 144: *api prayoktur ātmānam antaravasthitam/prāhur mahāntam ṛṣabhaṁ yena sāyujate iṣyate//* (where not otherwise stated, the Bhartṛhari verses/ commentary's translation is by K.A. Subramanya Iyer, 1966, 1995, *vide* references).

is only by merit; who hears, yet can't hear her, who sees, if not yet cannot sees her "Though all have eyes and ears, the companions are unequal in quickness of mind" not everyone is qualified to serve her.

The hymn X.125, also called *Vāk Sūkta*, is decidedly the most comprehensive poetical eulogy of Vāc-Logos. It is one of the few hymns where the seer (*ṛṣi*), this time a female seer (*ṛṣikā*) is the same as the governing deity of the hymn Vāk Āmbhṛṇa. It is a self-praise[13] (*ātmastuti*) hymn that has generated a rich commentarial literature and acts as a stepping stone to enhancing the perspective of speech's importance to shaping and understanding reality[14].

> 3.I am the ruler, assembler of goods, observer foremost among those deserving the sacrifice. Me have the gods distributed in many places – so that I have many stations and cause many things to enter (me). 4.Through me he eats food – whoever sees, whoever breathes, whoever hears what is spoken. Without thinking upon it, they live on me. Listen, o, you who are listened to: it's a trustworthy thing I tell you. 5. Just myself I say this, savored by gods and men: "Whom I love, just him I make formidable, him a formulator, him a seer, him of good wisdom.[15]" 6. I stretch the bow for Rudra, for his arrow to smash the hater of the sacred formulation. I make combat for people. I have entered Heaven and Earth. 7.I give birth to Father (Heaven?) on his (own?) head [=Agni?]; my womb is in the waters, in the sea. Thence I spread forth across all worlds, and yonder heaven with height I touch. 8.I, just like the winds, I blow forth, grasping at all words, beyond heaven, beyond this earth here – of such great size is my greatness have I come into being.[16]

The hymn's poetical and cosmical images of envisaging the power of the Word will be highly explored by the orthodox Brahmanical elites, priests

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[13] Poetical imagery and extensive metaphor of the self-reference function of the word. For it is through words that we analyse word, speech and language. Any other art in its very etymological sense (τέχνη - craft) uses other materials and resources to produce works.

[14] In his commentary, Sāyaṇa identifies consistently Vāc with brahman in terms rather typical for the Advaita Vedānta school. The interpretation given to the last line is clearly indicating his choice of seeing Vāc "I, in the form of absolute bráhman consciousness, removed from attachment, come to be with such greatness".

[15] It is hard to suppress an unsought yet so obvious similarity of this line with the definition of the accomplished orator in Rome prepared to embrace and follow the *cursus honorum*, which, in Cato the Elder's words, quoted by many, including Quintilian and Cicero, is: *uir bonus dicendi peritus*.

[16] The Rigveda, *The Earliest Religious Poetry of India*, trans. Stephanie W. Jamison and Joel P. Brereton (Oxford University Press, The University of Texas, South Asia Institute, 2014), 1603-1604.

and theologs in the next level met in the philosophical and theological discussions on the Veda – text transmission, that is, the esoteric teachings of the Upaniṣads, or in other words, Vedānta (the end of the Veda).

Vāc and *Brahman* between affirmation and negation

The Upaniṣads elaborate complex metaphysical speculations in a more straightforward language[17] with regards with the Vedic Vāc or the divine word, in all its forms (inaudible, unarticulated, or articulated), through various associations between speech and the other human faculties, including high philosophical concepts such is self (*Ātman*) or *Brahman*. Thus, Vāc is connected and interrelated to several forms of Divinity such as Gāyatrī, Agni, (Ch.Up[18]. III.13.3, III.18.3, Bṛ.Up. III.9.24, Jai.Up.IV.9.1-2,4), connected or supported by the vital breath (*prāṇa*) (Ch.Up. III.18.2; Taitt.Up. I.7; Jai.Up.I.1.1, I.21.-2) which mutually merged one into another, mind (*manas*) (Ch.Up. IV.3.2-3; Bṛ.Up. I.2.4; Jai.Up.27.17), intelligence (*prajña*) (Bṛ.Up. IV.1.2; I.5.9; Jai.Up.I.40.4, Ch.Up.VII.3.1) space (*ākāśa*) (Jai.Up.I.2). The most compelling assimilation of all is between *Vāc* and *Brahman*. The concept of *Brahman* we deal with in the Upaniṣads has travelled a long way from its meaning in the Vedas. In the Ṛgveda, *bráhman*[19], accented on its first syllable, it refers to a sacred poetic composition, or the hymns, a sacred formulation of truth, a mantra, thus *śabda brahman*, and not as much to the absolute *brahmán*, accented on its last syllable, as it is stated in later Sanskrit, particularly in the Upaniṣads which are building their metaphysical theology around the paradoxical nature of brahman, liable to both a cataphatic and apophatic approach. The *brahmán*, accented on the last "a" is widely accepted in the Vedas as the one who composes the hymn or who knows and masters the Vedic hymns and lore, the formulator of the sacred formulation. As far as the meanings of the term is concerned, Oldenberg (1972:65, vol.II) goes for the aura of magic power that fills the hymn, L.Renou 1943:43, the energy that uses speech to convey the ineffable, and Gonda 1950 the life force or power of the hymn. Regarding the etymology, the general scholarly consensus accepts the root "*bhṛ*" "to increase, to grow" which is in accord with the *Nighaṇṭu* classification of brahman under the terms for food (2.7) (*brahman*

[17] In the sense that is divested of all the metaphors or other figure of speech, literary devices, or other prosody resources to creating poetical image.

[18] The abbreviations for the quoted Upaniṣads are Bṛ.Up. – *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, Ch.Up. – *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, Jai.Up. – J*aiminīya Upaniṣad*, Taitt.Up – *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*)

[19] There is not a full consensus on the etymology of the term. For detailed studies on etymologies and meanings L. Renou & L. Silburn, "Sur la notion de brahman", *Journal Asiatique*, 1949: 7fff Gonda 1950, P. Thieme, *Brahman*, ZDMG 102, 1952: 99-151.

annam) and wealth (2.10) which assumes identification of Brahmanaspāti with Bṛhaspāti as "lord of speech".[20]

The transition of *bráhman* from a form of speech to the absolute is, no doubt, a gradual process based on assimilating layers of semantic development triggered by forces of extraction and abstraction the most distinctive feature which would satisfy the mind's quest for essence and all-encompassing/transcending principle of the phenomenal world. Hence the description, yet the refusal to fit the concept into words. In support of this idea, it can be noted that

> The transference of meaning is no accident; rather it is fundamental to the conception of the identity of speech with the fundamental element of being. That fundamental element has the nature of consciousness, of knowledge, which is expressed in speech. In the fifth century CE, the philosopher of language, Bhartṛhari, makes this identification complete in his concept of śabdabrahman 'speech absolute'.[21]

Reference to two *brahman* (the sacred formulation) can be dated as early as *Maitri Upaniṣad* 6.22: "There are two brahmans to be known, the sound brahman and what is higher than that. Those who know the sound brahman attain the higher Brahman. (*Dve brahmaṇī veditavye śabdabrahma paraṁ ca yat/śabdabrahmaṇi niṣṇātaḥ paraṁ brahmādhigacchati//*).

In Bṛ.Up., the most competitive of all debaters, as well as their acknowledged champion, Yājñavalkya, taking over from Jitvan Śailini, most likely a contemporary renowned theologian or philosopher, explains to king Janaka how *Vāc* is Brahman, nevertheless, at the very end of the section, after further attempts to solving further equations between brahman and life breath (*prāṇa*), sight (*cakṣus*), hearing (*śtrotras*), mind (*manas*), the heart (*hṛdaya*), he concludes that Brahman is rather Ātman and the answer is fulfilled.

> "What constitutes knowledge, Yajñavalkya?" "Speech itself, Your Majesty," he replied. "For surely, Your Majesty, it is through speech that we come to know a counterpart. Ṛgveda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda, the Atharva-Aṅgirāsa, histories, ancient tales, sciences, hidden teachings (*upaniṣad*), verses, aphorism, explanations, and glosses; offerings and oblations; food and drink;

[20] Valuable insights on the meaning, reception, and interpretation of the "brahman/Brahman" in its transition to the *śabda-brahman* is offered by Peter M. Scharf in "Determining the Ancient Vedic Conception of Speech by Samanvaya of hymns of the Ṛgveda" *Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute* 97 (2016):150–185.

[21] P. Scharf (2016: 162). More on the *śabda-tattva brahman* of Bhartṛhari will be dealt with further down.

> this world and the next world; and all beings – it is through speech, your Majesty, that we come to know all these. So clearly, Your Majesty, the highest brahman is speech. What a man knows and venerates it as such, speech never abandons him, and all beings flock to him; he becomes a god and joins the company of gods."[22]

What would also be of interest is to observe that for the first time in the history of thought, in Upaniṣads the limits of language are openly acknowledged. From the theological point of view, the apophatic cry "*Neti! Neti!*" of the Upaniṣadic thinkers is the expression of increasing awareness of the language's limits to comprehensibly comprise and describe the ineffable. Language can, at the most, just point at it. Vāc's powers (*śaktīs*) are unmistakably still there but lay hidden, as it should be to preserve intact the mystic force of the unspoken word.

A way to bridge the unspoken with the spoken is somehow secured by empowering the sacred syllable Oṁ. Midway through inaudible and audible, articulated and unarticulated, in its sonorous expansion and regression, Oṁkāra becomes the symbol of what in Bhartṛhari's words is already an symbol/image (*śabdabrahman - anukāra BK I.5*) of the whole Veda. As a syllable, it becomes the very embodiment of the imperishable syllable (*akṣara*) or principle, which at times acts as a name or epithet for *brahman* itself.

Aiming to salvation while ploughing down the rules: grammar's approach

Grammarians claim to be enquiring into the nature of word and language from the standpoint of the science of language with a purposely custodianship of the sacred language. Acknowledged as one of Veda's ancillary science (*vedāṅga*), vyākaraṇa's purpose is to provide means for insight and truth into the Vedic hymns forms, meaning and hermeneutics[23]. High moral ground as to grammar use and importance comes from the first grammatical commentary available, *Vārttika* of Kātyāyana. Also, in the introduction to the commentary of Ṛgveda, Sāyaṇa tells us how god Bṛhaspati tried to teach Indra the correct words, a very tedious endeavour which took many

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[22] Bṛ.Up. 4.1.1 in *The Early Upaniṣads*. Annotated text and translation Patrick Olivelle. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998),103.

[23] *Paspaśāhnika 2.1 rakṣohāgamalaghvasaṁdehāḥ proyojanam*. The purposes of the grammar are *rakṣā* – the preservation of the Veda, *uha* – the suitable adaptation of Vedic mantras according to the requirements of a particular ritual, *āgama* – following the Vedic tradition, *laghu* – simplicity and economy of the correct grammatical forms, and *asaṁdeha* – the removal of doubts with regards to understanding some Vedic.

thousands of heavenly years, and yet he could not exhaust the whole lot, and therefore he decided to teach Indra grammar instead. Thus, it seems that grammar is the necessary shortcut to master a language. The mystic Vāc meant through riddles or praised in cosmological dimensions in hymns is now restricted to the Vedic usage alone. Of all other names for word, *śabda*[24] which is both sound and signifier is gaining ground and represents the study material of the grammarians.

In the 4th century BC, Pāṇini[25] structures a comprehensive collection of grammatical rules of the correct usage (*sadhu*) of what he recorded as standardised Sanskrit spoken in his time, known as *bhāṣā*, the language of the elites and cultured brahmans (*śiṣṭas*), and also the rules applying to *chandas*, the language of the Vedic hymns. His approach is based on an economic principle of outlining the general rules (*ustarga*) and then offering the exceptions (*apavāda*). In both synchronic and diachronic perspectives, Pāṇini also makes room for marginal, optional, preferred, and dialectal usages of the Sanskrit language he is pinning down in his *lectiones*. The concise sūtra form, the highly specialised metalanguage and techniques used in *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, which must be a result of a significant tradition which produced Pāṇini, resemble more a code machine than a mystical reverie or a metaphysical introspection into the subtleties of the relationship thought – language – reality. Yet, all Pāṇinian commentators, starting with Kātyāyana, the first commentator of Pāṇini, felt it necessary to says lay the stress first and foremost upon the eternality of Sanskrit: "Correct usage of Sanskrit leads to prosperity. This is similar to the correct use of the Vedic expression[26]."

In the same frame of mind, Patañjali states the eternality of the relationship between the object and its verbal form and seeming to purposedly overlook acknowledging the historical development of the language, dialectal differences or particularities clearly shown by Pāṇini and by Yāska. The historical framework appears to be abhorrent to the Indian mind, which feels

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[24] There are also other names to express word – language in the Vedas i.e. *gir, vāṇī*, alongside the over fifty names listed in the *Nigaṇṭu*. Most of the total of fifty-four nouns are names of the metres, or variants to express sounds. Out of all these, *śabda* (which means both sound and significant (*vācaka*) prevails over and builds a successful conceptual career in the theory and the philosophy of language. To start with, the verbal testimony (*śabda pramāṇa*) of the Mīmāṁsa philosophers and the word-principle (*śabda tattva*) of the 5th century AD grammarian-philosopher Bhartṛhari are the earliest and the most productive ones in terms of commentaries and polemics.

[25] Pāṇini makes a great use of the fourteen aphorisms called *pratyāhāra-sutrāṇi* or *akṣara-samāmnāya*, which are technically devised to arrange the sounds of Sanskrit in such a way that allows many possible combinations and permutations. The tradition claims that the sūtras were revealed to Pāṇini by Śiva himself, beating his drum fourteen times.

[26] *Vārttika* 9 *śāstra-pūrvake prayoge'bhyudayas tat tulyaṁ veda-śabdena*.

so much right in a self-equal continuum, always ready to validate and justify any change or act in perfect keeping with established, mainstream Vedic paradigms. This attitude certainly applies to the grammarians who have never dwelled consistently on its historical changes although aware of language evolution. M. Deshpande summarises the opinion that a moderate, mixed attitude can as well be considered a possibility.

> …that the grammarians were actually aware of the facts of the linguistic changes, historical or otherwise, and yet, for reasons other than grammatical, they maintained the doctrine of eternal Sanskrit, and then tried as best as they could to accommodate the facts of linguistic change within the parameters of this dominant paradigm. A more judicious statement may be concerning this situation that the language did change somewhat, and that the grammarian were aware of some changes, but also made some modifications to their linguistic theory. But they did not change their basic paradigm. They only added new epicycles to the old paradigm to accommodate the newly emerging situation"[27]

Ignoring the historical changes or the dialectal differences could not have been the right attitude for a learned grammarian whose expertise will help the grammatical tradition to grant him the status of a sage[28] (*trimuni*). Yet, acknowledging those as possible historical, or usage forms and even more placing all of it under the generous parasol of unaccountable and unexplored changing possibilities of the eternal language is perfectly honourable.

A step forward to ensure the validity of the paradigm of Sanskrit as a divine/ eternal language was to account for the fact that all usage or historical were changes valid as long as, from the purely grammatical point of view they were correct, not corrupted, and thus capable of generating merit by knowing and employing them (Deshpande 1985). Merit is, therefore the main concern, and it seems to apply both to the Vedic as well as common (*laukika*) words provided are used on their correct, grammatical form[29].

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[27] M. Deshpande, "Historical Change and the Theology of Eternal Sanskrit," *Zeitschrift Für Vergleichende Sprachforschung* 98, no. 1 (1985): 126.

[28] The grammatical tradition refers to Pāṇini, Kātyāyana and Patañjali as the three sages (*trimuni*).

[29] *Paspaśāhnika* 4.84 *lokato'rthaprayukte śabda-prayoge śāstreṇa dharma-niyamaḥ* "When (it is assumed that the use of words is occasioned by the thing-meant, on account of the usage of) the people, grammar provides a restriction (on the use of words) for the sake of dharma"; 7.86 *evaṃ ihāpi samānāyām arthagatau śabdena capaśabdena ca dharmaniyamaḥ kriyate. śabdenaivārtha'bhidheyo nāpaśabdenety evaṁ kriyamānam abhydayakāri bhavatīti.* "In the same way, here also when meaning can be understood equally from correct words and incorrect words, a restriction is made for dharma, namely, that meaning is to be conveyed by correct words only, not by incorrect words (because) if it is being done in this way (the use of words) leads to *abhyudaya* (happiness in the form of the svarga)".

Language's natural or conventional character is one of the most important issues of Indian linguistics, which is entertained mostly by Mīmāṁsā and Nyāyā schools followed closely by the atomist-physicist school Vaiśeṣika, and obviously by grammar[30]. The ritualistic Mīmāṁsā[31] school of thought is the strong defender of the natural, innate character of language (*auttpatika*)[32]. As the Veda is revealed and inspired to sages (*apauruṣeya*), the origin of language also cannot be ascribed to any mythical founder, for if there had been any, the Tradition would have recorded him.

On the other hand, the Nyāyā-Vaiśeṣika schools are not too keen to accept a natural character of language, preferring the convention to it. However, the logicians, as well as Vaiśeṣika philosophers, do not consider language in its divine outcome but rather as a semiotic system. For them, language (*śabda*) is thelast to come in a list of the means of valid knowledge (pramāṇa).

> The word is a type of inference; it is not another means of valid knowledge. Why it is so? [It is so] because the thing is inferred from the word. How it is inferable? It's said that is inferable since it is not known through direct perception (*pratyakṣa*), as it is not known [directly] from its sign, but only by association with its sign it is known correctly thereafter through the correct knowledge of the word. In this way the word is inferable.[33]

For the grammarians, starting with Patañjali, the relation between word and meaning is eternally established[34] rather on account of a divine origin of

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[30] Grammar was always seen playing a subordinated position, as an ancillary limb of the *Veda* (*vedāṅga*). But at times, given the contribution of some great grammarians such as the 5th century Bhartṛhari, grammar is "raised" to the status of a *darśana*, view endorsed by some philosophers such is Mādhavācarya. In his *Sarva darśana saṁgraha,* the 12th century Dvaita philosopher, discusses in the 13th chapter *Pāṇini Darśana* mainly the Bhartṛhari's system of thought.

[31] The *mīmāṃsākas* claimed supremacy over any other philosophical schools to preserve and correctly extract the meaning of the *Veda*s. Their knowledge, known otherwise as the science dealing with Vedic phrases interpretations (*vākyārtha śāstra)*, grew mostly around producing the meanings and procedures of rituals laid down by the Vedic injunctions but it did not go any further than that. For the *mīmāṃsākas*, the Veda is authorless (*apauruṣeya*), revealed and heard by the poet-visionaries (*ṛṣis*).

[32] *Autpattika* is derived from *utpatti*, a feminine noun which means "birth, creation, origin" with the help of a secondary suffix (*taddhita*). Thus, the relation between word and its meaning was produced *illo tempore*.

[33] *Nyāya Bhāṣa* II.1 50-52 *śabdo'numānaṁ na pramāṇāntaram/ śabdārthasyānumeyatvāt/katham anumeyatvam/pratyakṣo'nupalabdheḥ/yathānupalabbhyamāno liṇgī mitena liṁgena paścanmīyata ityānumānam evam mitena śabdena paścānmīyate'rtho'nupalabhyamāna ityanumānam/ ityāścānumānam śabdaḥ/.*

[34] *Paspaśāhnika 3: siddhe śabdārtha sambandhe* (given the eternal relation between the word and its meaning), which is one of the major topic that is found even in Kātyāyana's *Vārttika* and then discussed thereafter in the *Mahābhāṣya* of Patañjali.

language than a convention device. They do not question it in the fashion the other mentioned philosophers do but focus mostly on the grammatical techniques and terminology, which is, otherwise, the grammar's main concern. Before Patañjali, Kātyāyana has also firmly ascertained the innate relationship between the word / the certain sounds sequence form (*vācaka*) / signifier and the object denoted (*artha*) / signified, but also acknowledged it from the perspective of gaining merit as the most important role of the grammar.

> While the relationship between words and meanings is established by the usage in the world (of a certain expression) to denote a certain meaning, the science of grammar makes a regulation concerning the religious merit (produced by the use of words), as is commonly done in worldly conventions and Vedic rituals.[35]

These are the premises[36] that are put forward and made manifest as the unique acceptable mind set of further enquiries and analysis into the various grammatical domains. There is also another strong hint at it. Patañjali himself explains that he uses the word *siddhe* (perfectly established) with a very good reason at the back of his mind, i.e., for the sake of receiving blessing (*maṅgalam*) before embarking upon the considerable effort of commenting upon Pāṇini's sūtras. Therefore, admitting this eternal character of Sanskrit as well as taking painstaking efforts to ensure the correctness (*sādhutva*), purification of the word (*śabdasaṁskāra*) and constant clearing out of all the corrupted grammatical forms of the language (*apaśabda*) is said to be merit generating. The correct grammatical forms are known only to gods (*suras*), whereas demons (*asuras*) do not, and therefore they can be defeated, as the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* story tell that instead pronouncing *he'arayaḥ*, *he'rayaḥ* they have wrongly uttered *he'lavaḥ*, *he'lavaḥ* which incurred their defeat[37].

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[35] Vārttika 1 *siddhe śabdārtha saṁbandhe lokato'rtha-prayukte śāstreṇa dharmaniyamaḥ.*

[36] It is a very common attitude of the old to put all effort to dissuade any chance of being at fault or guilty of any hubris. Any embodiment of power should be propitiated to secure its benign action.

[37] In another passage of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (I.2.4.6-11), the story goes that the demons who enter a competition with gods about giving pairs of words could not come up with the feminine form of numeral five (*pañca*), as in Sanskrit from five onwards the ordinal numeral has only one form for both masculine and feminine, and thus, the demons, not so competent in grammar, lost the competition and were defeated. The story is used to describe the Prayāja (Fore ritual), where the sacrificer imitates the gods, and his enemies are the demons. Correct employment of the accent is nonetheless important. Any mistake or misuse of the accent place becomes a thunderbolt in the form of speech and kills the performer as it happened to Tvaṣṭṛ demon who wanted a son to kill Indra (*índra-śatru* = slayer of Indra). By accenting the first syllable (*udātta*), instead of accenting the last syllable, to that demon was born a son, Vṛtta, who instead of killing, was killed by Indra (*indra-śatrú* = killed by Indra) (Taittirīya Saṁhitā 11.4.12.1).

Several centuries elapse between the great commentary on *Aṣṭādhyāyī* and further endorsement on the idea of grammar securing merit (*dharma*) and celestial happiness that is made by the unique 5th century CE grammarian-philosopher Bhartṛhari. There is even more to it, a new dimension which is certainly anchored in the Vedic heritage. To Bhartṛhari, grammar and by implication the Sanskrit grammar is "the door of salvation" (*dvaram apavargasya* VP I.14), "the best of all austerities, the one that is nearest to Brahman" (*āsannam brahmaṇas tasya tapasām uttamaṁ tapaḥ* VP I.11) and the "first step in the ladder leading to liberation; this is the straight royal road for all those who desire salvation"[38]. Bhartṛhari manifesto that supreme brahman is one the same as the word-brahman is clearly stated at the very beginning of his Vākapadīya, in the section called programmatically *Brahmakāṇḍa*.

> That without the beginning or end is Brahman, the Principle of Word-Speech, which is imperishable, and it manifests itself in the state of things, from which the world proceeds to evolve. Although he is thought as one, he appears divisible because of his powers, and [although] his powers are not distinctive, he manifests as if they are distinctive; that whose six types of modification such as birth etc., depend upon the power of time, they being the source of different type of existences, that whose unity, One, the seed of all [is perceived] as multiple: the agent, the object and the action, that for which the Veda is a means of attainment and a symbol. Although it is one, the great sages transmitted distinctively in different traditions[39].

The verses concentrate the gist of Bhartrhari's philosophical position, that is without any trace of doubt a firm adhesion to a structural monistic principle of a world of many names and forms. Echoes of the Vedic formula and mantra are easily recognisable. Echoes or of the Upanisadic assimilation or ultimate identity between self (*ātman*) and *brahman* are also read in its verses. How are we supposed to achieve realization of this supreme world principle that transcends the world being also its source and cause, expansion and point of absorption all in a cyclic wave like a particle (as the movement of an atom according to the quantum physics) little we are told and in

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[38] *VP I 16 idam ādyam padasthānaṁ siddhiṣopānapravaṇām/iyaṁ sā mokṣamāṇānām ajihmā rājapaddhatiḥ/* K.A. Subramanya Iyer translation, 1966.

[39] BK I 1-5 *anādinidhanaṁ brahma śabdatattvaṁ yad akṣaram/vivartate'rthabhāvena prakriyā jagato yataḥ//ekam eva yadāmnātaṁ bhinnaśaktivyapāśrayāt/apṛthaktve'pi śaktibhyaḥ pṛthaktveneva vartate//adhyāhitakalāṁ yasya kālaśaktim upāśritāḥ/janmādayo vikārāḥ ṣaḍ bhāvabhedasya yonayaḥ//ekasya sarvabījasya yasya ceyam anekadhā/bhoktṛbhoktavyarūpeṇa bhogarūpeṇa ca stithiḥ/prāptyupāyo'nukāraś ca tasya vedo maharṣibhiḥ/eko'py anekavartmeva samāmnātaḥ pṛthak pṛthak//.*

words that bear certain resemblance with the Vedic riddles or metaphorical description of what could be otherwise very technical but confided to certain traditions purposedly hidden from plain view[40]? "Therefore, word purification (*śabdasaṁskāra*) is the means of realisation of Supreme Ātman. For the who knows the truth of the employment of [the word] principle of its action attains immortal Brahman".[41] It is still all very philosophical and linguistic in a language that is from the realm of gods, yet there are no theological claims as theology is not Bhartṛhari' concern.

The same, yet another (*mutatis mutandis*) or continuity and change

The very few quotes above of works heavily loaded with praise for the divine and salvific values of Sanskrit[42] are but very few of the many examples down the centuries employed to illustrate its acclaimed divine and idiosyncratic character. Under Ashoka's reign, Buddhism was spread through missionary expeditions across the Indian subcontinent. Fortunately, in Sri Lanka, Buddha's teachings gathered as *Tipiṭaka* canon were committed to writing as early as 1st century BC, but in India, the Buddhist monks express themselves in Sanskrit. Jain monks are the only one that for some centuries resist the pressure to write their religious and philosophical works in Sanskrit. Since the 4th century CE till the 13th century CE, more and more inscriptions in Sanskrit appeared in the Indian subcontinent. They can now be found in far distant places as Vietnam, Cambodia, or Indonesia, and unmistakeably can be taken for an expression of the political power. Besides epigraphic evidence, schools of Sanskrit, numerous scholars, and their impressive and numerous literary works produced in the whole subcontinent led to an *état d'affaire* which rightly and aptly is termed as 'Sanskrit Cosmopolis' (S. Pollock, 1996, 2000, 2006). Sanskrit acts clearly as a link-language (Aklujkar 1996, Kelly 1996) or lingua franca between theologians and philosophers across India and Indian subcontinent, retaining once more its elitist marks. Languages of the Indian subcontinent belonging to a family other than Indo-European, drew heavily on Nāgarī/Devanāgarī to create their own writing and Indian metrics are used in Khmer language literary works as early as 10th century CE. Indian

[40] F. Dobre Brat, Śabda saṁskāra, a mere grammatical technique?" *Proceedings of the International Symposium The Book.Romania.Europe* (2010): 493-501.

[41] VP I 144 *tasmad yah śabdasaṁskaraḥ sa siddhiḥ parātamanaḥ/tasya pravṛttitvajans brahman aśnute*/ Translation J.E.M Houben, 1995.

[42] Obviously, the Vedic hymns I refer to in this paper are not in Sanskrit, but I use Sanskrit by extension (and in accord with other scholars' opinion) as a sui-generis term that covers a millennial linguistic tradition extending until the present day.

prosody seem also to have been used in Thailand, as it is shown in a Pāli inscription and a text in Thai with reference to the Pali text Vuttodara. The men in power of the Dravidian languages states made also generous cultural allowances for the usage of Sanskrit as it is shown on many bilingual (Sanskrit – Tamil) inscriptions plenty during the Coḷa dynasty (10 – 13 century CE) in south India. Works on Sanskrit grammar are composed in distant places such as Java where it is preserved. All these examples[43] are but a few glimpses into what Sanskrit meant for centuries on end: a distinguished, refined and elitist sociocultural-linguistic code never imposed, but always pursued.

The foundation of Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1784 marked the beginning of a new era for Sanskrit in many ways, from the systematic comparative Indo-European studies and linguistics turning to an increasing awareness of Sanskrit as a repository of an immensely valuable literary, artistic, and scientific works. Under certain forces stirred up by the colonial period, an acute sense of nationalism surged out during the 19th and early 20th century. As Sanskrit was used as a symbol of Hindu identity (Hindutva), no efforts were spared towards undertaking consistent promotion and popularisation of Sanskrit language and literature, known as Sanskritization, as well as promoting a sanskritized Hindi and other Indian vernaculars.

In today's India, Sanskrit is largely taught and promoted at many levels under many institutions, from the few traditional gurukulas or pathaśālas remaining to universities, research centres, and even on the political agenda. It is one of the twenty-two scheduled languages so recognized by the Indian constitution. Sanskrit language legacy continues and rightly so to be looked upon with utmost respect and reverence. Its legacy named as the language of gods (*gīrvāṇa-bhāratī*) is strongly felt, but under the urge to uphold its greatness and sacredness, its very essence is sadly forgotten[44] or sacrificed to new gods rising in power.

[43] For which systematic presentation, I am indebted to J.E.M. Houben and his Introduction (to) *Ideology and Status of Sanskrit: Contributions to the History of the Sanskrit Language*, ed. J.E.M. Houben, (Leiden, New York, Köln: Brill, 1996), 10-12, reprint New Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 2012.

[44] Contemporary efforts of Sanskrit revival are seldom heavily political biased and used as an instrument of shaping sharp identities. Sanskrit can become a powerful weapon but at the price of losing its purity and its grammatical correctitude much to the grief of scholars. G.U.Thite (2016: 200) touches on the current state of propagating Sanskrit language in a somewhat disenchanted tone. "Really speaking there is a lot of pollution in Sanskrit today. The writers write in Sanskrit without proper knowledge of the Grammar and prosody in Sanskrit. The proportion of grammatical mistakes is impossible to measure. In this situation it is very difficult to call this Sanskrit. It is ghost-Sanskrit." He emphasizes particularly on nowadays lack of care and refinement which is ultimately the very core, "the soul" of this "refined" = *sanskṛt* language.

Conclusions

In Vedic and classical India, the divine word (*Daivi Vāk*) can be approached and analysed as a topic of study from several points of view: poetical, philosophical and theological. The Vedic hymns about word and speech are copious, resourceful, challenging, mind-blowing and puzzling. The sacerdotal literature of the Saṁhitās extends and deepens the perspective on sacred word by bringing out and organising into complex instructions, patterns and traditions the relations and interpretations between Word/Speech, which is now more and more assimilated to goddess Sarasvatī and other divinities in order to secure the effective performance of ritual which is speech-based. The Upaniṣadic thought aims at more abstract layers of thought where the Word and Speech is seen as possibly describing and identifying with the supreme Brahman, the ultimate Principle, but without exhausting it. The prominent Sanskrit grammarians Pāṇini, Kātyāyana and Patañjali, in their monumental works left a standard refined language, i.e. Sanskrit, called *bhāṣa*, which succeeded in preserving across centuries its refinement prestige and became the lingua franca of the cultural elites not only of Brahmanical expressions but also of other religious orientations. Bhartṛhari, the 5th century CE grammarian-philosopher, restores the Vedic tradition of the mystic *Vāc*. With him, the fundamentals of divine word re-interpretation are laid out. For centuries after, further introspections and meditations on the nature of the divine word were more or less identical to inquiring into the status and role of Sanskrit itself against the other Indo-Aryan languages of the subcontinent languages which evolved into modern Indian vernaculars.

The divine aspect of Vedic and Sanskrit, the language of the sūtras and of the extensive commentarial and epic literature based on the Vedas is undoubtedly part of the well-constructed hierarchical structure of the Brahmanical society from top to bottom[45]. Thanks to the earnest custody of the Brahmanical priesthood and scholarship and its active role in the oral and written transmission, Sanskrit has become the symbol and enduring image of the divine word in its excellence and power.

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[45] In a more and more technological society, the religious imprints in form of rituals (*pūjas*) are undeniable landmarks of the Hindu society. Any mantra in Sanskrit that to very many remains beyond their grasp of lexical or semantical understanding is highly esteemed and looked upon with profound veneration and respect. It's like wearing an amulet or a token from a pilgrimage which empowers the devotee.

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Dislocated Positions of Bearing Witness: From Historical Self to Revelation

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Abstract

This paper analyses the relationship between lack and possibilities of bearing witness in a "posthistorical" context. We wanted to see how discussions about indeterminacy and testimony change the way in which we understand possibilities of truth in relation to the speaking subject. The limit of the language of testimony and memory generate experiences of incompleteness and inadequacy which make us negotiate the position of the subject between an impossible historical truth and the non-discursive truth of revelation. We argue that the resistance to representation which drives the language of testimony reflects the improper position of the witness or between historicity and existence or between attention and inattention. There is always an already lost historical event that we have to testify for and that foreshadows possibilities of significance. The witness can only generate discourse from inside a dislocated position which also describes the layered discursive structure of revelation.

Keywords: testimony, memory, loss, representation, revelation

We have to place the discussion about testimony inside the post-industrial world in a postmodern context where history has already been defined as "a lost referential" (Jean Baudrillard). In order to refer to this nostalgia for a lost referential we would like to employ the term "post-historical" which illustrates the idea of a retrospective dimension of our historic present. Baudrillard talks about cinema in order to show that the ways in which we portray and perceive the "historical real" betray the hidden logic of the disappearance of history in its representation. We found the term post-history appropriate as it contains the nuance of disappearance and discontinuity, underlying our indebtedness towards a missed "real" or a missed discourse at the centre of our cultural meanings. Cultural memory with its empty representations and floating symbols points to the idea that we can no longer talk about bearing witness to history itself, but

about the attempt to testify for the idea of what Giorgio Agamben calls "the time that remains". Our possibilities of bearing witness are no longer tied to the idea of a linear time that follows a scheme of progress, but to the feeling of a silent and closed figure of history which is still present through its marked and projected losses. Concepts of absence, lack and loss are fundamental to the discussion about the possibilities of testimony which are now drawing their forces not from the "the props of memory that prompt recall,"[1] but from the internal and public relationship of discourse with loss. For Stephan Feuchtwang, the objects that have been created to mark loss work "as screens for other senses of loss" and have their "own conditions of existence as an ordering practice."[2] We want to argue that such mentioned icons of loss also construct a different phenomenology of testimony inside which we can no longer bear witness from inside the retrieved position of a historical "I," but from "beyond" the subject or from a transcendental position outlined by the fundamental recognition of historical loss as personal dislocation. The already lost historical event that we have to testify for foreshadows possibilities of significance and the witness can only generate discourse from inside a dislocated position which marks subjective disruption. Techniques of distortion in arts point to this idea of embodying the missed discourse as long as the language of memory reveals its incompleteness as a gesture of remembrance. Literary geographies try to paint the picture of this incomplete inner space of inheritance that also reflects the gaps of cultural memory and the frailties of our symbolically mapped common "space". After examining the language of testimony and the language of revelation as hollow structures we will turn our attention to fiction writing and particularly to W. G. Sebald, a writer that uses the language of traces and lost references to talk about history. What the languages of testimony and silent traces do have in common is the sense of incompleteness or the geography of vacant realities that makes room for the perception of rests and the *adjacent* as part of the experience of revelation.

The project of a culture that could be based on memory, retention and representation has failed and our testimonial language is no longer thought only in relation to the subject, to the memorable and the visible, but also in relation to the erasure of the subject and the non-memorable. Testimony has already been discussed as an impossible position after the Second World War and memory is no longer seen as "recuperation". For Levinas, our encounter with the past is always mediated by a surplus of the trace that cannot be retained in a concept or fully inscribed in the

[1] Stephan Feuchtwang, "Loss: transmissions, recognitions and authorisations," in *Regimes of Memory*, ed. Katherine Hodgkin & Susannah Radstone (London: Routledge, 2003), 76.

[2] Feuchtwang, "Loss," 77.

self[3]. This excess gives voice to the speaking subject and makes direct and indirect witnessing possible. A certain rest or excess which eludes us is the underlying silent awareness that accompanies the linguistic shape of testimony. We want to argue that this residue or this lingering 'indeterminable' marks our relationship to the self as threshold between the possibility of testifying and the absent testimony inscribed in us. Derrida also thinks about testimony in terms of undecidability, because testimony is a unique alliance between the secret and the instant. According to Derrida, discourse bears the limit of that which refuses itself to testimony because of the uniqueness of the secret and the singularity of the instant. This relation to the instant conjures testimony and we can only bear witness to the absence of attestation, to the secret itself, recognizing, at the same time, the universality of that secret that becomes infinitely public through the workings of testimony. Thus, for Derrida, testimony constructs itself around an absence, around a secret which we testify for, but which is never fully revealed. For Agamben, the subject is a fracture between the living being and the discursive being, testimony springing from the ways in which man inhabits his own *non-place* and thus reconnects being with logos. The witness has to speak in the name of the dead, although he is a survivor. The discursive being triumphs over the silence of the dead and the witness has to tell the story from beyond himself paradoxically watching the story unfold as if it were his own, witnessing the replacement itself. That is why Agamben talks about imposture and the manner in which testimony is also built on the ruined voice of the dead other inside us. All these concepts associated with the idea of testimony (excess, undecidability, imposture) emphasize the fact that testimony is not only made possible by certain mechanisms of writing or saying, but by the way in which we can reassemble loss without completely substituting it with representational memory. Thus, we could also argue that testimony is the language of the unmemorable, the language of the residue or that of an uncertainty that opposes itself to the coherent experience of reality. As Bernard-Donals puts it, "the moment of saying disrupts history to the extent that it throws open the moments we'd try to recollect, and forces our attention to what can't be remembered or said."[4] All these conceptualizations of the dissonant position of the subject that bears witness to history (or to reality itself) take into consideration the limits of language and the idea of a silent distinct testimony that contains the fragmentary

[3] Emmanuel Levinas, *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence* (Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1974).

[4] Michael Bernard-Donals, *Forgetful Memory: Representation and Remembrance in the Wake of the Holocaust* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2009), 23.

ones. The limits of language open the discussion about a different metabolizing logic of loss. Thus, this adjacent second testimony that incorporates loss is what Alfred North Whitehead would call "the judgment of a tenderness that loses nothing that can be saved."[5]

If we understand testimony as springing from the failure of representation or from the resistance to memory and language, we will need to ask ourselves whether we can bear witness to that which is "inter-said" or to that which we cannot represent. Sometimes the "inter-said" overwrites our own pre-written witnessing position in the world and makes testimony possible only as a dislocation of the subject. This dislocation of the witnessing self creates a certain temporality of the interval inside which the distance between personal memory and nobody's memory, between the memorable and the non-memorable opens up the space of revelation. For Edith Wyschogrod, the breaks in historical narratives or the blank spaces in conventional stories "are the placeholders of revelation, a kind of white light that, unlike the formulae that announce them, illuminate the events recounted without ever becoming the focus of visibility."[6] Everything that is exterior to the narrative, because it has been lost or because it has not been mentioned, constitutes a space of revelation, where the past is always illuminated by a different concealed dimension of thought. We can argue that testimony is linked to revelation because they both rely on the experience of history and the self as fragment. That which cannot be contemplated articulates itself in the language of testimony as the ruin of representation. The language of testimony draws its force from that which cannot be expressed although it might be part of the witness's experience. Bearing witness becomes the condition in which the 'I' reconstructs histories not around the sense of self, but around an absence which cannot be inscribed. This absence might be related to the resistance of the other, to the impossibility of linking nobody's memory to the idea of personal memory or to the experience of the event as a disconnected fragment.

As we have argued, the language of testimony is articulated by the dislocation of the position of a central subject that can bear witness to the visible or testify for the invisible. Nowadays, when history is no longer experienced as event, but as an always mediated configuration of an "aftermath" of "grand narratives," the 'I' can no longer bear witness to his own present from inside a situated historical position, but rather from beyond himself, substituting the already missed discourse with his own dislocated voice. The missed discourse and the "hyperreal" (Baudrillard) that this

[5] Alfred North Whitehead, *Process and reality: An Essay in Cosmology* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1929), 490.

[6] Edith Wyschogrod, *Dwelling with Negatives* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006), 250.

sense of a lost "real" generates actually creates the post-traumatic and post-historical conditions of bearing witness. The obsession with representational memory and symbolic capital is a reflection of the need for totality (or an overarching testimony) as a reminiscence of the lost idea of eternity which surrounded historical time in the pre-modern frame of mind. Thus, if eternity can no longer foreshadow testimonial possibilities in the modern world, the subject can only have the experience of temporality as an unredeemed rest of the "time that remains." The possibility of revelation no longer springs from the idea of historical time that participates in eternity, but it is rather related to an isolated experience of the rest and the adjacent which actually tears us from historical time. The sense of a missing feature and the acknowledged missed discourse in all our gestures of remembrance or testimony create the forms of attention that break the "hyperreal" and find the language of revelation as an issolated rest of historical time.

Another argument for the conception of a dislocated position of the witness comes from the idea that we do not bear witness to our own private worlds, but to the common, shared world as we move from the sense of private self to the impersonal that conveys possibilities of testifying. As Merleau-Ponty shows, we cannot witness the world as spectators, because "it is not a synthesis," but a metamorphosis of appearances that results from the way in which perception both enters and withdraws corporeally from the world[7]. The world is always in and behind the body, inside and around the other and that is why attention and witnessing are also an "experience of the flesh" that cannot remain only the experiences of my private world, but they become "windows" of a private world that is no longer mine. "The propagation of my most secret life in another"[8] creates the possibility of witnessing one sole world. We are not testifying only for our own private worlds, but we are actually bearing witness to the erasure of our private world as it becomes a shared world. We could argue that the historical subject is also marked by this lack of a private world, formulating possibilities of bearing witness as he fails to integrate the common world, the general world. Witnessing is also a passage from the private to the impersonal as we are also talk about that which the 'I' can no longer see by means of perception, but by means of an already formulated world of the other. The concept of the modern witness also contains a crisis of the self as discourse springs from the lacunae inside the self, meaning from the place where the world of the other begins.

A rich phenomenological tradition concerns itself with the study of the question of interior time which is separate or even opposed to historical

[7] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 8.

[8] Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, 11.

or objective time[9]. For Husserl, internal time is very much linked to the disappearance of the sensory stimulus and the possibility to elaborate this disappearance that marks our internal time consciousness[10]. Time does not constitute itself as a linear collection of lost perceptions that have become recollections, but it draws on the relation created between the new possibilities of recollection and the already existing internal layers of remembered experiences. Temporality springs from the tension between that lost sensation and an idea about the future that fantasy can draw out of this already lost past. Bergson was also preoccupied with this idea of an interior time understood as duration or as that tension of becoming which is separate from objective time[11]. We could argue that the split between internal time and objective time defines our possibilities of bearing witness to the world based on the continuities and discontinuities that we draw between interior and external time. According to Samuel Beckett, there is a distinction made by Proust between that kind of memory which is governed by the laws of habit and that which can be recorded by our own *inattention*. This is yet another example of the way in which not only phenomenology, but also literature tried to explore the idea of an internal time that cannot be accounted for through the traditional idea of memory as internal storage. We could argue that this phenomenological tradition did not simply understood interior time in terms of personal memory, but tried to look for a different internal time that can be found by looking at the space between recollections or at that missed time we are not conscious of. We could say that internal time can be also seen as the presence of that "another" time inside our own temporal awareness. Interior time understood as the time in-between recollections or that "another" time inside our perceptions of temporality is fundamental to our discussion about testimony. Bearing witness draws our attention not only to the voice of the other inside us, but also to the voice of this interior opposing time inside ourselves which opens that distinct temporality marking our relation to the unsaid and to the workings of inattention. In other words, the language of testimony is also made possible by that time that is improper to the self although it is our most intimate experience of time (the time of inattention).

Absence and erasure play a fundamental role inside the folded structure of testimony. As we have seen, each testimony has to face time as disappearance, bearing a discursive orientation towards sealing out the trace of existence. Testimony re-tells the time of disappearance by covering the

[9] Bill Schwarz, "'Already the past': memory and historical time," in *Regimes of Memory*, ed. Katherine Hodgkin & Susannah Radstone (London: Routledge, 2003), 142.

[10] Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology of Internal Time-Consciousness*, trans. James S. Churchill (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), 33.

[11] Henri Bergson, *Durée et simultanéité* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968), 41.

empty space between existence as presence and life as vanishing impression with the narrative of survival, memory and transformation. This narrative of counter-oblivion marks a distinct idea of eternity as resistance to temporality and not as an 'after' or 'beyond' temporality. Thus, we could say that the language of testimony always negotiates the bridge between temporality and eternity starting from the idea of discontinuity. Testimony springs from inside the split, the void or the discontinuity between temporality and eternity. Alfred North Whitehead understands time not as an experience of the lasting objects, but as a reflection of an ongoing re-ordering created by the dialectics of temporality and eternity, actuality and potentiality[12]. Eternal objects have their own trajectory into the universe of actual things. The time of disappearance that we talked about becomes for Whitehead a time of process and becoming which always bears witness to wreckage and ruins as shadows of an emerging re-ordering of the temporal into the eternal. Inside this logic, we could say that each thing has its own way of disappearing which is actually a distinct way of appearing. Thus, we could claim that the language of testimony encompasses the unconscious belief in a metamorphosis of loss that aims at eternity. Absence, loss, disappearance are the sights through which the language of testimony develops its symbolic structure that opens towards a space „beyond" the real, a space of memory's incompleteness, a space of gaps and eternity. The division between temporality and eternity encapsulated in the symbolic structure of testimony is also expressed by the separation between the self that remembers the loss and the remembering discourses that the self uses to talk about experience.

Testimony gives us the possibility to speak on behalf of this countervoice and this inner counter-time that opposes itself to history and creates that dislocation that confronts us with the improper and the impersonal inside us. The necessity to speak springs from this sensation of a time which contradicts our attention and our possibilities of retention, writing the narrative from the margins of this destitute place of the subject. This impersonal is defined by Lévinas as that "il y a," which is neither subject nor noun[13]. The "il y a" lies at the foundation of existence as anonymous vigilance marking that site of indistinctness from which the subject emerges as person. In our opinion, the "il y a" conjures that absence of an author, testimony and confession stemming from this need of replacing the absence of an author with the subject that speaks by drawing a passage through the impersonal. In historiography, this impersonal which calls for testimony is the "other" as absence. For Michel de Certeau, writing history means to encompass that separation between the past and the present, between the "other"

[12] Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 54.

[13] Emmanuel Lévinas, *Le temps et l'autre* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1991), 25.

as presence and the "other" as absence and between discourse and the body[14]. Thus, writing history breaks the realm of knowledge from the immensity of the unknown and fills each page by withdrawing presence and conjuring absence. The silent body supports historical discourse and becomes the morphological ruin of consciousness. The language of testimony uncovers this silent body and places it in the position of an irretrievable beginning of a lost reality. As Van der Heiden argues, "the problem is not so much that the human might have two voices, but rather that these two voices cannot be separated in any strict sense. Somehow, the theoretical division of the articulate and inarticulate voice cannot do justice to the human reality that the inarticulate voice speaks in the articulate voice."[15] We could argue that this points to the idea of the lost unit of the self which speaks from inside this impossible totalization that opens the subject to the possibility of revelation that starts as a sense of incompleteness or a sense of the improper and division. As Van der Heiden proved, continental philosophy's account of testimony has always struggled to bear witness to bare existence. Thus, philosophy has always understood the source of testimony as the attempt to speak for that realm which is beyond language, representation and symbolization. Bare existence lies at the core of the speaking subject who can never find that complete discourse which would integrate that rest of existence which transgresses narrative, erases discourse and always confronts us as that pure nakedness which renders the world incoherent. For Maurice Blanchot, the possibility of language itself is linked to the erasure of the presence of the self and its evasive linguistic reality which stands for the absence of being[16]. The language of testimony makes us bear witness not only to the absence of the other, but also to that absence of being among the symbolic order of language.

The ideas of bearing witness to bare existence and to the absence of being seem to lead to what Jean-Luc Marion would call the impossibility of constituting a horizon that leads back to an I[17]. In other words, that embedded impossible language of testimony points to that "saturated phenomenon" inside which we experience the "failure to objectivize" as unconditioned openness to revelation. "The witness plays his part in the interval between, on the one hand the indisputable and incontestable excess of lived intuition and, on the other, the never-compensated lack of the concepts that would render this experience an objective experience."[18] Through the

[14] Michel de Certeau, *L'Écriture de l'histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975), 9.

[15] Gert-Jan Van der Heiden, *The Voice of Misery: A Continental Philosophy of Testimony* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2019), 35.

[16] Maurice Blanchot, *La part du feu* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), 327.

[17] Jean-Luc Marion, *The Visible and the Revealed*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968), 31.

[18] Marion, *The Visible and the Revealed*, 143.

disagreement between the subjective conditions of experience and its excess we remain the workers of truth, but we are no longer its producers, because we do not bear witness to ourselves, but to a certain lack of representation in us which marks the transgression of our subjective horizon. The truth of testifying is no longer concealed in the self's discourse, but in the self's impossible language of revelation. We can notice that this understanding of testimony no longer points to the human subject as a bearer of truth, but paints the speaking subject as a "worker of truth"[19] inside this multiple instances of incomprehensibility. We could argue that the witness can only remain a "worker of truth" by playing out that dislocation which places him both at the center and at the margins of language, opening the possibility of revelation.

How can testimony account for particularity inside narratives of history? Particularity seems to belong to a politics of the rest inside narratives which try to render an image of the past. We want to argue that singularity cannot be addressed and conjured by means of available images of the historical past. Singularity is evoked by those instances in which the language of testimony calls upon forgetting and upon what has been lost in order to catch a glimpse of the radical singular experiences which left a mark upon language and significance, but which were not inscribed inside collective memory's discourses. The language of testimony accounts for the singularity of experiences inside images of the past by means of a poetics of traces which influence language and the creation of meaning. The workings of testimony are best illustrated by literature. Literature is in fact the field inside which the limits of bearing witness, the possibilities of testifying for what has been lost and the split position of the witnessing self are actually negotiated. We shall thus turn our attention to the ways in which the late 20th century novel tried to deal with the "impossible" representational memory or testimony that we have been talking about. The language of testimony is completely redefined in the postmodern world in which the post-historical condition has emerged together with the idea of an impossible truth and a different condition for the possibility of bearing witness to both personal histories and historical events. Literature managed to capture this new phenomenology of testimony constructed on the idea of a split subject divided between existence and history, between the non-memorable and the memorable or between inattention and attention. We will ask ourselves which are the ways in which literature talks about testimony and forgetting. We will also wonder whether or not metaphors of loss open up a parallel discourse inside which the particularity that the language of testimony tries to bear witness to appears as a virtual manifestation of what has been disregarded by narratives of history? The novels of W. G. Sebald will be relevant

[19] Marion, *The Visible and the Revealed*, 44.

for our discussion about the re-negotiated limits of testimony seen through the lenses of a new phenomenology of traces. Sebald is one of the authors who tries to capture glimpses of the untraceable in order to account for the hidden faces of time and particularity inside the structures of memory.

The phrase 'literature of ruins' is coined in the text of W. G. Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction*, where he talks about Heinrich Böll as a writer capable of uncovering the secret amnesia of the postwar world. Sebald mentions a military American psychologist who narrates the conversations he had with the survivors of the bombings from Halberstadt and who drew the conclusion that "the population, although showing an innate will to tell its story, [had] lost the psychic power of accurate memory, particularly in the confines of the ruined city."[20] Amnesia and the fragmentary memory are the working material of this 'literature of ruins.' The 'literature of ruins' underlines these breaks and the strategies with which the mind covers and uncovers the event using a simple image that haunts narratives of history. Sebald asks himself why would we produce history in the face of total destruction. We want to argue that the 'literature of ruins' has this responsibility of the things written in spite of destruction, oblivion and the impossibility to testify.

In his last interview, Sebald gives a special importance to that kind of memory which returns after a period of time, although it has been kept locked. The force of objects and gestures comes from this initial dismissal which attracts the capacity to recall a certain temporary dimension of the 'long ago.' No matter how large this dismissal, there is something that always comes back, incompletely, opening the layers of communication between temporal dimensions. There is also an interesting dialogue between text and pictures in the novel. Images seem to bear a different silent but vivid testimony, while text fails in conjuring that sense of presence that the pictures talk about. In the novel, *Austerlitz*, the main character thinks he can recognize the face of his mother in a snapshot from a propagandist film about the camps. Later on, the picture of that woman proves not to be his mother, remaining unidentified. These zones of muteness allow us to get close to uncertain spheres of identity and significance that create the language of testimony out of a mixture between rests and revelation.

Sebald also uses pieces of archives in his novel, negotiating the fundamental role that the archive plays inside this double-layered language of testimony. The archive operates a certain split (but also a sharing) between what is significant and what is insignificant, between what is being said and what is not recounted. Knowledge is thus divided between the two fields: one of attestation and reification and the other one of the virtual and

[20] W. G. Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction*, trans. Anthea Bell (New York: Random House, 2003), 25.

the unsaid. Sebald uses the archive in his own writing playing with the two fields opened up by the archive. This division of knowledge operates a split inside which the imaginary deals with the forgotten things turning them into forces of the virtual. Where the archive is missing, places of remembering are being created by means of blank objects which, deteriorated and deprived of connection with history, mediate between forgetting and language. Ruins are usually perceived as blank objects because, as we would like to argue, they create a connection with the radical idea of a different time by means of the disruption they represent between historical time and present time. The blank object opens a dialectics between what can be still traced, meaning the image of the past, and what is untraceable, meaning the time of origin and its relation to the present. For instance, while waiting for Austerlitz to recount his histories of forgetting, the narrator comes across an article with images of the fortress of Breendonk and the impression that this object creates upon him is one of contradiction and unsurpassed lack of comprehension:

> From whatever viewpoint I tried to form a picture of the complex I could make no architectural plan, for its projections and indentations kept shifting, so far exceeding my comprehension that in the end I found myself unable to connect it with anything shaped by human civilization, or even with the silent relics of our prehistory and early history. And the longer I looked at it, the more often it forced me, as I felt, to lower my eyes, the less comprehensible it seemed to become.[21]

Those images of the fortress that are actually silent testimonies of a distant past function as blank objects opening up the impossible relational architecture of the past, disrupting the continuity of history and forcing the impossible gaze upon the past to return as a disconnected sense of time. Thus, the blank object is like an incomplete face of time prolonging itself into the unknown and the incomprehensible. We could say that the 'literature of ruins' encompasses both images of the past and their transfiguration inside perceptions of erasure. These perceptions of erasure are another sign of the failure of memory and discourse in the face of the possibility to remember or to represent the particular. In literature, the language of testimony operates with these blank objects turning them into visions of temporal distance which mark the narrator as an excluded witness of a past that can no longer be traced back to a particular `I`. For Austerlitz, the search to discover his past is also revealed as a search to uncover a secret which is seen as the omnipresence of a different time from the very beginning. We would like to argue that particularity is rendered, in this case, by means

[21] W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, trans. Anthea Bell (New York: Modern Library, 2001), 37.

of a poetics of the secret, of a lost secret which is actually the key to the connection with a certain erased period of time. This feeling of a hidden reality is like the sense of an incomplete identity which is manifested throughout the novel as the lost means towards the accomplishment of the sense of self through remembrance. The possibility of remembering his own past rejects but also attracts Austerlitz like in a game between the forces of memory and antimemory. Forgetting is imposed here by means of a certain estrangement in relation to his own erased personal history. Although reconstituted throughout the novel by Austerlitz himself, the story he finds out remains like a narrative that cannot be completely appropriated. The process of interior remembering is poured inside the pre-established images of collective history. The "theater of history" is seen as the *mise en scene* of "frozen" gestures and events, while authentic testimony is seen as a search for a certain rest of these images.

In the case of Austerlitz, the whole search for memory becomes an impossibility of recomposing the world from the point of view of personal or collective remembering. An already defined image will always get hold of remembering and particularity will become a rest of these images. The blank points and the silences of these images are of real importance for Sebald, because they open up different ways of appropriation which are concerned with underlining the sense of "another time." The novel shows that the language of testimony is made out of blank points and silences that are not just the impossible roads of remembering, but also the mechanisms of a story that always evades us and cannot be recounted but by means of the internalized position of an excluded witness. Austerlitz tells his story to the narrator whom he encounters several times, mostly unexpectedly. The unknown family origins of Austerlitz creates the tension of the novel which weaves into this impossible testimonies, emphasizing the possibility of revelation that comes out of temporal distances and "shadows of reality."[22] The split between the private self and the historical self generates that excess which shapes our perception of time, turning our attention to the possibilities of revelation inside an interrupted time. The language of testimony relies on these cracks, fissures and residues inside time and narrative.

We tried to observe the ways in which the figure of the witness and the gaze upon the past are being constructed through the literary language of Sebald's novel. We saw that the idea of a unifying, totalizing memory that can reconstitute the past through representations is no longer the inner grammar of our languages of testimony. Instead, forgetting, absence or lack are placed at the core of our the language of testimony. The displacement of the witnessing subject and the disfigurement of representation mark the event's singularity and the idea that experience is accounted for as a rest

[22] Sebald, *Austerlitz*, 90.

of memory's integrative possibilities. That is why we tried to talk about the limits of the language of testimony and argue that *absence* has the *locus* of speech, the space of transmission and continuity, grounding knowledge's fundamental relationship with death, anonymity and revelation. The poetics of the rest define testimony and insists on bearing witness to the impossibility of totalization and to the inadequacy of language which opens the space of revelation based on the feeling of a missing feature. Our desire to inscribe the real and to find integral symbolic constructions is challenged by the distance inscribed in our horizon by that improper position of the witness between historicity and existence. In what we called posthistory, possibilities of truth through instances of bearing witness are no longer sought out inside personal or historic memory, but outside of the personal and the historical, in those disconnected margins of the "real" that make room for the silent language of revelation.

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Archives: Building-in Time

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Abstract

The zero-moment of an architectural undertaking precedes and the final one postpones the conventional moments of building and demolition. This pre-usage of the material and of the site turn the 'birth' of the house into a rather vague moment. In the numerous makings there exist prior makings, and sites often appear to be palimpsests, layer upon layer, erasure upon erasure. This manner of approaching the question of the temporal 'sponginess' of architecture recalls the question concerning the beginnings of architecture. In this chain of fertile 'blackouts', the 'origin' of architecture ceases to be the inaugural moment still sought to this day: in a making there exist prior makings, and in an unmaking there endures the chance of future lives, at least in principle. Moreover, the question 'when?' deserves another, probably more fertile for the economy of this text: 'For how long?'

Keywords: The making/unmaking of architecture, Post-occupancy evaluation (POE), (painful) archives, co-presence, timelessness

> Thus, the oldest traditions were saved. Everything that we know by word of mouth about what was beautiful, grandiose or in any other way special, be it with you, here, elsewhere, all this was noted down here with us and kept from time out of mind, in temples. And when with you and with other peoples, whenever it happened that things be somehow ordered as regards writing and everything that is needed in cities, there comes over you at precise times, just like a disease, the heavenly flood that spares only the uncultivated and those deprived of the gifts of the Muses. So that you become again ignorant, like youths, without any idea of what happened in the times of old, here or among yourselves.
>
> (Plato, *Timaeus*, 23a–b)

> As for the race of men (*genos anthropon*), the Egyptian priest of Timaeus assigns 'places' to it: there are the places propitious for memory, or the conservation of archives, for writing and for tradition, these temperate zones which provide protection from the destruction by excesses of heat and cold (22e–23a).
>
> J. Derrida

Time before the House

It was only after I had been in Oxford for a while that I noticed something downright shocking: the alley leading from the main yard to the church and library of my College, St. Edmund Hall, crossed the old graveyard of the church and the slabs making up the path were tombstones. I trod on inscriptions into which the living had had carved their sorrow at losing those buried there. That manner of diverting stone from its basic purpose never ceased to send shivers down my spine, especially as I had no alternative route to take custom bans walking on the perfectly manicured lawn close by. Suddenly, by reading the inscriptions, the path I trod on acquired a temporal see-through character that seemed truly unbearable, as if those stones were actually windows to a past which had tumbled down from its commemorative purpose. I was treading on painful time made visible.

A shift in the relation with walled matter can be seen close to my home, at Densuș church in Transylvania, where the building materials used to construct the Romanesque church entwines include bits and pieces from the ruins of the Roman constructions that must have been available at the time when it was erected. This is nothing new: to 'phoenix' one building into another, the substance of the first being used in a new configuration of space seems to be rather the rule than the exception—namely, the rule which considers that houses are subject to becoming, just as living beings are. If you can use something from an old house—a privileged location,[1] or merely the building stone—so much the better—formerly, this act had nothing of the impiety which today strikes those who look at houses through the glasses of modernist timelessness but was rather a natural celebration of the process-like nature of building. We condemn such actions because we tend to endow the constructions that we celebrate as monuments with a sense that they are 'without end' when we halt their becoming at an arbitrary point in time, one which merely happened to be contemporary with this—powerfully conditioned from an ideological standpoint—modern view of their destiny. The falsely reverential attitude vis-à-vis monuments as objects stunted in their becoming and mummified in one of its life-stages is more recent than we might think. It is from this taxidermic standpoint that we criticize, inventing fallacious theories of conservation and restoration on which I will dwell a little later.

[1] The understanding of the sacred as it refers to places and constructions is beholden to the repetition of founding rituals on the same site, that which somehow instils in the ground the spirit celebrated by the ritual which 'makes room' for it.

The Time of Making

For now, let us return to living architecture, which, more than any other of the so-called 'spatial' arts, does not have a beginning or an end that can be clearly defined as regards its making, seen from a temporal perspective. A gesture, an object, a perfume, or maybe a trauma can sometimes cast a cone of light back in time, extracting therefrom what might seem forgotten and which thus becomes part and parcel of the present, over and again. This is the manner in which memory, always nostalgic, operates. The archives of architecture are no exception to these mechanisms of remembrance.

The zero-moment of an architectural undertaking precedes and the final one postpones the conventional moments of building and demolition. This pre-usage[2] of the material and of the site turn the 'birth' of the house into a rather vague moment. In the numerous makings there exist prior makings, and sites often appear to be palimpsests, layer upon layer, erasure upon erasure. This manner of approaching the question of the temporal 'sponginess' of architecture recalls the question concerning the beginnings of architecture. In this chain of fertile 'blackouts', the 'origin' of architecture ceases to be the inaugural moment still sought to this day: in a making there exist prior makings, and in an unmaking, there endures the chance of future lives, at least in principle. Moreover, the question 'when?' deserves another, probably more fertile for the economy of this text: 'For how long?'

We all know stories about the long periods needed for the construction of cathedrals. This lengthy process, to which a considerable part of the community contributes, seems compensated by the temporal 'stability' of architecture. It gives time back, withstanding not only the poorer aspects of reception (changes of style), but also physical aging. How is this possible? After only a short time practicing architecture I have come to realize there is nothing esoteric about this view. The fact that in design you can step back and sleep on an idea, giving it time to settle; the fact that you can test the idea together with the customer, with the builder; endows the building with an ever greater air of concreteness, even if you can perceive in it, new as it is, hesitations and changes of mind, scars of the conflicts which arose on the way, or the marks of past winters that would be clearly seen were they not camouflaged by the finishing touches.

[2] At the upper limit of the amount of time accumulated before the translation into fact lies 'prefabrication', which can, in fact, reduce the creation of a building to an ensemble of 'nearly ready-made' sub-assemblies: fitted bathrooms, complete rooms or living units which are affixed to a central trunk (as in the case of Kurokawa's tower). In those instances, the house no longer has a different rank from the matter that it organizes in a superior manner—what difference does characterise it is all the more insignificant ontologically the bigger the degree of prefabrication.

Such a traumatic coming into the world on the part of the architectural object we often see in the case of Italian churches begun in the Romanesque and finished in the Baroque style. This makes the object of architecture less prone to change because it already includes in its substance a multitude of decisions—some only partial—and of variants, even if not consummated; in other words, virtual stages through which the building has gone. Such an object is no longer only its final form, but also all the stages it went through before it was ready. It is not a question of whether such a building–palimpsest is necessarily 'better' than any of the 'what ifs' that it went through, as long as the final decisions also exude either a partial air—which, be it only for that reason and nothing else, calls into question Gadamer's optimum solution—or one that looks like the outcome of incomplete decisions. In any case, I know for certain that the 'real effect' of such a house is superior to the houses made without using any 'remains', after a single design, according to a single decision, no matter how well informed and/or authoritative it may be.

The example of the Sagrada Familia Cathedral in Barcelona is enlightening in this respect. In the final years of his life, Antonio Gaudi worked on it almost alone. Since his death, the construction work seems to be advancing no more rapidly than it would have done if its author was still the sole builder. This pushes the completion of the cathedral into a future which cannot be defined since, in parallel with new construction, the issue of restoring previous stages has arisen in order to conserve and perhaps to give them the chance of temporal cohabitation with the new. On the other hand, the manner in which the Sagrada Familia is being 'completed' is not taking on board the supplementary contribution of ideas which a new epoch can inject into a building whose making it inherits; on the contrary, the new construction work is markedly different from Gaudi's 'original' in terms of its (intentionally) more imperfect construction: Gaudi's fractal-like geometries of detail are being simplified to a significant extent so that the new is explicitly, deliberately, and visibly inferior in execution as compared to the 'original'.

However, one thing is certain as far as building in time is concerned: such a house, erected at leisure, if not deliberately 'put off'—which calls to mind a possible connection with Derrida's différance—will continue to bestow time, even when its construction is finished. How? First, by means of its capacity to provide dating indices, under the aegis of both its own slow becoming and the built-up context. The first Gothic choir can be identified in connection with the still Romanesque nave of the same church, just as the successive chapels of Westminster Abbey push the building further to the east and at the same time into the Gothic—ever more lacy, ever more detached from gravity, up to the flamboyant and perpendicular. Crossing the threshold, one notices this very movement in time of the house itself, and with it, of oneself as an observer of this anamorphosis. But what one

sees is the compression of century-old changes in a matter of a few minutes. In attentive observers of this accelerating change in forms this causes a dizziness comparable to watching a movie whose successive frames are rendered sufficiently fast to capture the blossoming of a plant and its wilting. In other words, what would otherwise be inaccessible in a lifetime becomes comprehensible by a mere crossing of the church from east to west.

The co-presence of constructions dating from various periods offers something more than mere visual diversity, namely, a contextual situation in time—the dating of our lives. Our house shows its and our own past, present and future by being located in time in between past, contemporary and future edifices. The possibility of stating that our house was built before or after some edifice, district, or street inserts it into historical time—but not only our houses, our lives too. This is one reason why cities established on a pre-established plan (such as Brasilia or Chandigarh) or massive reconstruction projects in a city—especially when the 'new' architecture looks archaic (i.e. delayed in style with relation with its time of building), of which Stalinist architecture or Bucharest's 'Victory of Socialism' Boulevard are privileged examples[3]- do not return the same kind of timing to their inhabitants as the "normal", i.e. build along ages, settlements do.

Time to Use the House (Post-Occupancy Evaluation)

Post-occupancy evaluation has existed in the West for quite some time, but it has not yet emerged in Romania (although there are indications that in the 1970s there were sociological studies which somehow resembled it). As I have already written about in more detail elsewhere, here I shall only address its relationship with time. Post-occupancy evaluation makes observations concerning what happens to a house under the tenancy of different occupants over different periods of time. The purpose of this is to try to identify how it is best used, in keeping with the design and the construction and architectural solutions applied. In other words, Post-occupancy evaluation seeks to discover to what extent it is a "happy solution" (Gadamer). Moreover, any alterations made by a particular occupant or by a succession of occupants, are recorded and subsequently examined, for the purpose of improving future design.

It is clear why modern architecture desperately needs such a discipline and why an architecture based on *vague space*, from the point of view of

[3] To these I am afraid soon will be added the consistent interventions of historicist post-modernism — in the genre of the Antigone Complex of Montpellier by Ricardo Bofill — a privileged model of the Bucharest boulevard, a thing acknowledged by some of the architects whom I have consulted on the matter, like, for instance the now vice-president of the International Union of Architects, Mr. Alexandru Beldiman who used to be in charge with a part of the Boulevard of the Victory of Socialism's architecture.

functionalist rhetorics that is, does not. If, from the beginning, one allows a house to adapt over time to various—even opposed—ways in which it might be used, post-occupancy evaluation can evaluate their adequacy in accordance with what vague space offers. Moreover, a large part of the data which post-occupancy evaluation makes available can be simulated on the computer before or during design so that it becomes unnecessary to resort to empirical data; this is the case, for instance, with the behaviour of houses during earthquakes, which can now be simulated with considerable precision. The results of such simulation can be taken into account in structural and architectural design calculations, just as the simulation of aerodynamic tunnels or of impacts provides vital data which makes it possible to do without testing in 'real' wind tunnels or using crash-test dummies.

Time to Unmake

In other words, houses—built at different times—date our lives, offering us location in both space (through the variation of its intensity vectors in relation to a home, the most intense of all), and time. Houses do something else for our lives, which are much more perishable than their own: they embody memories for us. The volume *The Story of Houses*, published at the ACS Publishing House, clearly shows how much individual and family memory is associated with dwellings—and often with their loss.[4] The intensity of such stories about houses and streets is without compare: the house acts like a condenser of these 'founding myths' or myths of family continuity, just as exemplary edifices compact together the great narrative of ever larger communities, justifying them both in their own eyes and in the eyes of the others, of strangers. It condenses— because the intensity of each story grows with the addition of a new one—and acts as a fixed point of memory. The house settles these 'great narratives', whether they belong to the individual or family, or to the collective or even the nation.

Another problem related to the temporal dimension—on top of the making or unmaking of a house—is its interpretation. The perception of an edifice is not necessarily related to a temporal sequence, as in the case of a piece of music in which the order and time in which the work unfolds grow together in the act of reception (because that is how it is conceived).

Naturally, the perception of the object of architecture takes time, but the way this time is *earmarked* does not condition the understanding of the whole. No privileged course exists, nor does an optimum duration. One can start from the city or from a stone detail; from the interior space to the exterior *ambiance* or context; we can cover colonnades and end with the

[4] Alexandra Mihailciuc, Alexandra Cuculescu, *Cartea Caselor* [The Story of Houses], București: ACS, 2021.

study of the shells held captive by the geological eras in the travertine of the facade. At the same time, things can very well happen the other way round, without damaging in any way the process of drawing the object closer to architecture. Some use a building for a long period of time before being suddenly struck by the sheer beauty of their home throughout their life. Others perceive it for a moment and preserve the *enlightenment* of that moment of grace for the rest of their life, which I have had the privilege of experiencing several times in my life, first in Venice, then in Rome, and in front of *Fallingwater House* by Frank Lloyd Wright.

The Timeless House

This potential for accumulating time and giving back history has been challenged by modern architecture with considerable force. Time potential, which acts as a 'bonus function' of the house in relation to its explicit ('denotative') role—to provide shelter—disappears in three ways: (i) with the use of materials which do not decompose over time,[5] and which therefore do not express their aging and death, cancelling out in the process the analogy with the body/organism, probably the most persistent metaphor with which architecture has ever been associated; (ii) by means of temporal, ephemeral, or *disposable architecture*;[6] and finally, (iii) by disengaging the decoration from the economy of the edifice—the enemy of Modern architects, by which location in time is achieved—and by emphasizing the privileged position of the carrying structure.[7]

Reduced to its functional and structural 'essence', the house is deliberately extracted from time, under the pretext that this bare structure is the endpoint in architecture's process of becoming. The moderns have suppressed the context in order to present a house in its 'integrity', untroubled by comparisons and contradictions, yet in this way they have diminished it, almost to the point of mutilation, as Venturi noted as early as 1966. Dating is no longer necessary; it disappears as a problem in an environment where only 'pure' architecture exists. The absence of situating landmarks in time creates

[5] More precisely, which do not do so at a pace that makes obvious the degradation effect in the 'consumption' of materials, in the decline of the house.

[6] This is not constructed with a view to endurance and, as a consequence, its making does not take up time in the way a 'perennial' house does; a disposable house does not have to be *memorized* and, with the exception of photographic or video testimony, it is not. Not even the buildings which replace it make any reference to it, since it leaves no trace. *Disposable architecture* calls into question everything that is not "useful" in a building and in doing so it 'un-founds' it, reducing it to a shelter—possibly a poorly decorated one but definitely a shelter.

[7] The creation of the dichotomic relations between decoration (peripheral, marginal, added: a surplus) and the carrying structure (central, essential, simple and pure) is an explicit (sub) product of architectural modernism.

an uneasiness which has attracted comment from the socio-psychological studies carried out with respect to dwelling in 'instant milieus', where there is no temporal 'before and after'. The dislodgment from historical duration and, consequently, the loss of collective memory, are, as a matter of fact, effects to be expected from modernist cities in general, not only those of totalitarian regimes; the disintegration of a community perched in an apartment-block city from which historical landmarks have been erased can be considered either the deliberate gesture of a diabolical mind or the unintended effect of the utopian idea of 'communisation'. Examples are easy to find in post-communist Romanian towns. The dislodging of time here doubles the alienation produced by the disfigured site: all the towns and cities in the country look terribly alike because they were all badly constructed from the same set of designs.

But even when its execution is flawless, modern architecture seems not so much timeless as deprived of time, frozen in a moment which it tries to turn into a continuous present. If we look at the designs of Sant'Elia in the early twentieth century, or at the Futurama building and exhibit at the New York World Exhibition of 1939, one may see that the same modern architecture was admired by differently dressed people in cars that seem funny to us today; everything has changed in the meantime, yet this architecture still seems 'topical'. No wonder, since in its essence it is decomposed into primal factors, cleansed of elements that might have rendered it obsolete—above all, ornaments—it appears somewhat 'muted' in respect of time.

The Intoxicating Nature of Time

Retrospection—the house looking back and, nostalgically, allowing itself to be impregnated by time and history—is a privileged method of 'renewing' architecture. The rediscovery of antiquity after the Gothic episode (itself not inured to the ancient heritage which it interprets against a background of amnesia in respect of its own built archives) represented a renewing shock situated—paradoxically only at first sight— in the remote past. More exactly, it was sufficiently remote to become new once more. The moderns operate in the same way, rejecting tradition (that is, historical heritage) in order to take inspiration from the 'origins' (peri-Mediterranean or African primitivism). In Romania, there is an equivalent of this rejection of history as something too burdensome: Orthodox architects of the pre-war period, which downgraded the medieval episode as unsatisfactory because of its diversity of sources and the allogenous ethnicity of their builders, which somehow did not help the nationalistic rhetoric of the right-wing or, eventually, national-Communist politics. This separation from the past is done in the name of origins, both religious (that is, Byzantine) and ethnic (that

is, Latin). Architecture oriented towards the past is an interpretive and selective reading of the archive. What is visible from the past is preserved, intensified, or even modified. *The Romans colonnades took on a kind of 'colossal order' from Palladio, while with Speer, Piacentini or, closer to home, with Duiliu Marcu and Contantin Joja, they became a row of pilasters stripped to their essence and with an austere geometry*. The elements caught up in a system with its own rules of coherence are 'released and allowed to fly freely on the wings of memory. Roman arcades acquire came back in fashion in the *stile littorio* or in the Carol II style (Victoria Palace by D. Marcu), in each case for different reasons, naturally. The first case is an exclamation of the imperial vocation of the fascist regime: for the Romanian architect, over the 'Roman' source floats the memory—monumentalised—of the vernacular autochthonous. The belief that the architecture of 1930s Romania is massively influenced by local folk tradition remains an uncritical commonplace among historians of the period.[8] This says more about the role of culturally formed archives in shaping our collective memory than about the 'real' sources of influence of the architects in question.

How are the past and its archival layers seen by way of the object present at hand? Sediment can float and resurface as cultural memory in the long series of consecutive remaking of the same programme or the same town. The successive remaking of a sacred site will, for instance in the form of a votive plaque, at least imply the presence—a mention—of what was replaced. The ghost of what has vanished returns to the collective memory: London or Chicago before their great fires; Bucharest before the successive waves of demolition. This glimpse into the past is not necessarily a deliberate action but belongs to the normal mechanisms of site stratification. The layers are never perfectly superimposed—they do not cover up the past perfectly, leaving no remains. In other cases, we are dealing with unintentional unearthings. You dig to make room for a new house and stumble upon vestiges or traces of the old one. This thing, especially of late, means a change of plans, moving the house or even halting its construction; the archive regains its status.

At the extreme, this unearthing of the archive can become deliberate and, through its effects, aggressive vis-à-vis memory. Unearthing or incomplete covering, in short, partial or iceberg-like visibility, is a procedure quite frequently used in the *post-bellum* reconstruction of cities devastated by bombs: for instance, the reconstruction of Buda (the hilly half of Budapest) features such 'shards', fragments of ruins left as such in places and positions that make them visible as 'not belonging there'; in fact, logically, it is quite the other way around: the ruin is the "original" and the new came eventually

[8] Cf. Luminita Machedon, Ernie Scoffam, *Romanian Modernism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999).

into the picture. Archive fragments surface in this way, and, by way of contrast, in their relationship with their situation they elicit the question, 'What is this ruin that obtrudes in this way?' Even this inconsequential question can trigger the unfolding of the archival story, which thus becomes somehow active and is brought up to date.

Another procedure is the incorporation into a new house of what is old in the spot, as testimony of its 'continuity'. What is added to the restoration of the old is marked out as new in relation to what is 'original'. In these 'benign' forms, the preservation of a trigger capable of unleashing the archive—or at least of invoking its physical presence or absence—is beneficial both for remembrance and for inserting the new in historical time, so ennobling the new house, which wears the old fragment as it were in its buttonhole. The new is no longer absolute, inaugural. It becomes blurred, falls into filiations, acquires a patina. As in the case of a marriage of convenience contracted by the newly rich (or, until not long ago, top communists) and the declining aristocracy, this is a mutually beneficial alliance. The former (or their descendants) acquire a certain social visibility, while the latter escape misery, poverty, or even physical extinction. Similarly, a symbiosis of this kind which—as pure and tough modernists would say, 'contaminates' the new house—postpones the evaporation or loss of the archive. I call these forms of new/old symbiosis the *active archive*.

Digging for a buried or invisible archive can be accounted for in terms of discontent with the present, surface archive. In such radical cases we can say of the archive that it is rather *aggressive* than active. G. M. Cantacuzino, in his 1947 book *On an Aesthetics of Reconstruction*, criticized the way in which the Italian architects of the Fascist period made the Roman ruins participate in the political propaganda of the system. The effort to uncover such vestiges and to reconstruct them sometimes entailed deliberate destruction of the existing city, and so of the surface archive, which were 'minor' *in comparison with* the relevant propaganda goals. The present or the recent past—unworthy of the heroic future—had to make room to the excavation of a more suitable past. What I have in mind here is, to quote Cantacuzino, "the *presence* of ruins and monuments that over the centuries found a setting that had become integrated into the artistry of the Renaissance",[9] the way veterans exhibit the stumps of their violently crippled limbs in order to justify their heroism. Cantacuzino speaks of the "awakening from the lethargy of ruins" (in other words, from the neutrality of their stance or position as *underground layer* of the living city). This procession of the unburied must march along with the living: "the ruins have been taken out of their vegetal, picturesque scenery, the columns have been washed and

[9] G. M. Cantacuzino, *Despre o estetică a reconstrucției* [On an Aesthetics of Reconstruction] (first edition 1947), București: Paideia, 2001, 37.

scrubbed, entire walls have been rebuilt, the tomb of Caesar Augustus has been reconstructed to become a political document… Everything has been ravished and put in a false light".[10]

Naturally, Italian architects were not alone. The German plans were on an even larger scale, geographically at least, and included Greece, Asia, and northern Africa in their search for 'Arian' vestiges to justify present grandeur. By comparison, the efforts of the Romanian mayor of a Transylvanian city to dig beneath a medieval past which does not serve his ethnic argument in order to *violently* bring to light, (*aggressively so*, that is) Roman ruins might seem ridiculous. These are invested, despite their original neutrality, with the same propagandistic role as the Roman ruins of the Eternal City in the Fascist period. This is not only a question of monuments or edifices—that is, buildings the original intention of which was display, public visibility, the embodiment of a desired collective image of such and such a community. In the Transylvanian city in question an accidental instance of the archive is being mauled by being unearthed, the one that happened to be under the 'foreign' square. Consequently, it cannot prove anything, or at least nothing of what the ultra-nationalist mayor might imagine. It is an uncovering of the bones of the long dead. The unearthing of vestiges in this way is, to a considerable extent, just as shocking as the disinterment of the dead. In the village of my birth, inhabited by Rasnov peasants from Dobrogea, there is a tradition of disinterring a grave after seven years. The bones are recovered, washed with oil and wine, covered in a white cloth, and reburied. The moment, which I witnessed several times during my childhood, is overwhelming. It brings to light, 'here', what ought to have stayed in the perpetual darkness of the 'beyond'. The remembrance of those who have passed away in this way becomes newly traumatic by the revisiting of their remains, after a period which would normally have softened the impact of the demise proper. My father refused to perform this seven-year disinterment on my grandparents, willing to risk offending against the local custom. Instead, he preferred that a sermon be said at their graves, perhaps because there is something immodest, unbearable in the unearthing of the archive, in its aggressive bringing up to date. I remember that when my grandfather died we had to dig up the grave where my cousin, only a few months old when she passed away, lay. All that was left of her were the few plastic toys that had been placed in the coffin.

The aggressive silence of a dislodged archive—in modern architecture—is doubled by the violence with which the archive left open or violated, like the white bones of a dead man who can find no rest, in totalitarian architecture. The way in which American restoration, for instance, makes possible the reconstruction of an archive as if it could live one more time

[10] Cantacuzino, 37.

(as at Knossos) has something of the harshness—though with the reversed as meaning—of this disinterment. The living-dead is, in the case of architecture too, a strange way of manipulating the archive.

There is, however, another form of survival of the archive which is, in fact, never buried; namely, continued practice of the trade that created the previous layers of 'sediment'. Identical repetition—or with only a small degree of variation—of what once went *before* innovation, at least with respect to the wirk of craftsmen and master-masons. A particular way of treating the material, of decorating it, becomes the trademark of a certain team of medieval builders and leads to the reason they are further on called to build. They can erect a monastery which is "much more beautiful and much brighter", yet still in accordance with the model which consecrated them. Against a prevailing background of redundancy, there are as few variations as possible—information or the 'new' is reduced. It is virtuous to remain piously in the shade of one's forerunners; following in their footsteps guarantees one's grandeur. The past instils quality in present deeds: the more indistinct in relation to the archive, the greater the chances of the new edifice being fit for an archive and therefore of lasting. One becomes part of the past because one is already 'old'; because one is part of an undeviating filiation.

Another manner of using the archive is the quotation. By means of quotation the new building invents for itself a pedigree or even invents an entire archive with the burden of justifying the new presence to justify its presence now. This is the reverse of the new–old symbiosis, in which the new is, if I may put it like this, the newcomer. On the contrary, in the case of the quotation what is invoked is the old brought into the new as a partner in its respectability. The quotation—which, as postmodernism teaches us, has an aesthetic function—operates against a background of difference between the new and the quoted object, which is somehow shortcutted by the gesture of quotation. This short-circuits a prolonged amnesia. It is seen as endowed with the gift of eliminating the alienation between the new and the old edifice—thus, it is a form of 'healing'. This holds not only of historicist postmodernism, which uses the archive as a source of quotations without really believing in their role as a 'bridge' between periods, but also of the recovery to the archive of individual sources of prestige. In other words, it is not a way of practising architecture which is recovered here (or continued, as in the case of the guilds), but an 'individual thing', one of its final products. I 'quote' such and such a monument, or one of its details, without repeating the process that made it possible.

Palladio's example provides us with an interesting means of understanding the *difference*: his manner of building (which made extensive use of the recent archive of the Renaissance and also the deep archive of the Roman world) had an amazing career in Britain, from where it crossed the Atlantic to become

almost the vernacular. American colonial architecture is almost entirely a reading (to a considerable extent unfaithful) of Palladianism. On the other hand, against this backdrop we might also consider the separate career of the Villa Rotonda in the work of Benjamin Latrobe or T. Jefferson. It became the ultimate example of a 'democratic' house, an edifice that could in itself embody the values of the new American state. A particular manner of practising architecture attains excellence in an edifice. By using it again and again, one can call again into presence this very prestigious monument or style which is being quoted, the social rank of the customers who ordered it, the political, cultural, and religious environment that allowed it, the city or state where many others simply copy the excellent example of the mastery or collective state of grace in question. The Pantheon, the pyramids, the Hagia Sophia, the temple in Jerusalem: all these knots of intensity in the archive are revisited again and again because they have the ability to draw on the entire archive.

Co-presence: The New Archive

There is a contemporary manner of starting a dialogue with the built-in time of a historical object. Can a space be jointly inhabited—in other words, can we erect a new building without thereby eliminating the states through which the site has already passed and without relegating, in the process, the time they contain? Deconstructivists have come up with part of the solution; the other is provided by a postmodern view of restoration. I will combine them under a sole generic term, 'co-presence'. Co-presence refers to the possibility of making now and then coexist in a single house or building. 'Then' is not a spectre, a good genius watching over and justifying the new building, but an indissoluble part of it.

The first manner of co-presence is represented by a new building on a given site which is equally 'now' and 'then'. Co-presence implies the presence at the same time, at the same location, and what is much more important, in the same undertaking (new building, urban arrangement, conversion of an existing building, restoration) of as many as possible of the significant instance incarnations through which the site—and the building—has passed. In the case of Derrida's and Eisenman's La Villette, the authors, as inferred from Derrida's quote about the *khora*-grid, intended the joint existence of all the layers on the site. As a matter of fact, Eisenman is a sort of trailblazer of co-presence: see, for example, his Wexner Center in Columbus, Ohio. Built on the site of a former armaments factory, the new construction reminds us fragmentarily—as befits all memory—of what went before, somehow recovered as the 'meat' of the present.[11]

[11] The same Peter Eisenman turned the extension of the DAAP (the Design, Architecture, Arts and Planning College in Cincinnati, Ohio) into an architectural 'Nude Descending a

Co-presence is thus not only desired but even imperiously necessary, being a manner of the 'saturation with being' of the place or the house subject to transformation. The new instance thus no longer represses or replaces the other spatial–temporal spaces but is merely one of those concomitantly present. The old is not superior to the new (the traditional view), nor is the new superior to the old (the modern view). The two ages have the same axiological status. The final ensemble looks like a body with two – or more – different ages: it is both new *and* old: something entirely new is added to an existing (or disappeared but brought back into life) building or fragment; the new one, after the joining, takes over the task of 'rewriting' the entire organism. This radical hermeneutical approach to the matter of simultaneity presupposes the absence of a (sole) 'text' that celebrates itself in favour of a contextual continuum and, especially, of an uninterrupted, constantly updated age. No house can, in fact, be present, being "always already" (Heidegger) submerged in the history of its own becoming.

This becomes obvious in the case of conversions, the second manner of co-presence. The house subject to conversion is 'then'—a 'then' interpreted from the vantage-point of the present but used 'now'. It reveals its original age or successive ages, but makes no secret of having undergone a facelift, following which, even if it had been a successful solution (Gadamer), it becomes nonetheless something entirely new, often a mere 'carcass' for an entirely new content.

The 'rewriting' of old buildings to accommodate new roles (sometimes fundamentally opposed to the original one) is seldom easy. The contrast between what is visibly old but just as visibly renewed or even updated is what generates these tensions, more than the difference between the roles. As a fellow of Collegium Budapest in spring and summer of 2000, I had the privilege of working for five months in the former city hall of Buda, on Szentháromság Square, opposite the Mathias Cathedral. The interior of the Renaissance building (in the local sense of the term) has been turned into a modern environment of hi-tech electronic apparatus and office furniture, with computers everywhere, naturally. The contrast between the stone framework on the one hand, and the avant-garde lighting fixtures and the Internet cables on the other, at first spark off a certain tension, but this is quickly offset by the charm of the place. But contrasts of this kind can be even more dramatic: elsewhere in Budapest, reminiscent of similar interventions in the United States and Western Europe, a mill on the eastern bank of the Danube, facing Gellért Hill, is soon to become Gizella Court, a

Staircase'. The imprint of the existing building was moved to the site and the new house records as it were 'stroboscopically', superposed, the succesive stages of this tectonic displacement. In the end, what we have is not a new building overlapping an old one, but rather an ensemble in which generating and generated form coexist in the same territory, explaining each other.

centre for yuppies offering high standard housing, offices, and an adequate restaurant. Other examples of co-presence in conversions come from the historical areas of Western cities: whisky distilleries in Edinburgh converted into dwellings; churches in the same area converted into housing and industrial buildings turned into unreal, involuntary 'sculptures' or modernist installations, surrounded by parks. More recent London examples include the transformation of the Bankside electricity plant (situated on the Thames across from St. Paul's) into new Tate Gallery or that of another power station in Chelsea (Lot's Road) into a housing ensemble (arch. Terry Farrell).[12] There is a certain Gothic air about these worrisome conversions, but this is doubtless to be preferred to the scorched-earth tactics presupposed by modern architecture.

This phenomenon is probably even more visible here than in the United States where the skyscrapers of modern downtowns make room for the unprecedented development of what is left of the historical areas, which are brought up to date by cosmetic and interior reshaping. These urban gestures often resolve—as an alternative to demolition—the problem posed by old warehouses and factories, and the ruins of industrial society in general. In summer 1999, I visited two cities fully engaged in recovering their inner-city areas so that they would be more in relation to the downtown area: Rochester, NY, and Cincinnati, Ohio. Both are revealing examples because, being relatively small, the sky-scraper district has not managed to devour the 'old' one entirely (as a rule, the latter dates from the nineteenth century when it, in turn, eliminated the 'competition'). The process of restructuring and bringing-back-to-life what five years previously had been in ruins and a bad neighbourhood is amazing and indicates, hopefully, a change of direction on the part of the American city towards the recovery of the downtown area which, in a contorted way, is also a pilgrimage to its own past: the space of collective memory.

Layers, Scars, and Folds: The Painful Archives

The archive often becomes a problem (and co-presence difficult) in the case of the restoration or reconstruction of historical sites when a choice has to be made between layers or between the layers in time and an entirely new house. The incorporation of the surviving fragments of the old layers (in other words, not their reinvention, as in the case of Eisenman's co-presence) seems to become an ever more 'fashionable' tendency in the case of the construction of historical sites, as if the new house would continue, or

[12] See *Financial Times* (20 May 2000, A5), "Converting power stations is not an easy way to earn a crust … but they can provide the most dramatic spaces, as visitors to the new Tate Modern Gallery at Bankside realize."

perpetuate the 'flesh' or substance of the old. The continuation of the cankered 'logic' of the first disappearance by marking the scar tissue or the growth of the 'tumour', which does nothing but make more visible the intrinsic plague of destruction, seems to be the specialty of Lebbeus Woods. His projects for Sarajevo and Havana could provide a few lessons which, I am afraid, we may grasp only with difficulty and are unlikely to accept. Nevertheless, they follow the internal 'logic' of destruction.

The question posed by Woods is: Why do we persist in camouflaging the traces of urban dramas when that is one of the causes of their repetition? In other words, Woods invites us to meditate on our attitude to the inconvenient archives of the immediate past: we bury them by camouflaging them under layers of 'reconstruction' and 'new' things, or, on the contrary, we preserve them as something living and therefore painful. Is there an intermediate space between these extremes? The artist himself seems to think so, although he opts for a variant closer to the extreme of the living archive: a healing without cosmetic surgery: where once there was a wound, let the scar be seen, no matter how 'ugly'. The Warsaw variant of Stare Miasto—just as politically loaded—constitutes the opposite case: healing without a visible trace (other than collective memory) of the extermination to which the city was subject. Budapest, likewise, prey to a process of violent extermination during the Second World War, chose a more moderate variant: the preservation, sometimes, of the ruins in the new flesh of the houses or the preservation of the type of houses pulled down in the architecture of the new ones. The German cities left without a centre sometimes put up a modern one in a desperate attempt to avoid the physical presence of the archive, especially when it was inconvenient. On the contrary, in Dresden, with a gesture just as ideologically loaded as the one which produced it, the ruin of the sacred space bombed in 1945 was preserved 'alive' until recently like the memory of a wound in the body of the city to remind us of the past and to prevent it from descending undisturbed into the depths.

Bucharest is not an example to follow, either for the way in which it managed its pre-war archive or for the manner in which the archive as it stood right up until 1989 was revisited in the following decade. Why should we believe that an international competition or, indeed, any other solution could erase the drama which occurred in downtown Bucharest in particular? Furthermore, why should we want it? To use tall buildings to camouflage the House of the Republic is a dramatic form of co-presence in which the new hides the 'tumour', but in such a way as to suggest that, in the midst of this concealment, there is something that must be swept under the carpet. By making this gesture of covering a canker with a new texture we do not heal the city; in fact, as a result of this it might perhaps no longer be susceptible to healing in the sense that it might be able to return to the patriarchal

serenity it enjoyed before destruction; but perhaps it can come to terms with its handicap and live, psychically at least, at peace with its presence, the way the deaf put up with their hearing aids or others with draining pipes in their abdomen. This is no longer 'normality', but at least it is a life in possession of the decency of its own infirmity, in which the being survives, accepted by society, without pretending to be a fashion model if it is a paraplegic insofar as it addresses (post)communist cities, is this: If the canker is metastatic, let the patient know: don't pull the wool over his eyes!

In other words, *co-presence* is a field in which the ingenuity of the architect puts into—sometimes violent—contact the past and the present, if not the (unwanted) future as well. Yet this violence engenders memories, conserving and attracting to itself the memory of the place. By ceasing to make room for their houses by eliminating the 'adversary', architects seem to understand that past time is essential in architecture and therefore in the life of the houses they create. The archives of a site's layers are therefore involved in a symbiotic process. The old houses continue to exist and to lend what they have accumulated as a consequence of their longevity—always a quality associated with wisdom, seriousness, and, in art, also with aesthetic value—to the new houses which are added to them or into which they themselves are transformed. In turn, the new edifices make visible and present (also in the sense of duration) the old house near or in which they sit.

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