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LES PROJECTIONS DE PENSÉE NE SONT QUE DES FILMS QUE NOUS NOUS FAISONS SUR LES AUTRES ET QUI SONT LE PRODUIT DE NOS DIFFERENTS ENFERMEMENTS. RAPPORT SUR LE PROJET „PHILOSOPHIE VIVANTE”

Jean Jacques SARFATI¹

SUMMARY. Thought Projections Are Nothing but Scenarios We Construct About Others and Are the Products of Our Own Closed-Mindedness. Report on the "Living Philosophy" Project. This text is a reflection on Projections. The aim here is to show that it is necessary to go beyond the Freudian concept to offer a more open reading of the concept of projections. The term is taken in its true sense. Projection is mainly used today in the world of cinema and entertainment. To be victim of a projection is to "make himself is proper film" of reality and live in an imaginary world. Our idea is to maintain that these projections develop in the era of the spectacle which is ours. The term "société du spectacle" is borrowed from Guy Debord. However, we distinguish ourselves from him by maintaining that the spectacle is only an epiphenomenon which is only the result of a culture of secret itself produced by contemporary narcissism. This work is the continuation of a series of conferences which are organized within the framework of a movement called *Living Philosophy*. This movement aims to bring philosophy back to life by leading it into living spaces and bringing it down into bodies, streets and villages. To do this, she wants to be creative and bring together the Ancients, the Moderns and the post-moderns. Living Philosophy is a movement built on the idea of dialogue and mediation.

Keywords: philosophie vivante; Freud, Sigmund; projections; Debord, Guy; narcissism.

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RÉSUMÉ : Ce texte est une réflexion sur les projections de pensée. Il s'agit ici de montrer qu'il faut dépasser le concept freudien pour proposer une lecture plus ouverte de ces projections. Le terme est pris au vrai sens du terme. La projection est surtout utilisée aujourd'hui dans le monde du cinéma et du spectacle. Être victime d'une projection c'est bien « se faire un film » de la réalité et vivre dans un imaginaire. Notre idée est de soutenir que ces projections se développent dans l'époque de spectacle qui est la nôtre. Le terme de société du spectacle est emprunté à Guy Debord. Nous nous distinguons cependant de lui en soutenant que le spectacle n'est qu'un épiphénomène qui n'est que la résultante d'une culture du secret, elle-même produite par le narcissisme contemporain. Ce travail est la suite d'une série de conférence qui est organisée dans le cadre d'un mouvement qui s'intitule Philosophie vivante. Ce mouvement a pour objectif de refaire vivre la philosophie en la conduisant dans les espaces de vie et en la faisant descendre dans les corps, les rues et les villages. Pour ce faire, elle se veut créative et fait dialoguer les Anciens, les Modernes et les post-modernes. Philosophie vivante est un mouvement construit sur l'idée du dialogue et de la médiation.

Mots clés : philosophie vivante; Freud, Sigmond ; projections; Debord, Guy; le narcissisme.

Lors de l'année 2022/2023 j'ai organisé avec l'aide des amis de philosophie vivante une quinzaine d'événements qui avaient pour objectif d'être dans la créativité et la rencontre effective ainsi que dans le lien. Plus d'une fois j'ai remarqué à quel point il était difficile aujourd'hui d'œuvrer en ce sens car d'une part, les ghettos se forment vite et chacun préfère retourner à son petit groupe, en rejetant l'autre et d'autre part, lorsque l'on aborde une notion, tout un chacun veut la voir sous le prisme de sa philosophie dominante. Enfin, comme le dit le proverbe, la lumière jaillit de la discussion. Je préfère dire qu'elle jaillit du dialogue vrai et plus il y a de vrai et moins nous sommes disposés à l'accueillir. Ce qui est normal car il faut du temps pour s'habituer à la lumière et il nous faut être bienveillants les uns envers les autres.

Le but de philosophie vivante est cependant d'aller éclairer nos failles individuelles et collectives.

Nous ne pourrons innover en philosophie qu'en croisant les influences qui s'opposent aujourd'hui et qui sont celles des Anciens, des Modernes et des contemporains. Nous ne pourrons créer qu'en croisant les savoirs dès lors qu'ils sont vrais.

Je ne sais si j’innoverai ici mais c’est à partir de ce croisement que j’ai construit ma thèse, celle que je soutiendrai dans cet article.

Cette thèse est la suivante : *les projections sont de films que nous nous faisons. Elles ont tendance à croître dans la société qui est la nôtre car elles sont le produit de la société du spectacle et de l’enfermement qu’elle ne cesse de porter à son point culminant du fait d’un narcissisme qui est de plus en plus prégnant et que nous ne traitons pas comme il se doit. La source de celui-ci n’est autre que la culture du secret et de la fragmentation.*

Certains soutiennent qu’il y a de bonnes projections. Ils nous disent que ce sont celles notamment que nous faisons en prévoyant et organisant une réunion ou une rencontre. De même sont tout aussi « bonnes » celles par lesquelles j’entre dans le film de l’autre afin de l’accompagner. Dans ce cas, il ne s’agit pas, à proprement parler selon moi de projections au sens où je l’entends mais plus de prévisions ou d’accompagnement.

Prévoir et accompagner c’est bien. Projeter non parce qu’elle a pour caractéristique de nous éloigner du réel pour nous enfermer dans la fiction et l’image.

Lorsqu’il y a projection, selon la conception qui est mienne de ce terme, nous faisons comme celui qui s’installe dans une salle de cinéma et qui regarde l’autre et la réalité en spectateur à partir d’images et d’un récit qu’il s’est lui-même fabriqué à partir de sa petite propagande personnelle.

Là est ainsi le premier danger de la projection. Elle nous enferme dans la propagande et fait de nous des victimes potentielles de tout manipulateur qui voudra utiliser cette propagande pour nous dominer.

Ces petits films ne cessent de croître aujourd’hui selon moi et les « techniques de manipulation » que l’on applique aujourd’hui au commerce vont d’ailleurs dans ce sens.²

Les enquêtes récentes sur le sujet montrent que les proxénètes utilisent ce type de méthode pour convaincre leurs proies³. Or – et ce n’est pas un fait du

² Ainsi, en est-il de la PNL, outil de soin pour certains mais qui est malheureusement parfois (et de plus en plus avec d’autres techniques de plus en plus élaborées semble-t-il) utilisée par certains charlatans, pour abuser de cette tendance contemporaine à se plaire à la propagande. En effet, il existe ainsi en PNL – qui est à la base une technique de soin qui a été galvaudée par quelques individus – ce que l’on appelle la « synchronisation ». Celle-ci consiste à se placer dans le film de l’autre afin de le séduire. Le manipulateur « péennélien » observe et écoute les fantasmes de l’autre qu’il sait bien repérer et il fait semblant d’entrer dans ses projections. De même utilise-t-il la logique de la dissociation qui consiste également à « entrer dans le film de l’autre » afin de lui « vendre » ensuite tout ce que l’on souhaitera après l’avoir mis en confiance. Grâce à cette écoute, il monte des fictions qui vont dans le sens de ce que l’autre veut entendre et il l’enferme progressivement dans ses filets retors et parfois malveillants.

³ <https://images.sdm.qc.ca/fichiers/Public/2018/B876359.pdf>

hasard – le proxénétisme juvénile augmente régulièrement sans que l'on en parle vraiment...Quant à la prostitution en général, elle augmente également régulièrement.⁴

Le proxénétisme est la marque et le produit de cette époque car c'est un « grand » metteur en scène qui sait parfaitement manipuler ses proies...Proies, elles-mêmes souvent enfermées dans leurs projections. Comme nous le verrons, le proxénète est l'homme de l'époque puisqu'il joue du spectacle que nous avons érigé en roi⁵.

La projection n'est certes pas nouvelle et nous verrons rapidement qu'elle a été condamnée (sous d'autres noms) par toutes les formes de philosophie. Puis nous verrons en quoi c'est l'enfermement qui favorise les projections. Nous verrons alors que c'est aujourd'hui l'enfermement et la séparation créées par la société du spectacle chère à Guy Debord, qui augmente cette tendance aujourd'hui et dont il importe impérativement de nous débarrasser. Toutefois nous verrons que ce n'est pas le capitalisme qui a accru cet amour du spectacle mais notre narcissisme et notre égoïsme qui sont en lien avec cette manière qui est nôtre de nous faire spectateur et de jouer toujours un jeu lui-même curieusement alimenté par le secret.

1) Anciens, Modernes et Post-modernes, leurs enfermements et leurs projections.

Puisque le dessein de philosophie vivante est de faire dialoguer les différentes philosophies pour « faire descendre celle-ci dans les cœurs, les corps et les rues », il est aisé de constater qu'en convoquant certaines grandes œuvres de la pensée ou de la spiritualité, le lien entre enfermement et projections est immédiatement opéré.

Ainsi, chez les Anciens, dans la Bible, par exemple, Abraham se distingue de Sodome et Gomorrhe en ce qu'il accueille les étrangers. De même se distingue-t-il de Lot, son neveu, en préservant sa famille du mal et de la perversité. L'enfermement que nous pouvons connaître peut être celui de notre histoire ou de notre hérédité à laquelle nous pouvons être fermés mais ce peut-être aussi tout simplement la fermeture à l'autre. Ces deux formes de fermetures conduiront les habitants de Sodome à ne voir les étrangers qu'ils accueillent que comme des objets de plaisir sur lesquels ils plaquent leurs fantasmes sexuels et qui mèneront Lot et ses filles à cette

⁴ https://sante.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/synthese_rapport_sur_la_prostitution_des_mineurs_12072021.pdf

⁵ <https://amnesia-traumatique.fr/la-prostitution-decryptage-des-mecanismes-impliqués/>

projection terrible et aveuglante que peut être l'inceste ou la pratique incestueuse en ce qu'elle conduit le père à projeter sur ses filles ses propres fantasmes sexuels⁶.

Nous retrouvons le lien entre enfermement et projection de manière plus flagrante encore dans l'Allégorie de la caverne de Platon. Nous savons, en effet que des esclaves vivent enfermés dans une grotte et qu'ainsi enchaînés ils ne voient la réalité qu'à travers des ombres projetés sur un mur. Ces projections sont une manière pour eux de refuser la vérité et la réalité. Elle est le produit de leur enfermement intellectuel qui leur fait croire qu'au-delà de leurs cavernes, il n'existe rien et que le monde se limite à leur petit chez eux⁷.

Les Modernes ont également travaillé la question de la projection qui n'est autre qu'un préjugé chez Descartes. Préjugé dont on ne peut se défaire qu'en doutant de soi et en prenant du recul par rapport à soi. C'est ici l'enfermement dans de fausses vérités qui se sont incrustées en nous qui produisent ces projections.

Freud, pour les post-modernes est ensuite venu – notamment dans le livre qu'il a consacré au président Schreber⁸ - . Schreber s'était imaginé que son médecin lui voulait du mal et il avait écrit tout un livre pour le dénoncer. Freud a alors montré que c'était son homosexualité refoulée dans l'inconscient qui expliquait de telles projections. Souvent, en effet, pour éviter de me voir tel que je suis, je projette sur l'autre des images qui me permettent de fuir le réel un peu comme je le fais lorsque je m'enferme dans une salle obscure pour oublier la réalité.

Lévinas a, quant à lui également, évoqué la question de la projection dans le dialogue en distinguant le dire du dit. C'est souvent pour me fermer à l'autre que je l'enferme dans ce qu'il a dit sans me préoccuper de savoir ce qu'il voulait dire. Enfermer l'autre dans un « dit », c'est bien se raconter un film⁹.

Toutefois c'est, selon nous Guy Debord qui a le mieux, selon moi, permis de bien comprendre la tendance contemporaine à la projection qui ne cesse de s'accroître.

2) La société du spectacle et l'aggravation de notre tendance à projeter

Dans un livre qu'il a intitulé, la société du spectacle, Guy Debord a soutenu que le capitalisme ayant réussi son entreprise, ne sachant plus que faire, a alors décidé de placer toute son énergie au service du spectacle. Pour lui, il ne s'agit plus

⁶ Genèse chapitre XIX et suivants.

⁷ République, Livre VII.

⁸ Le président Schreber, un cas de paranoïa. S. Freud. Petite bibliothèque Payot. 2018

⁹ On peut consulter l'article que Paul Ricoeur a consacré à ce sujet. <https://www.cairn.info/autrement--9782130489184-page-1.htm>

désormais que de nous transformer en spectateurs. Cette transformation ayant pour effet de nous séparer les uns des autres et de nous affaiblir en nous isolant¹⁰.

L'analyse que je propose ici est effectivement que nous sommes de plus en plus gouvernés par le spectacle et qu'effectivement nous nous sommes tous enfermés derrière nos écrans. C'est précisément cet enfermement qui nous conduit à projeter nos films sur la réalité. Chacun a désormais son petit film qu'il se raconte mais aussi aime à y entrer en se mettant en spectacle pour devenir une projection pour l'autre.

Puisqu'il n'y a plus que le spectacle et le spectaculaire dans nos vies, la projection ne cesse d'augmenter et la mise en spectacle avec elle. Cependant, ce n'est pas le capitalisme qui a provoqué cette situation mais bien notre narcissisme. Pour le comprendre, il convient en effet de revenir sur ce mythe de Narcisse qu'avec Martine Streliski nous proposons de revisiter¹¹. Dans ce mythe, il nous est rappelé que Narcisse va tomber amoureux de son reflet et donc de sa projection de lui-même et de son image. Il refuse de se voir tel qu'il est et il refuse de s'accepter. Il préfère s'idolâtrer. Cette idolâtrie le conduira à la noyade. En agissant ainsi le narcissique finit par se noyer et s'oublier et ainsi mourir à lui-même. Toutefois, le mythe nous dit ainsi qu'il va renaître en fleur. Cette renaissance est précisément cette manière que nous avons – du fait de notre narcissisme – à nous enfermer dans le paraître et dans le spectacle.

Au lieu de vivre notre vie, nous nous donnons en spectacle. Ce qui se passe au niveau d'internet et des réseaux sociaux en est une cruelle illustration. Nous ne vivons que pour nous mettre en scène. Nous nous montrons aux autres et ainsi nous devons « monstrueux ».

Ce Narcissisme est ainsi aggravé par une culture du secret qui ne cesse d'entraîner de multiples confusions qui produisent ensuite ces fusions – non avec l'autre – mais avec nous-mêmes.

3) La culture du secret, au cœur de ce narcissisme et de ces fusions et de ces projections

J'ai déjà eu l'occasion d'évoquer la culture du secret dans une conférence que j'avais proposé aux Minimes, il y a quelques mois de cela dans le cadre des cafés de philosophie vivante. La culture du secret ce n'est pas le secret, c'est une culture qui a pour but de créer du secret. *Cette culture se développe et ce n'est pas*

¹⁰ La société du spectacle. Buchet Chastel. 1967

¹¹ Pour cela, il conviendra de se reporter à l'ouvrage que j'ai co-écrit avec Martine Streliski et qui doit paraître : Seul le vrai restera.

*le capitalisme mais cette culture qui favorise le spectacle et c'est cet amour du spectacle qui développe les projections*¹².

La culture du secret, c'est celle que les philistins avaient adopté lorsqu'Abraham et Isaac, dans la Genèse avaient décidé de creuser des puits.¹³ Les philistins voulaient les recouvrir. Le puits, c'est le symbole de l'eau dans les régions désertiques et l'eau c'est la vie et le partage. Les philistins n'aiment pas la vie. Ils préfèrent la mort à la vie. De plus et surtout, ils n'aiment pas le partage. Ils préfèrent enfermer le vrai et la vérité et ils préfèrent la garder pour eux. Ils préfèrent la garder pour eux car la vérité c'est le savoir et le savoir c'est le pouvoir. Or c'est le pouvoir qu'ils aiment. De plus, le puits c'est le symbole de l'approfondissement et du véritable travail d'illumination et d'éclairage qu'il faut continuellement faire sur les abîmes de nos vies et qui nous abîment en permanence.

Il y a deux manières de faire entrer un jeune dans une société, la première la plus juste et la plus noble c'est de l'éclairer en le formant et l'éduquant et la seconde, la plus facile, c'est de lui infliger une violence lorsqu'il est jeune pour l'enfermer dans la honte.

Notre société est gouvernée par les barbares que nous sommes tous. Cette barbarie fait que nous préférons cultiver le secret plutôt que d'aller vers le vrai. *Le vrai ce n'est pas la vérité à tout prix. Le vrai c'est-ce qui est. Le vrai c'est la réalité qui se cache parfois et souvent dans les profondeurs.*

Le vrai est ce qui appelle les profondeurs. Il est cette eau qui nous apporte la vie.

La nature a horreur du vide. Le secret crée du vide. Avec le secret le vide se crée. DE CE FAIT nous avons besoin de nous remplir et c'est alors qu'à défaut de Lumière et d'éclairage nous allons préférer la projection.

La projection n'est donc rien d'autre qu'un leurre de l'éclairage. Si je suis enfermé dans une salle obscure, la projection sur l'écran est une lumière. Oui mais ce n'est qu'une projection d'ombres sur un écran qui m'éloigne du vrai. Pour l'être enfermé c'est une lumière mais pour celui qui connaît la réalité c'est une fiction terrible et qui plonge dans les ténèbres car elle fait croire que l'on sait alors que l'on ignore tout.

Si nous sommes dans le spectacle c'est parce que nous avons peur de la réalité et nous préférons nous donner en spectacle plutôt que nous montrer dans la profondeur. La Mise en spectacle et le fait d'être spectateur est une manière de

¹² Sur le sujet, on peut notamment consulter l'article de C. Bryon Portet.

<https://journals.openedition.org/quaderni/410>

¹³ Genèse 26-18

cultiver le secret. Ce secret crée alors une autre envie, celle de lumière seulement la lumière nous fait peur alors nous nous nourrissons de projections.

En conclusion, sortons de nos cavernes, cessons de projeter nos films et nos phantasmes sur les écrans blanches de nos nuits blanches comme l'a si bien chanté Claude Nougaro. Allons vers le vrai et vers la vie¹⁴.

¹⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmv16X-nT7k>

(RE)CONSIDERING GEOENGINEERING IN AN ETHICAL BIOCULTURAL FRAMEWORK

Radu SIMION¹

ABSTRACT. In the perspective of biocultural homogenization and the increasingly prominent use of technology, environmental ethics faces new challenges. Development policies, governance, and economic factors impose new ways of understanding and managing coexistence. Phenomena such as pandemics, global warming, migratory phenomena, the expansion of urban and rural areas, and the development of large-scale monocultures show us that human agency, resources, the environment, and surroundings are increasingly intertwined, both physically and metaphysically, in an increasingly encompassing organism where the dissociation between the local and the global becomes difficult to achieve. With a wide range of actions and relationships, environmental psychology and ethics have the task of rethinking the relationship between cultural elements and the biosphere, in order to achieve a balance between sensibility, responsibility, and responsivity. In this article, I aim to illustrate that a biocultural ethical framework emphasizing socio-environmental justice, applied to geoengineering, not only promotes global socio-environmental sustainability but also recognizes the crucial significance of local ecosystems in climate regulation and biodiversity conservation. To do so, I will briefly present some theoretical elements related to the importance of environmental psychology in understanding the connection between individuals and the surrounding environment. Then, I will succinctly present the concept of the "3Hs" and its implication on biocultural ethics, and subsequently integrate specific elements of biocultural ethics into the analysis of geoengineering ethics to illustrate the need for a perspective that takes this into account. Through this endeavor, I intend to emphasize the vital role of a holistic, multidimensional perspective that guides individual values and community policies towards sustainable practices, ensuring social cohesion and dialogue, respecting the coexistence of life forms, and protecting their habitats.

Keywords: environmental ethics, geoengineering, sustainability, biocultural ethics, environmental psychology.

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Introduction

The characteristics of the social and physical environment have a direct impact on the way human behaviors are articulated, and the health status of individuals and non-human entities is directly related to the organization and manifestation forms of the ecosystems in which they reside. Moral agency is closely linked to the perceptions, evaluations, and attitudes that individuals exhibit in relation to the environment, with the anthroposystem being tightly connected to the characteristics of the ecosystem. In order to understand the dynamics of social and cultural phenomena and to identify sustainable actions or sets of interventions in accordance with sustainable development goals, it is necessary to understand how our cognitions, perceptions, and representations depend on the levels and forms of organization of the environment. In this regard, environmental psychology can help us identify how individuals perceive the environment in which they live, as well as the impact of different environmental conditions on individual actions. Technological interventions on the climate, such as geoengineering, with the aim of manipulating it to achieve positive results, make us aware of the expansion of the human environment beyond the limits imposed by what we call "natural" or "artificial" (Moser, 2009). Human settlements shape the distribution of elements in space and reshape both biotic and anthropic models of interactions, drawing new coordinates for human communities' relationship with nature, as well as with other communities and inhabitants of ecosystems. Adaptive behavior in new environmental situations depends on a certain degree of control that individuals feel they have and can exert. Thus, individuals become efficient when environmental constraints are not so strong as to lead to disorganized behavioral reactions. Moral action is dependent on the level of controllability that individuals have to act in accordance with the considerations they deem desirable (Seligman, 1975). The surrounding environment is vulnerable to the motivations and actions exhibited by moral agents, and changes in the appearance and distribution of elements in the environment directly impact on how individuals perceive and respond to environmental stimuli. Having a degree of control over environmental conditions significantly reduces the risk of uncontrolled reactions towards the environment. Therefore, the more individuals feel empowered to control their living space, the more efficient their adaptive behaviors become.

Averill (1973) contends that individuals can exercise direct command over the surroundings by altering the circumstances that vex them. This control can adopt the guise of cognitive command, encompassing the evaluation and assessment of the stress level generated by particular environmental scenarios, as well as decisional command, wherein individuals possess multiple feasible alternatives to

select from. Hence, the essential prerequisites for an individual to partake in a control conduct are ascertained by the likelihood that the situation can be modified in the intended manner, the perception of the probability that a situation can alter through its own dynamics, and the valence or worth of the situation. In this framework, we can mention an ethos of motivation and, conceivably, the extent of positive reward it entails. Consequently, we can observe that behaviors associated with the environment are components of an exceedingly intricate cognitive system, wherein the situational interpretation of the environment, the degree of command, motivations, and expectations all contribute to our societal representations of space. (Parodi et.al, 2011).

Understanding social relationships is intimately tied to the social portrayals of the inhabitants of a territory, a standpoint that governs behaviors, which can be either sustainable, aligning with the requisites of sustainable development and regard for future generations, or unsustainable and ruinous. The social portrayals of individuals determine an accumulative array of ecological or non-ecological behaviors, and the principles of organization and comprehension of social reality dictate the epistemic validity of moral action (Neculau & Curelaru, 2003). Consequently, there is a close correlation between the establishment of behavioral schemas and the tangible and communal dimensions of the environment in which individuals partake, and territorial relationships exert a direct influence on behavioral adaptability. The ecological administration of space becomes contingent on the relationships with the environment structured by the individual's personal encounter, an encounter that is, in turn, influenced by the characteristics of cultural and ecological multiplicity (Rozzi et al., 2018). Therefore, an environment perceived by an individual as limiting to their objectives will incite a series of adverse emotional responses, culminating in a reactance effect that prompts the individual to react with behaviors that reinstate a sense of manageability (Stokols, 1978). Nevertheless, humans are not solely engaged in the tangible aspects of landscapes, but also in the emblematic, cultural, and linguistic elements. Language, customs, and technology are profoundly ingrained in human observation and comprehension of organic variety. The phrase "biocultural" explicitly acknowledges that the societal aspects of any perceiver, containing scholars with their investigative techniques and representational frameworks, exert a substantial influence on the formulation and interpretation of biodiversity notions. Consequently, human perceptions and comprehension of biodiversity and their surroundings can shape the manner in which humans populate ecosystems and alter the arrangement, operations, and composition of living organisms, spanning from small to worldwide extents.

A biocultural ethical framework that accentuates socio-environmental justice not only fosters worldwide socio-environmental sustainability but also acknowledges the pivotal importance of local ecosystems in regulating climate and conserving biodiversity on a global scale. Nowadays, humans wield greater influence over the biosphere compared to alternative natural forces. This realization blurs the conventional dichotomy between "biophysical" and "cultural" facets of actuality and underscores the truth that global society possesses the capability to instigate substantial alterations to the planet's climate, contamination, biological variety, and more. To comprehend the role of humans in the Anthropocene, it is vital to embrace a biocultural standpoint that surpasses depiction and raises ethical inquiries concerning human agency as the principal impetus shaping the biosphere. The disregard for ecological and cultural variety, alongside their interconnectedness within the assorted regions of our planet, has led to processes of biocultural standardization. This frequently disregarded feature of environmental crisis propels the Anthropocene, causing the loss of biodiversity and cultural richness at local, territorial, and worldwide levels. While the extent of biocultural standardization is not widely recognized, it stems from intricate and pervasive declines in both biological and cultural diversity. The widespread substitution of local ecosystems, linguistics, and cultural artifacts by cosmopolitan counterparts distorts the interaction of indigenous cultures and their surroundings. When a social group embraces universally homogenous lifestyles, it is more prone to fashion uniformly standardized habitats. Concurrently, globally uniform digitalized urban environments boost internationally uniform lifestyles and mindsets to underscore these intersections between cosmopolitan lifestyles and surroundings, and their implication for both humanity and other-than-human species, the term "biocultural standardization" was coined by Rozzi (2012).

Biocultural ethics and the „3Hs”

To counteract the effects of biocultural homogenization, Rozzi (2020) draw up the theoretical paradigm of the biocultural ethos, which emphasizes the importance of recognizing the interconnectedness among diverse life habits of various co-inhabitants, including humans and other species, who share a common habitat. While ecologists may perceive the connections between habitats, habits, and co-inhabitants, referred to as the "3Hs" (Rossi et.al. 2020) as self-evident, these links are presently confronting swift and extensive disruptions due to policies and development models that neglect to acknowledge and value the distinctive and diverse local biota and cultures. Consequently, these distinctive elements are being

eradicated and substituted with a restricted and standardized array of biological species and cultural habits on a global scale. Rozzi introduced an approach to biocultural preservation that established correlations between assimilation, reliance, socio-economic disparity, and the relocations encountered by regional populations from their original territories. The preservation of ecosystems is not solely acknowledged from a scientific standpoint but also held in elevated ethical esteem as a fundamental prerequisite for ensuring the welfare and safeguarding of the ethnic heritage and cultural practices within these local settlements. To attain equity and sustainability, Rozzi (2003) claimed the necessity of putting together the governmental, financial, and epistemological features, supporting the preservation of various and distinct habitats and the living habits that have evolved in each specific area. In order to protect a habitat, it is essential to shield it from the detrimental actions driven by imbalanced self-interests of particular individuals or groups, which can lead to the deterioration of ecosystems, biotic communities, and specific populations. The protection of habitats is grounded in a fusion of both legal and moral frameworks, which may differ across diverse countries. (Callicot, 1994). Within the model of the biocultural ethos, the idea of habitat encompasses three interrelated aspects, where alterations in one feature precipitate modifications in the others. These three elements are the (1) biophysical dimensions, (2) the cultural and symbolic-linguistic dimensions and the (3) the social, structural, and technological components (Rozzi, 2015). All of these dimensions are potentially impacted by the effects of climate engineering, and the short- and medium-term consequences can be irreversible, causing destabilization and modification of natural mechanisms and landscapes, community policies and practices, thus changing the way individuals relate to the technosphere, their peers, the goods, and resources. Therefore, the concept of "co-inhabitants" bears ethical and ontological implications that are interconnected and serve as a critique of the dominant theoretical model of environmental benefits. The framework in question suggest that individuals manage the ecological outputs, thus considering humans as the sole active agents with their own interests. However, within the biocultural ethos's conceptual framework, the term "co-inhabitants" adopts a more extensive interpretation to underscore three crucial traits of the diverse beings (both humans and other living entities) that partake in a biotope.

Firstly, co-inhabitants are perceived as individuals rather than things. Secondly, their identities and well-being are co-formed through their interdependence with other human and wildlife entities. Lastly, co-dwellers inhabit in the same environments that they collectively shape by their shared living arrangements. These associations are characterized by ecological complementarity and reciprocity, involving transfers of substances and forces. Hence, the conservation and protection

of biodiversity becomes crucial conditions for the existence and well-being of these diverse co-dwellers. Co-inhabitation implies reciprocity, acknowledging the mutual interdependence and shared responsibility between humans and the broader ecological community. (R. Rozzi et al. 2020). I have introduced the theoretical model of the biocultural ethos' 3Hs as a design that provides knowledge in three important areas. Firstly, it enhances our comprehension of the complex multidimensional and multiscale processes involved in global changes. Secondly, it aids in the formulation of policies that effectively integrate moral, governmental, and eco-related components within our today's tech-oriented society. Thirdly, it supports decision-making mechanisms by evaluating the potential ramifications of development projects on the preservation or destruction of living environments, ways of life, and the welfare of co-dwellers. By using the 3Hs scheme of the biocultural ethos, we can navigate international community towards energy-efficient forms of cohabitation among the quickly transforming socio-ecological scenarios. This framework serves as a valuable tool to navigate the intricacies of our changing world and make informed decisions that prioritize the long-term well-being of both humans and the broader ecological community.

Essentially, the biocultural ethos framework recognizes living environments as encompassing these interconnected dimensions, emphasizing their interdependence. Changes in any one dimension inevitably impact the others, highlighting the intricate relationship between biophysical factors and the living organisms they sustain. Biocultural ethics is a field of study that analyzes and evaluates the environmental and societal factors contributing to both biocultural homogenization and biocultural conservation. It employs a conceptual framework and methodology that facilitate collaboration among biologists, engineers, anthropologists, ethicists, and other professionals in researching and redirecting environmental change towards a sustainable future. Also, it establishes connections between human existence and the diversity of co-dwellers with whom humans share their identities and well-being. This ethical approach encompasses inter-species relationships, expanding the moral relevance of biotic components to the community. Unlike popular contemporary ethical norms, which primarily concentrate on human conduct while neglecting their surrounding environments, biocultural ethics integrates human customs, living environments, and the communities of co-dwellers. These "3Hs" of biocultural ethics encompass various aspects, including the ecological, language-based, and societal-institutional-technological dimensions. Within each domain, it is crucial to examine power dynamics and varying responsibilities related to the origins and remedies for ecological challenges. These statements are not exclusively factual but carry normative value, aspiring to

utilitarian truth. Biocultural ethics endeavors to promote social-environmental fairness by endorsing the sustenance of biological variety and cultural heterogeneity (Rozzi, 2013).

Biocultural morality highlights that numerous communities worldwide manifest conservation-minded and harmonious coexistence practices (Callicott, 1994). Furthermore, it underscores that a small number of identifiable actors are accountable for many significant environmental issues (Rozzi et al, 2008). Consequently, analyzing global environmental change as a broad conflict between humanity and the environment is both distorted and unjust. To address this, biocultural standards seek to recognize and hold individuals accountable for socio-ecological challenges. The application of biocultural morality promotes further exploration and admiration of biological and cultural variety, alongside their interconnectivity, in educational initiatives, policy formulation, and everyday customs. This approach counters the adverse repercussions stemming from the homogenization of biocultural diversity. Therefore, it is crucial to emphasize the importance of ethical collaboration among individuals and communities due to the global impact of geoengineering. This impact will have far-reaching consequences, influencing our perception and management of landscapes, biodiversity elements, and the intricate connections between the human-influenced environment and the natural world.

Geoengineering in the biocultural ethics model

First and foremost, we can only consider geoengineering as an additional option alongside adaptation and mitigation, rather than a solitary intervention devoid of efforts to tackle the root causes of global warming. The available options for manipulating the Earth's climate can be broadly categorized into two groups: those that seek to mitigate global warming by reducing greenhouse gas levels (carbon sequestration) and those that aim to limit sunlight intensity reaching the Earth (solar radiation management). For the purpose of this paper, I will solely focus on solar radiation management because, unlike carbon sequestration, it has the potential to artificially cool the climate at a faster rate, even though its effects are not immediate (although it addresses the underlying cause of global warming, which is the volume of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere). Specifically, one solar radiation management procedure proposes the continuous release of hydrogen sulphide (H₂S) and sulphur dioxide aerosols (SO₂) into the stratosphere. Atmospheric aerosols are particles suspended in the air, consisting of gas or liquid, and they exist in the atmosphere due to both natural occurrences and human

activities. These particles have a significant impact on the climate. They directly affect solar radiation by absorbing a portion of the incoming solar energy, and they also indirectly contribute to cloud formation, resulting in a cooling effect. This phenomenon reduces the amount of solar energy reaching the Earth's surface and atmosphere, reflecting a small fraction back into space. Solar radiation management procedures strive to decrease the amount of solar energy reaching the Earth through various methods, including space-based approaches, modifications to stratospheric aerosols, marine cloud whitening, and alterations to surface albedo. Redirecting one to two percent of the sunlight that reaches the Earth back into space would lead to a cooling effect equivalent to the projected warming resulting from doubling the levels of greenhouse gases compared to pre-industrial times (Cherry & Todd, 2021).

The technique of marine cloud whitening involves generating a fine mist of seawater droplets that rise into the atmosphere, forming sea salt aerosols. This process entails spraying micron-sized droplets of seawater beneath marine stratocumulus clouds within the turbulent boundary layer. As the residues left behind after the droplets evaporate reach the cloud level, they introduce numerous new cloud condensation nuclei, effectively enhancing the cloud's albedo and reflecting solar energy back into space. This procedure would cool the Earth by an amount comparable to the cooling effect expected from doubling atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations (Bellamy, 2016). Due to the Earth's climate system's sensitivity to alterations, these technological procedures may yield unintended outcomes, such as changes in global precipitation patterns and distribution, an upsurge in acid rain, alterations in sky brightness and coloration, reduced solar insolation for photovoltaic and thermal energy production, delays in mitigating ozone layer depletion, potential drastic warming if abruptly discontinuing atmospheric sulphate aerosol injection, increased plant productivity, potential adverse impacts on health and healthcare, and disparate regional climate changes.

Thus, stratospheric aerosols holds significant potential as a partial measure to mitigate global warming. Compared to other geoengineering approaches, it produces immediate effects that can also be reversed by ceasing sulphur injections if problems arise. However, even if successful, the use of sulphur aerosols serves as a temporary solution, as warming will resume once the injections cease. Solar radiation management fails to address other negative consequences of rising anthropogenic CO₂ emissions, such as ocean acidification. Therefore, relying on stratospheric aerosols alone cannot be regarded as a viable strategy to combat climate change but rather as a means to buy additional time to directly address the root causes. Nonetheless, substantial efforts must be dedicated to determining the most efficient execution of injections and conducting extensive research into

potential unintended effects before implementing this geoengineering technologies (Keith, 2021). According to Royal Society Report (2009), the SRM methods with the greatest potential, ranked in order of priority, are (1) stratospheric aerosol methods, having the advantage of more uniform distribution of their effects compared to other techniques and can be implemented relatively easily, (2) cloud brightening methods,(with the advantage of being readily deployable and can be tested on a smaller scale with fewer governance concerns compared to other SRM strategies and (3) space-based SRM methods, providing a more consistent cooling effect compared to surface or cloud-based methods, being a cost-effective option compared to other SRM methods. However, the development of the space-based SRM technology is expected to take several decades. While the feasibility of implementing geoengineering measures involves considerations of policies, governance, and costs, solar radiation management (SRM) can serve as a temporary alleviation of concerns regarding the impending ecological catastrophe (Scott, 2018). Certain scholars have proposed that geoengineering procedures could contribute to raising awareness about climate change and the urgency of adopting policies and practices that mitigate the impacts of pollution and waste management (Wagner & Merk, 2019).

Furthermore, by comprehending the ongoing interconnectedness and adaptability inherent in the functioning of all living systems, we can observe how our actions can result in substantial amounts of waste, burdens, and debts (Scott, 2018) that may be inherited by future generations. Even if solar radiation management (SRM) strategies would be implemented, their effectiveness would hinge on international adherence to these technologies, necessitating global awareness among nations regarding the supportive role of geoengineering in conjunction with clear pathways toward a fundamentally different lifestyle. Such a lifestyle should prioritize biodiversity, safeguard the delicate atmospheric equilibrium, and promote responsible resource usage. The SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the embargo on Russia's gas and oil exports serve as examples of situations where ecological concerns take a back seat to sanitary, political, and economic interests. Nevertheless, research in biotechnology, applied studies on ecosystems, and policies related to resource management and waste must persist. Moor (2005) argues that the rapid emergence of new technologies (referred to as technological revolutions) often catches analysts off guard, including psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists, and ethicists. Their tendency to apply outdated analytical methods may lead to failures due to the mismatch between the values inherent in the new technological paradigm and the methods employed for analysis. Consequently, we find ourselves in a realm that calls for new conceptual frameworks and procedures.

To address this need, it is crucial to recognize that applied ethics are dynamic organisms, constantly evolving and confronting new challenges. This implies that within the realm of ethics surrounding emerging technologies, it is crucial to continuously situate ourselves in relation to their development, anticipate their trajectories, and devise new analysis strategies. Grasping the entirety of a technological revolution is challenging due to information loss during its emergence. Therefore, Moor's second recommendation emphasizes the establishment of improved collaboration among ethicists, scientists, social science researchers, and technology specialists—a multidisciplinary approach is essential. I underscore the significance of this issue because it represents the sole means through which we can obtain a comprehensive understanding of the world that may be shaped by climate engineering. Without such an approach, ethical dilemmas will proliferate, and the sciences attempting to address them will deplete their resources justifying pseudo-problems that could have been averted. The third enhancement for the ethics of emerging technologies entails the imperative to develop more intricate ethical analysis methods, recognizing that ethical theories often prove simplistic and offer limited assistance in dealing with specific situations. Applied ethics must continually engage with challenges in the present to avert the "shock of the future," enhancing their working mechanisms and identifying the underlying logic of scientific evolution. Even in the face of unforeseen dilemmas, research in climate engineering must persevere and advance.

There is an obvious need to minimize the risks associated with deliberate interventions such as solar radiation management (SRM), ensuring that research proceeds in accordance with the moral principles of science and avoids serving private interests or arbitrary manipulation (Ackerman, 2017). The governance of geoengineering should be framed within a framework that considers moral principles upon which researchers, public, and private entities can rely. The Tollgate Principles (Gardiner & Fragniere, 2018) offer such a framework, encompassing the entire process of framing, authorization, consultation, trust and accountability, technical feasibility, predictability, and social protection of geoengineering strategies. Moreover, there is a need to transition from an investigator-driven scientific program to a robust mission-driven research structure (Morrow, 2019). Furthermore, there is a requirement for comprehensive on-site research that involves all stakeholders and potentially affected communities of solar radiation management (SRM) strategies. This research aims to establish a collaborative body between local institutions and the central government, facilitating the inclusion of diverse values, ideas, perceptions, and beliefs while informing communities about the impacts of geoengineering strategies. Public engagement plays a vital role in ensuring the reliable and trustworthy implementation of SRM strategies.

Hence, the moral principle of publicity becomes essential, recognizing the significant impact of geoengineering on the quality of life for individuals and species, as well as the interactions among institutions and moral agents in terms of rights, justice, welfare, political legitimacy, and compensation strategies (Blackstock & Low, 2019). Research should be conducted in accordance with the precautionary principle to mitigate situations where SRM strategies result in incomparable or irreparable unintended negative effects. It is crucial to conduct computer simulations, analyses, and test technology functioning within a stable and predictable context (Wolff, 2019). The implementation of solar radiation management (SRM) has implications that extend beyond national borders, potentially impacting various regions worldwide (Heyward, 2019). Ecosystems' ability to mitigate the effects of human activities is already overwhelmed, with tipping points being exceeded and subsequently overlooked. The loss of biodiversity, soil degradation, ongoing acidification of oceans, disruption of nitrogen cycles, and significant global changes in air currents, coupled with severe air pollution, all necessitate a sustainable and enduring strategy. This strategy should begin with public policies and extend to lifestyle changes, altering our patterns of consumption and reevaluating our self-perception in relation to our possessions and actions. The challenges posed by geoengineering, including feasibility, moral hazards, governance issues, research-related obstacles, and risk-related dilemmas, will intersect with existing problems. The current economic growth model, which relies on the exploitation of natural resources like oil, gas, wood, and coal, will ultimately lead to a collapse (Sturloni, 2017). Introducing another form of human intervention into the Earth's climate system could potentially result in irreversible environmental transformations. Without a global consensus on strategies to keep global temperatures within safe limits (which are regularly surpassed and revised in every global environmental summit), engaging in irreversible climate interventions through alternative technologies would be at least dangerous, if not irresponsible and ultimately catastrophic (Shue, 2018; Dooley and Kartha, 2018). Given the complexity of the Earth's system, any large-scale attempts to influence the functioning of living systems and ecosystem interactions require careful consideration. SRM could have significant environmental consequences, such as reduced global precipitation, increased acid deposition, and diminished oceanic productivity. Additionally, if SRM were to prove successful (even on a long term), there is a risk of commercializing geoengineering technologies, which would have unprecedented global impacts in political, scientific, social, and ecological realms. In such a scenario, there is a heightened likelihood of addressing symptoms rather than underlying causes, leading to a weakening of moral agency and motivations (Nerrico, 2018).

Ensuring public safety and providing transparent information to the public, along with controlling access to geoengineering technologies, are imperative. It is crucial to establish robust and practical protocols for monitoring and verifying the activities of companies involved in producing the necessary components or systems for geoengineering. These companies should have safeguards in place to protect their data and equipment used in small-scale tests of geoengineering procedures. The results of these tests, as well as the associated impacts and risks, should be effectively communicated to the public (Smith, 2020). Having the context of geoengineering research and its possible implications, biocultural morality advocates for an approach that is willing to explore the interconnections among individuals, living creatures and their habitats. To accomplish this, interdisciplinary cooperation between ecologists and philosophers is vital in bringing insights from scientific perspectives, while conserving and promoting local cultural and moral dispositions that are strong and sustainable. Thereby, biocultural morality aims to increase consciousness about cohabitation of different living beings and to help individuals cultivate the communication skills with a diverse range of people as well as other non-human beings. This form of communication goes beyond mere verbal or rational exchange and encompasses physicality, emotion, and the practice of co-inhabitation in daily living. Biocultural dialogue is not confined to far-off areas but can also be nurtured in the urban dwelling places of cities.

Additionally, it underscores the importance of integrating and embracing the multitude of eco-conscious local rituals and knowledge into policy, economy, and school-based education. We can distinguish between various meanings concerning sustainability. Thus, we can discuss either expansive sustainability, which seeks to establish mechanisms of environmental justice and political control, or moderate sustainability, namely a gradual transformation of the current socio-economic system without radically altering the structure of environmental policies (Stevenson & Dryzek, 2014). The expression "place-based" refers to three separate levels of encounter. Primarily, through practical engagement, it is possible to observe and investigate constituents and operations of biocultural variety which are frequently disregarded or misrepresented in formal learning, public strategy, and dominant worldwide paradigms. Subsequently, by engaging with their sentiments and reason in interchanges with other entities in their environmental, semiotic, and systemic conditions, participants acquire a comprehensive perception of biocultural variety. Ultimately, and most notably, through direct meetings with other human and other ethical recipients, the comprehension of biocultural variety is transmuted from a simple notion to an immense encounter of co-residence. This encounter permits other entities to surpass their status as mere objects of exploration and obtain the position of co-residing subjects.

Within this framework, the expression "culture" is employed to denote a modern comprehension where culture is no longer perceived as the antithesis of natural surroundings but as the concomitant presence of essential hereditary aspects such as togetherness, correspondence, and custom (McDaniel, 2002). From a pragmatist standpoint, culture may be viewed as a system that guarantees the continuous safeguarding of a communal group, acting as a mutual regulatory mechanism that fosters a sense of unity and aims to establish constancy throughout timespan (Orr, 2002). Consequently, sustainability, initially comprehended in a restricted sense, becomes an implied central objective within any culture.

Theoretically, a sustainable culture would be sustainability that is collectively endorsed, mutually agreed upon, and easily understandable, as well as being institutionalized and internalized so that it is transmitted through customs, patterns, habits, and even emotions. In a moral culture of sustainability, its principles are embraced and put into practice on a day-to-day basis. Similar to the manner in which accomplishments like democracy, freedom, autonomy, and education are deeply ingrained in the cultural backdrop and only come to the forefront when threatened, sustainability should also become a fundamental cultural notion and achievement that guides the collective. At its core, a culture of sustainability involves translating and embodying the key doctrines and perspectives of eco-friendliness notions into everyday life. It goes beyond merely defining and implementing complex rules and indicators associated with sustainability concepts. Instead, it entails the collective institutionalization of the underlying humanistic principles that form the basis of these concepts, such as global awareness, intergenerational justice, and an expanded understanding of our relationship with the environment. When we delve into the authentic essence of sustainability and contemplate its assertions of being worldwide, integrative, to some extent anthropocentric, and intergenerational, we come to comprehend the complete breadth of its scope. It encompasses nothing short of the welfare of humanity as a whole, perceiving all moral actors as members of a community or, from an ecocentric standpoint, recognizing all beings as interconnected kin.

Among other factors, two elements support this approach. Firstly, the pervasive integration of technology into our natural living environment has resulted in the disappearance of nature, significantly undermining any sustainable ecological framework. We observe that nature is manipulated, transformed into a technical state, losing its intrinsic identity as it merges with technological artifacts and culture. In ecological contexts where technology and nature are inseparably intertwined and unpredictable, the traditional distinction between technology and nature becomes meaningless. Then, the ecological crisis serves as a stark demonstration that the prevailing notion of technology as a means of controlling

and harnessing nature is yielding consequences that jeopardize the continuance of humankind. The ecological crisis is essentially a manifestation of a paradigm primarily centered on the division of humanity, culture, and the technological disruption of nature. Therefore, it is imperative to reassess our relationship with nature and technology, recognizing the need for a more harmonious and mutually beneficial coexistence. This shift entails embracing a perspective that transcends the dichotomy between technology and nature, acknowledging their interdependence and seeking sustainable solutions that uphold the integrity of both.

There is a concern that the implementation of geoengineering may lead to the marginalization of ethical issues and superficial justifications. This could occur either because certain ethical concerns are deemed too sensitive for public discourse and consensus is difficult to achieve, or because discussions on potential dangers are sacrificed in favor of the belief that geoengineering is preferable to inaction (Rickles et al., 2018). Such an analysis necessarily involves discussions on moral solidarity, distributive justice, and informed consent. It requires clear and transparent evaluations of costs, impacts on human rights, intergenerational effects, and the formulation of compensation principles in relation to food justice and unrestricted access to basic resources. In terms of compensation principles, it should be noted that there is currently no clear and unified strategy at the policy level regarding the agents (institutions, governments, industry stakeholders, large or small polluters) responsible for covering the costs of implementing SRM technologies. The concepts of separation, autonomy, and individuality can estrange human beings from their natural environment. These concepts promote and imply power dynamics. However, placing excessive emphasis on these notions can be perceived as a misconception for two primary reasons. Firstly, from an ethical standpoint, overvaluing and prioritizing these concepts diminishes the importance of the environment, paving the way for violence and exploitation. Secondly, epistemologically, if the emphasis remains purely theoretical without any basis in reality, it can lead to erroneous conclusions and ineffective actions.

Fundamentally, it is vital to acknowledge that placing excessive emphasis on separation, autonomy, and individuality can have adverse repercussions for both ourselves as human beings and the interrelated systems we inhabit. Embracing a more comprehensive perspective that recognizes the interdependence of individuals and their environment is crucial for fostering sustainable development and social harmony. This entails the need to strengthen our character, diminish the dimensions of hubris, support sensitivity and entrepreneurship in the realm of technology with an altruistic approach, nurture tenacity and the spirit of observation, self-reflection, and critical thinking. We find ourselves metaphysically entangled in a web of interdependencies, wherein self-care must manifest as a mature moral,

emotional, and psychological inclination towards caring for the entirety of our identification (Stoenescu, 2016). Any alteration to the structure of an element within a system will inevitably impact the entire system. Nothing eludes the system, thus introducing any element requires careful evaluation of its local and global consequences on the entire biophysical system. Hence, as geoengineering arise as an feasible option, all significant participants in the fields of science, society, medicine, law, technology, and politics must engage in an open dialogue, embracing a holistic perspective and fostering cooperative attitudes. There is a strong need for an unprecedented interdisciplinary endeavor to address this global challenge. Establishing a common ground for exploration, contemplation, action, and implementation concerning climate change is of utmost importance, and decisions need to be promptly implemented, having a necessary attention given to the moral principles of subsidiarity, justice, publicity, and precaution.

Conclusion

In the face of global changes, we require interdisciplinary philosophical and scientific approaches. The challenges posed by socio-ecological dilemmas compel us to reconsider the fundamental basis of our understanding of nature, the environment, and our role within them. This includes our communities, resource utilization, and the fulfillment of our needs. It is important to recognize that the right decision is not always the easiest one, given the multitude of options and ideological influences we encounter daily. To navigate sustainable development and respect for future generations, we need public policies that are clear, transparent, intelligent, and creative. Prudence is essential in areas where we have limited understanding of the interconnections between human agency and fundamental ecological values. Simultaneously, it is evident that action is required. We must expand our relationships and cultivate motivations aligned with moral principles that safeguard the interconnected web of biodiversity. Technologies, by mediating relationships between humans and the world, actively contribute to our moral framework. The profound integration of human beings and technological products in our lives means that even our ethical judgments and choices are shaped by technology. Recognizing this interplay is crucial for assuming responsibility for the societal and existential impacts of technology.

As the effects of geoengineering transcend borders and potentially disrupt the diversity of inhabited areas and habitats, it becomes our responsibility to acknowledge the necessity of a bioethical common ground—an all-encompassing environmental ethics—encouraging the development of communication,

evaluation, and implementation mechanisms and tools for technologies that can manipulate transnational ecosystems. Furthermore, we must be aware that technologies are frequently employed to justify harmful and irreversible interventions in economic, social, cultural, or natural domains, resulting in significant costs and potential new issues through a slippery slope effect. Consequently, resolutions regarding geoengineering investigative endeavors should be accompanied by proper notification and discussion with those potentially affected and their delegates, duly considering their self-declared interests and values. We should strive to strengthen environmentalist values by recognizing the natural world as an irreplaceable reservoir of essential necessities that enhance human life quality. Upholding these values should transcend differences and the number of individuals within a community. We should place importance on cultural and knowledge diversity within habitats and be responsive to their needs. The Capitalocene era comes at a cost, and the crises we encounter serve as a reflection where metaphysical questions and daily observations intertwine. Ultimately, intelligence, understanding, compassion, and the courage to act convey a message to ourselves. It is crucial not to fear making mistakes; thus, research in geoengineering and beyond should persist and improve. Simultaneously, our loyalty and commitment to ourselves demand resistance to conformity, the inclination towards submission and destruction, and the imposition of a moral rigor that will ultimately preserve not only the beauty of biodiversity but will serve as a response that humanity offers back to life—a gift acknowledging the miraculous opportunity to be here, now, on Earth.

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THE FRAMING REVOLT: THE ROLE OF UNLIMITED PUNISHMENT IN THE (SO-CALLED) CULTURE OF THE LIMIT

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ABSTRACT. What is the role of unlimited punishment in a (so-called) limit culture? What is the point of narratives that tell of endless, futile labors and sufferings? Trying to find their role in a dimension that involves much more than an obvious “moralizing” contribution, in the manner of a satire, the unlimited punishment will be researched, by reference to *bios* and *thanatos*, at the intersection of public cult, blood sacrifices and mysteries from ancient Greece, looking for its source in civic religion as a punishment for wandering.

Keywords: bios, thanatos, thambos, hybris, *Sisyphus*, *Prometheus*

Existence appears fundamentally as limited, as situated, framed. What matters from this point is to follow the way in which the dilemma of how to live can be answered, thus questioning how it can be lived. From the plethora of philosophical problematizations carried out over time (ethical theories, existentialism, etc.), one of the most important approaches, designating the very dimension of reality as such from the concreteness of the *bios*, is marked, on the one hand, by the projectivity of death and – on the other hand – the way in which existence as such can be organized; operating convergently, the problematization aims at the way in which existence can be organized in the horizon of *thanatos*. In this sense, in the cultural dimension of mythology, corroborated here through the prism of the fact that the problematization as such returns to being treated “culturally” (in the

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sense of the way in which life and death are represented from mythology), the questioning proposed in this paper follows the way in which, in the projectivity of a postmortem "salvation", Greek culture pursued the conception – and reconciliation – of *bios* and *thanatos*. What matters here is precisely that culture generally answers such vital questions. And starting from this point, the present problematization aims at the way in which, in the depths of humanity, culture does not appear as an illusory creation of creativity, but the sphere in which it consumes its existence. And in this sense, the dimension of *thanatos* is pursued in rigorous preparation in anticipation of defeat. From the entire Greek mythology, what is important in the present work consists in researching the representation of *thanatos* – especially, in our approach, the role of unlimited punishment being important; punishments like those of Sisyphus, Ixion, Tantalus, the Danaids, Prometheus, etc., repetitive punishments ad infinitum. In particular, what draws attention to this problematization is the way in which, in a culture that aims at rigorous measure, temperance – and not only in Heraclitus, Plato, Aristotle, the Epicureans, etc. –, exceeding the limit is felt in negativity. And it would seem intuitive, elementary, by perceiving the contrast from the perspective of the limit, because any crossing of the limit, thus refusing it, stepping on it, leads to the loss of the self. But what is the source of this vision? And - more precisely - what is the stake, as a benchmark, of this relationship between the limit and the limitless in the existential dimension?

Concretely, the guiding question of the present text can be formulated as follows: what is the role of unlimited punishment in a (so-called) limit culture? Why, in the pursuit of inscribing within precise and firm limits, did the Hellenic imagination conceive this limitless dimension in negativity? Why does Greek mythology have as a vital area the negative conception of the limitless? Thus, subsidiarily, asking what is the relationship between divinity and man from the limit and how this relationship can enlighten man how to live?

Following a number of anthropological benchmarks for contextualization, the representation of Hell will be corroborated with different mythological episodes that punctuate the relationship and "limitations" of gods and humans, nuanced the role of the limit in Greek culture.

The civic role of religion in Ancient Greece

From the beginning, it is important to point out that the role that religion has in the culture of ancient Greece is a civic one, so that the Hellenes "negotiated"

the relationship with the divine spectrum², through a codependency with the gods³. Based on a diverse array of orally transmitted ideas, it was subjected to critical reflection⁴. Along with learning at home, poets were the ones who contributed to the oral spread of myths, singing about the gods⁵ and warriors⁶, but fundamentally it played as an essential component of the consolidation of social relations⁷. Such a critical dimension is fulfilled by the way in which the ancient Greeks constantly sought to question existence in relation to divinity, exploiting intelligence "as an instrument of information" regarding the Inferno⁸.

The relationship of interdependence between man and gods determines a diversity of divinities, related to existential needs and found everywhere⁹. These feeling¹⁰ gave birth to a pious fear, *thambos*, understood as a sentimental reaction in relation to the sacred¹¹. On this background, religious manifestations have a representative background with an actualizing role.¹² The Distribution and Relation of the Olympic Spectrum¹³ considers the way in which man sought to fix himself existentially, taking into account his origin and race, the civic contribution of religion consisting in this historical-identity regulation¹⁴. Thus, religious experience is invariably based on correspondence with divinity in the composition and organization of the *polis* and temples¹⁵. The cult thus gives an account of the way in which the relationship is pursued through contrast with the existence of the gods - respectively the heroes -, to which the sacrifice is corroborated as that which, finally, marks the fundamental character of the contrast between man and divinity: the sacrificial food, equally distributed, has a fundamental role in the relationship with divinity. Based on Prometheus' attempt to trick Zeus at the first feast and by stealing fire, the public feast¹⁶ it is he who emphasizes the discrepancy between

² Vernant, Jean – Pierre, *Mythe et religion en Grèce ancienne*, Éditions du Seuil, 1990, pp. 15 – 16

³ *Ibidem.*, pp. 16 – 17

⁴ *Ibidem.*, p. 23, p. 27

⁵ Detienne, Marcel, *The Masters of Truth in Archaic Greek*, Zone Books, New York, 1996, chapter II

⁶ Vernant, *op. cit.*, pp. 69 – 88

⁷ *Ibidem.*, pp. 23 – 24

⁸ *Ibidem.*, pp. 26 – 27

⁹ *Ibidem.*, p. 17

¹⁰ *Ibidem.*, p. 34

¹¹ *Ibidem.*, p. 29

¹² *Ibidem.*, p. 34 – 39

¹³ *Ibidem.*, p. 42

¹⁴ *Ibidem.*, pp. 47 – 48

¹⁵ *Ibidem.*, pp. 58 – 59

¹⁶ *Ibidem.*, pp. 76 – 79

mortals and immortals¹⁷, depicting man, who communicates with divinity through fire, between animals and gods (similar to Aristotle in *Politics*). The last religious component is marked by the mysteries, as a set of beliefs that complete the civic religion¹⁸, thus completing the network of cultural practices – to which the oracles are added¹⁹ – of communication with the divinity²⁰: the mysteries of Eleusis – which ensured the continuation of a fulfilled existence²¹ –, dionysism – what marks, against the background of the uniqueness of Dionysus²² – radically blurring the lines between humans, gods, and animals, lashing out at those who disregard it²³ – and Orphism – which goes in a completely different direction, capitalizing on the reincarnations that feed the fears of diseases²⁴ – are the special cults, which nuance the religious activity of the Greek as a deepening of the relationship with the divinity and the orientation of existence in the deep coordinates of the polis.

The Description of Tartarus

The problem of death – and not only from the mysteries of Eleusis – cannot be understood without an (at least) overall picture of Hell, as this helps to facilitate the contribution that unlimited punishment has through the characteristics of the environment in which it is carried out. The description of Tartarus will capture, first of all, the fearful atmosphere of a space where unlimited punishments take place. Second, it designates how the latter is resized.

Thus, Tartarus is described as one of the places where people will end up after being divided at the crossroads between the Isles of the Blessed and Tartarus²⁵, a crossroads with two spaces on earth and two in heaven²⁶.

In extending the descriptions from Plato's dialogues²⁷, anticipating the development of this work, it is worth pointing out the important landmarks of the conditioning regarding the way to the other world: the temperate soul and the one

¹⁷ *Ibidem.*, p. 79

¹⁸ Eliade, Mircea, *A History of Religious Ideas*, vol. I, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1987, p. 299

¹⁹ Vernant, *op. cit.*, pp. 58

²⁰ *Ibidem.*, pp. 89 – 112

²¹ *Ibidem.*, pp. 95 – 96

²² Eliade, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 363 – 366

²³ Vernant, *op. cit.*, pp. 98 – 104

²⁴ *Ibidem.*, pp. 104 – 109

²⁵ *Gorgias* 524 a

²⁶ *The Republic* 614 c – e

²⁷ *Phaedo* (107 e – 108 a, 69), *The Republic* (363 c – d), *Gorgias* (493 b)

too attached to the body, the misfortunes of the intemperate, the reward and peace of the good, etc. These are decisive aspects, because, having reached Hell, after the journey on the Styx and overcoming Cerberus," a three-headed or, some say, fifty-headed dog"²⁸, the departed soul is guided to one of three paths: "the cheerless Asphodel Fields"²⁹ – where go those without serious sins³⁰ and beyond which lie the domains of Hades³¹, The Elysian Fields - where the "virtuous" end up, respectively Tartarus. The apportionment is carried out by Minos, Rhadamantes and Eacus, and those with grave sins end up in Tartarus³².

In Tartarus, there are those with unlimited punishments: Sisyphus, Ixion, Tantalus, Danaids, Titius. Each carries his own endless burden: Sisyphus carrying the ever-rolling boulder down a mountain³³, Ixion always spins on a wheel of fire³⁴, Tantalum, in the marshy lake³⁵, he does not manage to drink and eat because water and fruit always avoid him, the Danaids always try to carry water with sieves³⁶, Titios, the one whose liver is eaten by two eagles³⁷. Not in Tartarus, but still having unlimited punishment, Prometheus³⁸ he suffers fierce torment on Mount Caucasus, where an eagle eats his liver which always regenerates overnight³⁹.

Although it seems impossible to get out of Tartarus, there are still cases of returning to the world: some of the heroes who managed to get there - Theseus, Heracles, Odysseus, Orpheus, to which are added Dionysus and Aeneas respectively⁴⁰.

Theseus arrives in Tartarus⁴¹ at the request of his friend Piritoos, who wanted to seal Persephone, entering through the cave of Tenaros (in Laconia). Arriving there and telling Hades what they wanted, they were subjected to terrible tortures, the repetitive one being sitting on the Seat of Oblivion, from which they could not get up, "while Hades looked on, smiling grimly."⁴² After four years of

²⁸ Graves, Robert, *The Greek Myths: The Complete and Definitive Edition*, Pinguin Books Ltd, London, United Kingdom, 2017, 31. a.

²⁹ *Ibidem.*, 31. b.

³⁰ *loc. cit.*

³¹ *loc. cit.*

³² *Ibidem.*, 31. b.

³³ *Ibidem.*, 67. i.

³⁴ *Ibidem.*, 63. c.

³⁵ *Ibidem.*, 108. d.

³⁶ *Ibidem.*, 60. l.

³⁷ *Ibidem.*, 21. d.

³⁸ *Ibidem.*, 39. h.

³⁹ *loc. cit.*

⁴⁰ *Ibidem.*, 103. 1.

⁴¹ *Ibidem.*, 103.

⁴² *Ibidem.*, 103. c.

being chained there, Heracles finally rescues Theseus by ungluing him from his seat, while Piritoos stayed there, having set up the adventure⁴³ (*hybris* of Piritoos). From this it follows that Hades forgave Theseus, but punished the other for his audacity.

Heracles descended into Tartarus to steal Cerberus⁴⁴, taming him by suffocation, being the last of his labors, a myth symbolizing the defiance of death⁴⁵. Odysseus, *son of Sisyphus*⁴⁶, arrives in Tartar⁴⁷ to find out the prophecy of Tiresias. Orpheus descends⁴⁸ there to save Eurydice, regaling everyone there with his song. The presence of Dionysios in Tartarus⁴⁹ it is justified by the bringing into the world of his mother, Semele, also known as "Tione", whom he shelters in Trezena, at the temple of Artemis. Aeneas arrives in Tartarus⁵⁰ following Deiphobia's challenge to put Cerberus to sleep.

Each individual case marks the way in which the transgression of the limits is carried out, important in the cases of the heroes being the fact that they do not attempt a displacement of domains, but only challenges fulfilled through strength and skill.

Among many other moments worth marking in this dimension of confrontations between gods and mortals, those in which those who dare to face the power of the gods are punished are worth mentioning in relation to the theme of the work: from the simple challenge of Lycaon to his skills Arachne (in dispute with Athena⁵¹) or Marsyas (in the challenge with Apollo⁵²), each case shows that man is engaged in an attempt to overcome his limits, while at the same time demonstrating the limited power of the gods. Another highly relevant example is Asclepius, son of Apollo, a healer so skilled that he resurrects souls from Hades, and he complained to Zeus⁵³ precisely for violating the human condition.

Other such episodes concern the way in which hubris generally transcends the mortal condition, as when, for example, Artemis destroys the family of Queen Niobe, Tantalus' niece⁵⁴, because she was proud⁵⁵, when Zeus kills the defiant

⁴³ *loc. cit.*, 103. d.; sublinierea noastră

⁴⁴ *Ibidem.*, 133

⁴⁵ *Ibidem.*, 108. 7

⁴⁶ *Ibidem.*, 160. c.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem.*, 170. l. – p.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem.*, 28. c.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem.*, 27. k.

⁵⁰ Virgilius, *The Aeneid*, Book VI, Roman Roads Media, 2015

⁵¹ Graves, *op. cit.*, 25. h. – g

⁵² *Ibidem.*, 21. f. – g.

⁵³ *Ibidem.*, 50., f.

⁵⁴ Graves, *op. cit.*, 77. a.

⁵⁵ Graves, *op. cit.*, 77. b.

Bellerophon, the nephew of Sisyphus⁵⁶, just "to discourage revolt against the Olympian faith"⁵⁷, when the gods took out his eyes, "he had been blinded by the gods for prophesying the future too accurately, and was also plagued by a pair of Harpies"⁵⁸. A very special case is Penelope, the wife of Odysseus, who worked at a repetitive job while waiting for his arrival⁵⁹.

Other cases can also be mentioned, such as Achilles, Ajax. All these are examples of how mortal activity tries to transgress boundaries, rebelling, defying and disobeying.

The punishment for intemperance

From what has been presented up to this point, it can be surprised that the constant dispute that created the tension between the gods and the people consisted of the attempts of the latter to face, to defy the divine authority. Starting with Prometheus and ending with Ixion - in the first place -, the stake of this challenge to the gods can be captured in the dimension of an excess, a hubris. But the unlimited punishment does not appear as an inherent reaction to a hubris, but to the way it manifests itself: the audacity of people, as *brotoi* (mortals), to measure themselves against the gods, as *atanatoi* (immortals) and to seek to overcome their condition – so a self-transcendence. The premise of this lack of balance lies in the fact that human activity, as a transition, seeks a violation of what no longer belongs to one's own domain, a crossing to the "unknown" - to the inadequate and unfamiliar, to what is not specific.

Thus, conclusively, Tartarus returns to being the place where those who dared to face the gods, to face their power (the Titans, Atlas, Meceneus, Prometheus – and in extension Camus -, Sisyphus, etc.) were imprisoned, thus receiving an unlimited punishment; Prometheus defies from Elbrus (Caucasus) the repetitive punishment given by Zeus; in the same situation can be traced the punishments of Hephaestus for Hera (blackmailing her) and for Aphrodite and Ares (revealing how he is cuckolded).

Thus, the stake of a moralizing shock remains fundamental, distancing man from unlimited punishments, illustrating the bond between men and gods, between limited and unlimited. However, in the stake of the limit that the gods also encounter, this remains a fundamental aspect - and not only from *moira*, but from the

⁵⁶ *Ibidem.*, 75. a.

⁵⁷ *Ibidem.*, 75.3

⁵⁸ *Ibidem.*, 150. j.

⁵⁹ *Ibidem.*, 171. b.

relationship they have with humans. Thus, the god punishes the mortal more skilled than he or she – Artemis, Aphrodite; the pits are not necessarily unlimited, but the "infinite" follows from them: defeat and "exile" as perpetuity as constellations (Calisto, Orion, Sirius); the envy of the gods (Athena and Arachne, Artemis and Niobe, Aphrodite and Psyche, Apollo and Marsyas) for the superior skills of earthlings. And when they are unlimited, the punishments denote precisely this overcoming, which accounts for the way in which the human act increases beyond the divine power (Arachne, for example). But the stake, here, is not aimed at a moralizing shock, but at the satisfaction of a whim. Of course, in the virtuality of the imaginary that the Greeks have in mind, the stake of the act lies in the legitimate origin – or in the legitimization of an origin –, but the stake of the unlimited accounts for the way in which the link between men and gods can be perpetuated by transgressing the mortal condition and challenging divine authority.

As an entirely different but interesting issue regarding the mortal condition, limit and limitlessness can be explored in relation to the metamorphosis in the stars and within the firmament – not only of fantastic characters and animals, but also of mortals. Also worth noting is the "salvation" in Olympus of the latter and the demigods (Heracles). The skill (of mortals and heroes) by which the gods are outclassed places the unlimited in a tension similar to that between man and the world, obviously not in the anachronistic sense of absurd existentialist intent, but in that of engaging in dispute, finally, with fate – hence the fears of the gods in relation to destiny. Moreover, a better understanding of the mortal does not offer an ontological transgression – nor of the limit final, therefore –, but a metamorphosis that captures, beyond the original clarification (of the arachnids, for example), the positioning of the human beyond a limit, but preserving, through punishment, the essence of the human as remaining within the limit of mundanity; rarely is it fundamentally changed, except, of course, killing it, being arachnids, trees, etc. – and even then it is not a question of passing into immortality (or not into that of the gods, at least): the times when man is, in this sense, saved are exemplified by a change, "at most", in the stars (the mythical origins of constellations and stars); the very phenomenon of changing into the stars is fascinating, denoting precisely a "rescue" from the irreversibility of defeat - the exceptions from entering the perimeter of Hades being few and ultimately unsuccessful (Oedipus, Sisyphus); otherwise it is not a definitive avoidance, but a postponement (the wife of Heracles' friend, who is resurrected, but not absolved from the mortal condition); even Heracles, who tames Cerberus and brings him into the world, finds his limit (in the lion's fur soaked in the monster's blood) and is "displaced" in Olympus; here it would not be a question of a passage into immortality, but an extension of existence, otherwise half-divine. Ariadne is an exception, becoming the wife of

Dionysus after he forces Theseus to leave her. Yet finally, the irreducible distance between gods and men appears as inviolable, and any such transgression finally ends in – a potential overcoming of the gods, who are, in this sense, vulnerable.

And all the more – in the light of the limits that the gods have – the unlimited punishment appears more meaningful, because this transcendence comes from the way in which man positions himself in relation to fate. Causing a tension in relation to this accounts for the vision of the *moira*, this supreme force hovering over the gods. In this perspective, because everyone has their own area, rigorously delimited, drawn by the *moira*. *Moira* itself limits, including the gods⁶⁰. Hence the fact that the Olympian gods are themselves limited, being invincible in relation to humans, but powerless in the face of fate (the example of the premonition of Zeus in Troy). Thus, the Olympian pantheon, against the background of distribution (*Nomos*), appears in a special dimension: the supremacy of Zeus – supported by the oath on the Styx⁶¹ – , the powers of each god spill over onto people, being a sterile game of "immortal anthropomorphic adults"⁶² who they do not have the consciousness of the limit – in the sense of reaching it, touching it – and that operates distinctly from the human axiological dimension, against the background of immortality and immeasurableness.

And that attitude is the one that will be the guiding point of the problem proposed here: because they, "those who, in the purity of their existence, are completely utterly alien to decline, corruption, and death."⁶³, will be replaced by the *physis* together with the first philosophical systems – which recovered the elements, prior to the gods, from which they were also created – through a positive and abstract thinking, man overcoming the religious vision towards a philosophical one, in the great divisions of the 6th century BC, with the crisis in the *polis* and new discoveries. In this period, the proposed issue remains to be analyzed – the role of unlimited punishment in a culture of limits – , looking at the period from Homer to the 6th century. Because they also have an end. The Olympian gods, created *in* the universe, are limited and placed by distribution and delimitation. Zeus is the one who divides, bringing balance to the city and fixing the ineluctable flow of time⁶⁴. But they also have an end, disappearing because, finally, the god cannot be approximated anthropomorphically.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Cornford, Francis Macdonald, *From Religion to Philosophy*, New York, USA, 1912, pp. 15 – 21

⁶¹ *Ibidem.*, pp. 23 – 26

⁶² Nussbaum, Martha, *The Therapy of Desire*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, United States of America, 1994, p. 227

⁶³ Vernant, Jean – Pierre, *Myth and Thought among the Greeks*, Zone Books, New York, 2006, p. 346

⁶⁴ Vernant, *Mythe et Religion*, pp. 42 – 50

⁶⁵ Xenofan *apud*. Eliade, *op. cit.*, II, p. 200

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But the problem of the limit - found in the subsidiary role of unlimited punishment -, in this spectrum acquires a completely different value: from the perspective of the gods, exceeding, violating the limit is inevitably sanctioned and originating from a lack of temperance. The connection between hubris and intemperance is extremely deep, for the limit crossed itself claims a crossing over of one's own condition. The *hyrbis*, in this context, captures precisely a violation of the irreducible distance between man and gods. The imposition of the limit as non-transcendence, the great stake of the Delphic motto, is the one that provides the fundamental characterization of the relationship between humans and the Olympian gods. From this comes the sanctioning of the fact of stepping beyond (*hyperbasia*), of having more than what you it is appropriate (*plenexia*), to overcome (*hybris*). Thus, what matters is to be *so – phron*, to be sane⁶⁶.

The stake of being *so – phron* is the one that facilitates an advancement in the issue proposed here, and the research of the unlimited punishment from the stake of being *so – phron* allows a direction that, following the analysis so far, will be able to offer the research a special depth: temperance (*sophrosyne*) in relation to religion - or its dimension in relation to religion - is the benchmark of the analysis, signaling the way in which this connection with the problem of unlimited punishment. And here lies the very stake which, in relation to *bios* and *thanatos*, offers a philosophical significance. Because from this point it is no longer just about a literary analysis - with fruitful results in any case -, but about the way in which unlimited punishment was integrated into a deep dimension of the very existence and cultural manifestation in the depth of human behavior.

From the ones so far, there is a stake of purchase in relation to the religious experience, which Vernant also signals by the way, as being "based on control and self-discipline; each creature was to remain in its place, within the limits assigned to it"⁶⁷. This religious dimension of temperance captures the fact that reporting to divinity captures not only an activity aimed at the awareness of an irreducible difference that will invariably lead to a glorification of the gods, but, in its totality, a manifestation that turns on the self. From this follows the fact that, fundamentally, temperance aims at a determination of the limit, an awareness and the stake to reach it. The attempt to locate within one's own limits shows the fact that the religious experience, through the indirect meeting with the divinity, has as its goal the very awareness of the location within the perimeters of one's own limits.

⁶⁶ Cornford, F. M., *op. cit.*, pp. 110 – 118

⁶⁷ Vernant, Jean – Pierre, *Myth and Thought among Greeks*, p. 355

Thus, transgressing the limits does not commit violence if it does not have the right to divert those of the domains (*moira*). In relation to *sophrosyne*, therefore, the unlimited punishment is aimed at *hybris* in its negative dimension, and the examples of this case highlight the fact that these excesses have their source in defiance. Sisyphus, Ixion and the others operate in this attempt to transgress, to reduce the limits that finally come back to create, through this transgression, a mélange of ontological conditions: when Ixion wishes to seduce the goddess, when Tantalus seeks revenge, when Sisyphus tricks the gods, reveals their secrets, chains Thanatos, when Prometheus steals and brings fire to the people, when Arachne almost surpasses Athena in weaving, etc., each of them tries to capture precisely this detachment from their own limits through a defiance of divine laws. And the fact that they invariably end up in Tartarus denotes the exemplification of *sophrosyne* as the source of religious experience. Not in the sense that it can be reduced to temperance, being the only core of Greek religion, but in the idea that, finally, the role of unlimited punishments provides an example of lack of temperance, of an *aphrosyne* (madness).

In addition to the moralizing shock, the unlimited is also engaged in legitimization (of cities, ancestors, power, etc.), as an exponent of the divine origin. Therefore, the unlimited does not appear only in relation to the punishment in Hell – although this has its socio-moral role (keeping the traditions – which, otherwise, arouse divine anger – and establishing conduct through worship), its stake consists in a permanent situation in the liminality of the limitless (as the boundary between human and divine), in order not to suffer eternally or not to be punished. The stake of the unlimited punishment has its source in this double-orientation, designating a correct conduct and an example to be avoided (so oriented not to exceed).

The role of unlimited punishment, therefore, can be traced not only from the mythology to man – and the city, finally –, but also from the stake of temperance in a religious context. This is a representation of *thambos* (piety), until it descends from heaven, so as not to transgress into the limitless, into Tartarus, representing it through Sisyphus and the others – what exactly is this trying to do. Thus, the role of temperance, in relation to *bios* and *thanathos*, is to be followed precisely through the stake of not exceeding. *Hybris*, on the other hand, has its validation only in heroes, who perform human action only to mark the overcoming offered by divine grace. Unlimited punishment, therefore, comes from a defiance of it.

However, this "revolt" will be devastating and irreconcilable with the 6th century and the first philosophical systems. The changes taking place in Ancient Greece will lead, as I mentioned, to a transition from the pantheon of Olympus to *physis* – the contractual character of relations and libations being replaced by a

reconfiguration of the specific dimension of nature and primordial elements, changing the conceptual direction of temperance: "These are the same rigorous tendencies that we see in a somewhat exaggerated form among the cults, where they appeared as a discipline of askesis that enabled the initiate to escape the injustices of this life, to break free of the cycle of reincarnation and return to the divine source of things. We recognize them at work in ordinary life, minus any eschatological concerns, tempering behavior, values, and institutions. Pomp, ease, and pleasure were rejected; luxury in dress, in one's dwelling, in food and drink were forbidden. How furiously wealth was denounced! But the target of the denunciation was the social consequences of wealth—the evils it bred within the group, the divisions and hatreds it stirred up in the city, the condition of stasis [civil discord] it brought about a sort of natural law"⁶⁸. The religious dimension of *sophrosyne* "was characterized by teachings on what became of the soul, its punishment in Hades, the hereditary transmission of evil, the cycle of reincarnation, and the community of all animate beings, and by the establishment of purificatory rites in accord with the new beliefs"⁶⁹, along with other aspects that determine a reconsideration of temperance in the context of the Dionysian and Orphic cults that appear as a source of various laws in the city, such as homicide. Thus, common sense in Homer acquires a religious stake with which balance is associated, prior to the political crisis (the reunion with the East) and "secularization", so that the connection, through imitation, with the divine order can be perceived, extending at the same time in the social organization, so that the *sophrosyne* and the *dike* are at the base of the *polis*.

CONCLUSION

From what has been researched so far, it can be observed that the development in several cultural segments – philosophical, religious, mythological, literary – attempted a resizing of the analysis from the point of view of the limit in this kaleidoscope of aspects that are part of the deep dimension of human existence: the research of a problem with a practical role in human existence is corroborated with the mythological dimension of a belief that aims at eschatology itself. And - definitively - the problem of how to be after defeat is one of the vital ones that man has throughout his existence. Rephrased, the question would be whether there is *bios*, not *zoe*, after *thanatos*. And *sophrosyne* can operate an important response in this sense, engaging Greek culture – and implicitly

⁶⁸ Vernant, Jean – Pierre, *The origins Greek thought*, Cornell University Press, USA, 182, p. 83

⁶⁹ *Ibidem.*, p. 76

philosophy – from Homer to Epicurus. Because the creation of the ancient Greeks regarding this is quite special, because, in its profound dimension, the cultural construction that operates in a detection of "salvation" engages the manner of being in this world as a conditioning of the one beyond.

Of course, the term "salvation" is inappropriate, and of course this reformulation of the problem does not indirectly underestimate the issues adjacent to the one announced at the beginning. On the contrary, it engages them all, summoning them in a corroboration of a pluriperspectivism, for the investigation of the role that unlimited punishment has in a (so-called) culture of the limit involves both a mythological and literary analysis, as well as an anthropological, the philosophical contribution being that of deepening the announced problem, the reformulation in the parameters of the limit of the problem of temperance, facilitating, from the perspective of the limit, the conceptualization of some fundamental terms from the religious and cultural spectrum that the Greeks have: "temperance", "overcoming", "sharing" , "distribution", "limit" – finally – , "destiny", "piousness". Each one has a special meaning - and not only culturally –, because etymology contributes fundamentally to the way of understanding the Greek vision of *bios* and *thanatos*, the depth of each term being integrated into the conceptual field of the problem of unlimited punishment.

In this context, what then is the role of unlimited punishment in a (so-called) culture of the limit? A socio-moral percept with religious value that reflects the lack of temperance as an error that leads to an endlessly repetitive drift, full of suffering and futility. From the perspective of the limit, the drift operates in the sense of a wandering. An initial disappointment of only a moral percept is illusory because it is not about the current concept of ethics, but about how its existential dimension (up to the 6th century B.C.) can be recovered. Dispelling the prejudice, the moral perception is followed in the context of the civic religion that combines the political, the social and the belief system, bringing in a special fusion the branches of the *polis*, thus designating a new dimension of human existence that engages the citizen, the believer, the soldier, the ruler, the mother, the daughter, the grandmother, the father, the son, the grandfather in a fusion of man who engages in a *thambos* through which he can live (*bios*) in the longing for rest (*thanatos*) on the Elysian Fields. As such, in the relationship between *bios* and *thanatos*, *sophrosyne*, in the stage of *thambos*, marks the way in which a *brotoi* recognizes its difference from an *atanatoi*, identifying itself in the negativity of a *hybris* that causes an overrun that leads to an unlimited penalty (*apeiron*).

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THE HISTORICAL SPECIFICITY OF CAPITALISM, AND ITS CONSEQUENCES: REFLECTIONS ON POSTONE'S READING OF MARX AND MARXISM

SZILÁGYI Botond¹

ABSTRACT. Whether we think history has a definite logic of its own, or is merely the emergent quality of an irreducible contingency – it is usually taken as granted that it the same way in all its course. This is the case with some philosophers who argue against a conception of history as having an inherent logic. In this paper I present Postone's critical reexamination of Marxian categories and argue that based on his project, we can criticize the presupposition of the "sameness" of history. For although there is no transhistorically valid "logic of history", something like it is constituted by the functioning of capitalism's elementary categories.

Keywords: history, historical time, logic of history, capitalism, traditional Marxism, Moishe Postone

Despite the readiness to accept that history is full of breaks and gaps, the readiness then to accept that people have lived very different lives in different epochs, there is an underlying continuity in our conception of this history. Although riddled with events and periods that come into stark contrast with one another, we understand these historically different worlds as taking place (or rather: time) in history. This intuitive conception of human history – that has been challenged at numerous junctions of contemporary philosophical thought – rests on the presupposition of the essential sameness of historical time. Whether history has a definite logic of its own, or is merely the emergent quality of an irreducible contingency – it is taken as granted that it the same way in all its course.

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Surely the first counterpoint to such a charge seems to arise from the general trend of denying the existence of a unique ‘History.’ The positing of capital ‘H’ History is considered one of the chief faults in our modernity. I turn to Odo Marquard for a preliminary definition: “Thus Schiller gave the classical definition of universal history, as the history that is universal because it turns all histories—all stories—into one, the single, unique story of mankind's progress and perfection.”² This idea, or rather: program, is criticized by Marquard on the grounds that it is a “capitulation” in the face of an ever-accelerating world – making a virtue of the necessity of change. Furthermore, he localizes in the program of universal history a form of unfreedom, saying: “It is necessary for human beings to have not only one unique history or story, or a few of them, but many of them. For if they—each individual human being, and all of them together—had only one unique history or story, they would be utterly in the power and at the mercy of this sole history or story.”³

Or one could point towards various conceptions of contingency, which, just like Marquard point outwards of History, and towards histories. Ernesto Laclau in fact considers “the impossibility of the a priori transcendental constitution of any *positive content*” as “the very ontological condition of historicity.”⁴ Laclau considers this fundamental lack crucial for the autonomy of the political and thus for the freedom of human action. And he argues that notions of History with a definite logic negates this freedom, saying:

in the vision of History [...] the various stages in the succession are not conceived as *interruptions* of what preceded them but as *teleological fulfilments*. We are dealing with a pure combination in which each actor and task has an assigned place in a secular eschatology grounded in the ‘necessary laws’ of History.⁵

This is essentially “rigging the game”, where various possibilities are subsumed under these ‘necessary laws’ of History. Just like Marquard then, Laclau scoffs at the idea of a history with a definite logic of its own, considering it a restriction on the free play of signifiers – and not unimportantly: philosophically untenable.⁶

² Odo Marquard, “Universal History and Multiversal History”, in Odo Marquard, *In Defense of the Accidental*, transl. by Robert M. Wallace, Oxford University Press, 1991, 50–70. 52.

³ *Ibid.* 67.

⁴ Ernesto Laclau, “Structure, History and the Political”, in Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality – Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, Verso, 2000, 182–212. 186–187.

⁵ Ernesto Laclau, “Articulation and the Limits of Metaphor”, in Ernesto Laclau, *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society*, Verso, 2014, 53–78. 70.

⁶ See: Ernesto Laclau, “Why Constructing a People is the Main Task of Radical Politics”, in Ernesto Laclau, *The Rhetorical Foundations of Society*, Verso, 2014, 139–180. 162–163.

Such conceptions could surely not be construed as based on the sameness of historical time. Yet even if we say that there are only histories, or that the one fundamental feature of our socio-historical reality is contingency – this radical openness that allows for multiple articulations – we are positing a sameness of historical time. If every randomly plucked period is contingent, hence all are contingent in the way they are, then I am positing contingency as the fundamental characteristic of historical time. If I posit that there is no History, only histories, I am saying that historical time is such that it cannot coagulate into a unitary time, that it is irreducibly plural – so I posit multiplicity or plurality as the *sine qua non* characteristic of historicity proper.

This sameness of historicity bodes ill for inquiring after the specific “nature” of different periods.⁷ In fact, periods seem to melt into air, as nothing more than ill-fitting straightjackets sewn together by eager, but – with regards to the ultimate contingency and irreducible multiplicity of human existence – ignorant theoreticians and/or revolutionaries. In this paper I wish to present Moishe Postone’s reading of Marx, in which – through his insistence on the historicity of capitalism and his analysis of its historical dynamic – one can find a perspective that dislodges the sameness of historicity.⁸

The historical specificity of capitalist categories

Moishe Postone’s *Time, Labor and Social Domination* (1993) is to this day a classic within Marxist theory. As a meticulous re-reading of Marx, the book sets out to rewire the way Marxian categories are used. Postone differentiates his approach

⁷ Of course, from Marquard’s point of view this search for the historical specificity of an epoch could be seen as merely an atrophied version of the philosophy of history. See: Odo Marquard, *Dificultăți cu filosofia istoriei*, transl. by Maria–Magdalena Angheliescu, Tact, 2014. 15–19.

⁸ One has to consider Cornelius Castoriadis as well, since he argues that all societies construct their own mode of historical time: “The social-historical is this temporality, in each case specific, which is instituted as the global institution of society and not made explicit as such. The time that each society brings into being and which, in turn, makes society exist, is its own particular mode of historical temporality that it unfolds by existing and by which it unfolds itself as an historical society, without necessarily knowing this or representing this to itself in such a way.” (Cornelius Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society*, The MIT Press, 1998. 206.) This seems to fulfill the requirements of historical specificity. After all, Castoriadis explicitly states and theorizes the difference between various kinds of societies in terms of a difference in historical time. While this is true, based on Postone’s argumentation it becomes possible to take issue with conceiving of the historicity of precapitalist and capitalist societies on the same plane of abstraction.

from what he calls “traditional Marxism”⁹, the latter including almost every Marxist – this received some criticism. As Martin Jay writes: “Certainly, the intellectual historian will want to know why Marx was so easily and consistently misunderstood by the multifarious figures Postone lumps together under the rubric of ‘traditional Marxism’; this is not a trivial issue.”¹⁰

The chief reason Lenin, Bukharin, the Frankfurt School and British Marxist historians are subsumed under the term “traditional Marxism”, is that they provide a “critique from the standpoint of labor”, as opposed to making the category of labor the object of social critique.¹¹ Crucial to this opposition is a transhistorical notion of “labor”. “Traditional Marxism” regards labor, according to Postone, as “a normative standpoint for a social critique in the name of justice, reason, universality and nature.”¹² Postone, on the other hand, stresses that for Marx labor, along with all capitalist categories of social mediation are historically specific to capitalism. Consequently, they cannot serve as the standpoints of critique – rather, they have to become its object.

Let us consider the Marxian distinction between value and material wealth. Postone argues, that Marx regarded material wealth as wealth in general, the sum of goods etc. But in capitalism material wealth is produced in a very specific form: that of value. “Marx treats value as a category expressing both the determinate form of social relations and the particular form of wealth that characterize capitalism.”¹³ These two dimensions – that of value and material wealth – are present in the commodity form, famously the starting point of Marx’s analysis in *Capital*.

Each commodity has a use value and an exchange value. The former is made up of the various uses and qualities of the commodity – a shoe keeps my foot comfortable, has a certain shape, color, etc. The exchange value of the commodity, on the other hand, expresses the rate at which one commodity can be traded for another – a shoe may be the equivalent of ten socks. It is crucial that the exchange value of a commodity is quantitative – abstracted from all qualities, so that we can measure against one another laptops and gummy bears, for instance. We can see, that in the commodity – itself a historically determinate form of, say “products”, or “goods” – there is a “concrete” and an “abstract” dimension, which corresponds to the material wealth – value pair, but in a way in which the value-dimension is dominant.

⁹ See Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor and Social Domination*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 1993. 1-120.

¹⁰ Martin Jay, “Marx After Marxism”, in *New German Critique*, No.60/1993, Duke University Press, 181–191. 186.

¹¹ Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor and Social Domination*, Ibid. 64-71.

¹² Ibid. 65.

¹³ Ibid.: 44.

This is carried on to the category of labor, which, for Marx, also has a twofold character. We can thus talk of abstract and concrete labor, which are aspects of labor under capitalism. Abstract labor is the aspect of labor that yields value, and it is measured solely by abstract, homogenous "Newtonian" time – X commodity takes Y many minutes to be produced. Concrete labor is the aspect of labor that yields use values. Just as with the commodity form, here too, the abstract value-dimension is dominant.¹⁴ Note that value – both a form of social relations (meaning: the fact itself that commodities are values is a significant one with regards to social life) and the form of wealth in capitalism – "is a social form that expresses, and is based on, the expenditure of direct labor time."¹⁵ This means that the value dimension is at the center of social relations in capitalism.

All these categories are historically specific, because, according to Postone, they function here as categories of social mediation. That is to say: when labor becomes the means to acquire the product of the labor of others, and consequently these products take the form of the commodity, when money becomes a general equivalent expressing the value dimension of all these commodities – we are in capitalism. This is not the case in precapitalist epochs, where social mediation is taken up by explicitly social relations. As Postone writes: "*Labor itself constitutes a social mediation in lieu of overt social relations.*"¹⁶

These historically specific categories of social mediations are at once subjective and objective "determinations of existence" [*Egzistenzbestimmungen*], or "forms of being" [*Daseinsformen*].¹⁷ So, for instance, abstract "Newtonian" time itself becomes – from this perspective – a corollary of capitalist categories: this kind of time does *in fact* become a measure of human activity. Postone pays special attention to the appearance of abstract time as a measure, and concludes that it is not – contrary to popular belief – the technological innovation of the clock, that leads to a conception of an abstract time, which is made up of homogenous and interchangeable parts. Rather, it is the special relationship of time and labor in capitalism, that gives rise to the idea of this kind of abstract time. He points out, that while it would have been much easier to construct devices that measured constant hours, many precapitalist cultures designed clocks that showed variable hours, and the Japanese, when presented with western clocks, modified them to show variable hours. The difference that gave rise to the idea of "Newtonian" time,

¹⁴ Postone recapitulates these points fairly often in his opus. E.g. *Ibid.*: 127-128.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*: 25.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 150.

¹⁷ See: Moishe Postone, „A Tőke újragondolása a *Grundrisse* fényében”, transl. by Szilágyi Botond in *Kellék*. No. 59. ProPhilosophia Foundation, 2018. 7-29. 20.

was a changing relationship between human activity and time – this relationship was codified by Marx as the labor theory of value: value is constituted by abstract labor-time expenditure. To have homogenous, quantitative value, incarnated in interchangeable commodities – we need to have a measure of labor, which is fitting these criteria.¹⁸

The twofold character of these categories is crucial to understanding the temporary dimension of capitalism. It is the tension between these two aspects in labor and commodities, that blossoms into a contradiction generative of what Postone calls “historical time”. But before I outline this particular mode of time, we have to consider the basic dynamic of capitalism: the accumulation of surplus value, or the extended reproduction of capital. Marx talks about two ways in which surplus value can be accumulated: one by the extension of the workday, one by the raising of the productivity of labor.¹⁹

The surplus itself comes from the fact that what is bought is the labor power of workers, not the actual labor they perform. According to Marx, labor power is a special commodity, because it can produce more value than is needed for its reproduction. To put it simply: workers work more than they would need to, if they produced only the amount of value that is necessary for them to take care of their needs. If a worker needs 10 value units’ worth of commodities (food, clothing, rent, etc.), then whatever she produces above that 10 value units’ is surplus value. The capitalists’ elementary interest is to keep the workers’ wages as close as possible to the costs of the reproduction of labor power, and to squeeze as much surplus labor out of the workers as possible.

Because value is produced by socially necessary labor-time expenditure, the easiest way to increase the value output of a productive unit, a lightbulb-factory for instance, is to increase the time the workers spend in production. If 100 workers work 8 hours to produce 800 lightbulbs, then the same 100 workers, were they to work 10 hours, could produce 1000 lightbulbs. In this scenario we suppose that wages remain the same, for the sake of clarity. The problem is that this increase in absolute surplus value has some physical barriers: not only does the day have only 24 hours, it is also easy to see that workers cannot be pushed over a certain limit, lest they stop “working”. (This latter realization is one of the reasons for the codification of the length of the working day.)

The other mode of increasing surplus value is the theoretically more interesting one: relative surplus value. This is achieved through raising the levels of productivity – which in turn can be achieved in many ways: technological

¹⁸ See: Postone, *Time, Labor and Social Domination*. Ibid.: 200-216.

¹⁹ See: Ibid.: 283.

innovation, more efficient organization of the labor process (think Fordism) and so on. So, for instance, if before an innovation in the 8 hours that the capitalist has at his disposal, the productive unit outputs 800 value units, then after introducing this innovation into the productive process it outputs, say, 1000 value units. The 200 units are the surplus achieved. But what makes this surplus relative? If we come back to what produces value, we find that it is socially necessary labor-time expenditure: this means that the value of a commodity is given by the amount of time it takes generally – in a given society – to produce it. The surplus above-mentioned is relative exactly to this kind of general level: through an innovation a firm can produce more commodities in a given unit of time than the socially general norm. What is crucial is that when the kind of innovation that leads to a relative surplus becomes socially general, then the level of productivity achieved in this way is reset as the socially necessary level. So, to take our example, after the innovation is generalized, the socially necessary labor-time expenditure is reset, and the productive unit is back at producing 800 value units: corresponding to the value of the standard labor hour. This leads to ever newer ways of organizing labor and novel technological methods to raise productivity. In relative surplus value lies the secret of capitalism's dynamic character. This is why "relative surplus value is the form of surplus value adequate to capital, as understood by Marx."²⁰

Before moving on to presenting the value of these insights as regards history, I will consider some criticism leveled against Postone that is relevant to this chapter. Namely that Postone "uses transhistorical categories to expose the historically specific nature of historical time while, simultaneously, he denies them any validity for understanding the movement of history."²¹ So while Postone's analysis requires the category of material wealth, which seems to be a transhistorical category, in that it is essential to conceiving a post-capitalist world, since it is the discrepancy between the immense productivity with regards to material wealth and the ever diminished productivity with regards to value that grounds the possibility of producing value-producing labor (not the production of material wealth!), he seemingly bans transhistorical concepts from theorizing historical processes. This leads, according to Karen Miller, that Postone is unable "to explain effectively how capitalism, and, specifically, how capitalism's historical time, arose."²²

²⁰ Ibid.: 284.

²¹ Karen Miller, "The Question of Time in Postone's *Time, Labor and Social Domination*", in *Historical Materialism*, 12/3, 2004, Brill, 209–237. 222.

²² Ibid.

This is partially correct. Postone in fact does concede at one point, that “the rise of capitalism in Western Europe may have been a contingent development”.²³ This contingent development however secured its reproduction as a system of social life, and the way it is categorial logic functions does ground and makes explainable how capitalism’s historical time arose. The overly cautious way Postone approaches transhistorical categories, and the reason why he uses them as merely a backdrop to the inquire into the historically specific categories is explained by him in his book:

The historical specificity of the categories of Marx’ s mature critique has more general implications for the question of a self-reflexive social epistemology. [...] Each social formation, then, requires its own epistemology. Put more generally: Even if social theory proceeds on the basis of certain very general and indeterminate principles (for example, social labor as a prerequisite of social reproduction), its categories must be adequate to the specificity of its object. There is no transhistorically valid, determinate social theory.²⁴

Postone’s cautiousness is then not about banishing transhistorical categories from historical speculation, although he does give this impression. Joseph Fracchia for instance writes that “Postone establishes an either/or situation: *either* categories are transhistorical and ontological, the consequence of which is a teleologically driven theory of inevitable historical evolution; *or* they are determinate and historically specific as, in Postone’s view, Marx constructed them.”²⁵ Fracchia goes on to propose that there is need of a third option – based on the *German Ideology* – “*transhistorically abstract* categories as a necessary prelude to the construction of historically specific categories.”²⁶ But as can be seen from the above cited passage from Postone’s book, he himself acknowledges this need. Importantly, however: transhistorically abstract categories must be a stage which theory crosses, and not a goal which hides the key to a post-capitalist world – as was the case with labor in Traditional Marxism.

²³ Postone, *Time, Labor and Social Domination*, Ibid. 258.

²⁴ Ibid.: 259.

²⁵ Joseph Fracchia, “Time, Labor and Social Domination: A Reinterpretation of Marx’s Critical Theory by Moishe Postone”, in *History and Theory*, Vol. 34, No. 4/1995, Wiley for Wesleyan University, 355–371. 368.

²⁶ Ibid.

Historical time in capitalism

The motion outlined above is one of the temporal norm. What happens with innovation is that the temporal norm of value-production is superseded: a unit of time becomes more productive. Yet with the generalization of said innovation, the temporal norm is reconstituted. Postone terms this a “treadmill effect.”²⁷ Because it is socially necessary labor-time expenditure that constitutes value, any increase in productivity can only mean a short-term increase in value. Just as on a treadmill, value production, while constantly moving “forwards” – it stays in the same “place”. But – and this is crucial – the increase in productivity doesn't present itself the same way with regards to material wealth. Any increase in productivity means that more and more material wealth can be produced with a given unit of labor-time. So, whereas in terms of value, labor-time remains crucial – in terms of material wealth, labor-time becomes more and more anachronistic.

This is the reason Postone argues that Marx saw capitalism as producing the possibility of its own overcoming. Because labor-time remains crucial in generating value but becomes more and more superfluous with regards to producing material wealth, value itself as the historically specific form of wealth becomes anachronistic. This points to a post-capitalist society in which value is not the form of wealth, labor-time expenditure is not the predominant form of human productive activity, and consequently labor ceases to be a category of social mediation (the means through which one acquires the products one needs).²⁸

There is another consequence of this dynamic. As Postone writes: “In abstract temporal terms, the social labor hour remains constant as a measure of the total value produced; in concrete terms, it changes as productivity does.”²⁹ These concrete terms are those of the material wealth dimension: with the increases in productivity, the social labor hour – unchanging with regards to value production – becomes “denser” with regards to producing goods. Postone argues that this distinction cannot be solved through considerations based on abstract “Newtonian” time alone. This apparent paradox of the ever “denser” social labor hour, which produces more and more goods, points to a “superordinate frame of reference”. Postone argues that even though in terms of value production the new level of productivity is redetermined as the base level – the increase in productivity was achieved. “And while this substantive development cannot change the abstract temporal unit in terms of abstract time itself, it does change the ‘position’ of that unit.”³⁰ It does, so to say, change what counts as the social labor hour.

²⁷ See: Postone, *Time, Labor and Social Domination*, Ibid.: 289.

²⁸ See: Ibid.: 324.

²⁹ Ibid.: 292.

³⁰ Ibid.

Here we have then, as Postone sometimes puts it, a movement *of* time, rather than movement *in* time – even more precisely: “*a feature of capitalism is a mode of (concrete) time that expresses the motion of (abstract) time.*”³¹ This mode of concrete time Postone terms *historical time*. The concreteness of this historical time can be summarized by saying that “once such a movement [of an increase in productivity] happens, the whole rhythm of life changes and accelerates – one must move faster to stay in the same place, as if someone has increased the speed on the treadmill on which one is running.”³² This directional dynamic of capitalism then is crucial to understanding the speeding up of the day-to-day, and is the ultimate ground of the ever renewed need to adapt, to learn and relearn, to train and retrain on the part of working people.

Postone’s argumentation has far-reaching consequences with regards to conceptions of history and historicity. He in fact grounds history in the functioning of the categories of social mediation characteristic in capitalism, saying, that (according to Marx, in his reading) in capitalism “there is indeed a form of logic in history, of historical necessity, but that it is immanent only to the capitalist social formation, and not to human history as a whole.”³³ There is however an important caveat to this:

My effort to ground socially – on a very abstract logical level – the historically dynamic character of capitalism suggests that although capitalism is not necessarily marked by a unitary, synchronous, homogeneous historical process, it is, as a whole, historically dynamic in a way that distinguishes it from other forms of social life. The relations among various social levels and processes are organized differently than they would be in a non-capitalist society; they become embedded in a general, socially constituted, temporally directional, dialectical framework.³⁴

³¹ Ibid.: 293. Text italicized in original.

³² Viren Murthy, “Moishe Postone’s Historical Time: Capital, the Holocaust, and Jewish Marxism” in *Critical Historical Studies*, Spring/2020, The University of Chicago, 43–62. 52. Murthy’s article gives a critical summary of Postone’s theoretical insights on Nazi antisemitism, an important part of his work.

³³ Postone, *Time, Labor and Social Domination*. 305.

³⁴ Ibid.: 306. This shows why it is problematic to theorize the historicity of capitalism on the same plane of abstraction as that of precapitalist societies, as Castoriadis does. Capitalism is not just one instance of instituting a specific mode of historical time – this being a transhistorical constant (ie. each society institutes a specific mode of historical time) – because it institutes a time on a different/higher plane of abstraction than precapitalist societies. If we say that each society has a different mode of historical time, we must at the same time add, that the “nature” of historical time in capitalism is “differently different.” In this sense precapitalist societies can be named as such not because they chronologically precede capitalism, but because capitalism differs from their modes of historical time in the same way: it does institute a kind of logic of history.

This disavowal of History, even when applied to capitalism as such stems from the fact that this historical dynamic is contradictory. It is not necessarily linear, not necessarily homogenous – there is room for play, as it were, even if these forms and the temporal dynamic underlying capitalist society do impose harshly on this play. And the fundamental contradiction: the positing of labor time expenditure as the content of value, and at the same time reducing necessary labor time expenditure – points toward the possibility of a society, in which value-producing labor is not the necessary form of productive human activity.

The position Postone makes feasible allows him to critique notions of a universal logic of history – in fact, these presupposed transhistorical laws of history are considered projections of the specific historical nature of capitalism into the past or the future. This has important consequences for “traditional Marxist” narratives of history, which do presuppose transhistorical elements to explain the rise of capitalism and its place in human history.

For a very orthodox version of this see Tőkei, who considers the different social forms in terms of specific combinations of relations between the individual, the community, and the means of production – the relationship [Zusammenhang] of these three moments is what makes up a mode of production. What is specific to each form is not the social categories at its base, which are invariant throughout history, but the way they are woven together. This is the case even if Tőkei adds the caveat, that “the three basic moments, in the indeterminate form above signaled, do not exist. The determination of the form of their three-fold relationship will however give the basic determination of each specific mode of production (and social formation).”³⁵ This is a theory that presumes to be transhistorically valid – something that for Postone is evidently anathema, since each social formation would need its own epistemology.

Also problematic (if not equally) from his viewpoint is the very sophisticated approach of Ellen Meiksins Wood. She, in *The Origin of Capitalism* analyses the class struggle between the English lords and peasantry. Because their judicial-political means of appropriating the surplus product of peasants were squeezed by the monarchy, the landlords had to resort to a merely economic way to acquire this surplus. They used land ownership to their advantage, renting it out so that renters had to compete with one another to be able to pay leases. This kickstarted the process which resulted in the dependence on the market, in Wood's view the characteristic feature of capitalism.³⁶ (This exclusive focus on the market is critiqued by Postone, who regards the categories of production as of higher

³⁵ Ferenc Tőkei, *A társadalmi formák elméletéhez*, Kossuth, 1971. 72.

³⁶ See: Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Origin of Capitalism*, Verso, 2017.

importance.) But this genesis is problematic, since it presupposes that class struggle is the universal driving force of history. Such universal presuppositions are ungrounded in Postone's view. It should be noted however, that Wood recognizes the problem of the historicity of the category of class, saying that "the division between appropriators and producers – a division implied by any form of state – can take different forms, forms to which the notion of 'class' can be applied only with great caution where there is no clearly differentiated 'economic' power."³⁷ In addition, such narratives of the birth of capitalism can – when proposed in terms of historical contingency (as Wood's argument tends to do so sometimes) – fill the gap left open by Postone when it comes to the question of how capitalism arose.

But it is not just Marxist "grand narratives" that come under critical scrutiny based on Postone's approach. Equally problematic are unilateral refusals to consider a universal human history. For Postone "a general human history does come into being historically (in an alienated form) but does not exist transhistorically."³⁸ Rather than considering it simply a misguided project, as Odo Marquard does, this general history is grounded in the functioning of social categories. It is notable that Marquard, when considering the social causes for this misguided project, talks about them on a very general level, as the increasing speed characteristic of modernity. Yet this increase is not grounded socially, not explained, but merely registered. From the vantagepoint of Postone's analysis, both the ideas about the progress of history and the apparent acceleration of changes can be explained and grounded in the functioning of capitalism's basic categories.

Finally, the critique of totalizing narratives of history, usually from a poststructuralist standpoint (see Laclau), can also be critically examined based on the analysis outlined here. To quote Postone at some length:

Consideration of such general historical patterns suggests, then, that positions, such as poststructuralism, that attempt to deal with history in terms of contingency are inadequate empirically to the history of capitalist society. Nevertheless, such considerations do not necessarily dispense with what might be regarded as the critical insight driving such attempts to deal with history contingently – namely, that history, grasped as the unfolding of an immanent necessity, should be understood as delineating a form of unfreedom.³⁹

³⁷ Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy against Capitalism – Rethinking Historical Materialism*, Verso, 2016. 35.

³⁸ Postone, *Time, Labor and Social Domination*. Ibid.: 285.

³⁹ Moishe Postone, *History and Heteronomy. Selected Essays*. The University of Tokyo, Center for Philosophy, Tokyo, 2009. 32.

Poststructuralists are right, in other words, to criticize the conception of history as totality, with particular laws of motion – such a history, with an immanent dynamic constitutes a form of unfreedom. This is the position of Marquard as well. But both Marquard and poststructuralists in general seem to presuppose that history cannot be such: a totalizing process with an immanent dynamic. This is what I called the presupposition of the “sameness” of history. Capitalism is different, because it *does* give rise to a history of this kind – it is not just an unfortunate project by intellectuals or misguided revolutionaries. Because this dynamic is actually existing, it is in fact disempowering to deny the possibility of any logic of history. This denial is indicative of the theoretical presupposition of the “sameness” of history, the presupposition then, that advocates of grand narratives of human history as a whole and advocates of contingency have in common. Namely, that history, be it a *mélange* of contingent histories and events, or a transhistorical process with definite characteristics underlying eons – is the same way throughout. I think Postone’s reading of Marx disproves this notion through highlighting the specificity of historicity in capitalism.

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LA SHOAH, LE MAL ET LA PHILOSOPHIE

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ABSTRACT. Shoah, Evil and Philosophy. To speak of the philosophy *of* the Shoah presupposes a philosophy *of* philosophy -that would stand in the pre- or post-position of a meaning and the subsumption of an object under a concept. But there is no concept of the Shoah because there is no intelligibility that could justify it. Of this «incomprehensible incontestable» as Victor Hugo said of God, literature can only approach the massive enigma. The «banality of Evil» prevents one from thinking that Evil thinks, and with such a radicality that it demands of the existence itself, and *a fortiori* of that of the Shoah, irrefutable proofs. By blurring the hypothesis of a flawless equivalence of intelligibility and existence, the Shoah questions the question of meaning.

Keywords : Evil, Meaning, Philosophy, Shoah, Thought

R SUM . Parler de philosophie *de* la Shoah pr suppose une philosophie *de* la philosophie qui se tiendrait dans la pr - ou post-position d'un sens et la subsumption d'un objet sous un concept. Or il n'y a pas de concept de la Shoah parce qu'il n'y a nulle intelligibilit  qui pourrait en rendre raison. De cet « incompr hensible incontestable » comme disait de Dieu Victor Hugo, la litt rature peut seule approcher l' nigme massive. La « banalit  du Mal » emp che quant   elle de penser que le Mal pense, et avec une telle radicalit  qu'il exige de l'existence elle-m me, et   fortiori de celle de la Shoah, des preuves irr futables. En brouillant l'hypoth se d'une  quivalence sans faille de l'intelligibilit  et de l'existence, la Shoah met en question la question du sens.

Mots-cl s: Evil, Meaning, Philosophy, Shoah, Thought

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J'entends de tous côtés, et pour des considérations souvent opposées ou différentes, parler de philosophie *de la Shoah*. On peut entendre l'expression de diverses façons, selon la philosophie *de la* philosophie que l'on se forme au gré de ses choix, de ses lectures, de ses attentes. Les génitifs, subjectifs, objectifs, polysémiques, sont ici porteurs de confusion. Je voudrais essayer de clarifier partiellement la question.

Si l'on entend par philosophie ses significations les plus lâches et les plus vagues, comme on parle par exemple ces temps-ci de la « philosophie » de la réforme des retraites, alors on peut bien se demander quel est le sens de la Shoah et quelle est son origine, sa fonction, bref pourquoi la Shoah. N'importe quel objet peut servir de pâture à la philosophie ainsi entendue, et non sans légitimité. Il est conforme à « l'essence de l'homme » de s'interroger sur le monde, tout ce qui l'entoure, sur les autres hommes, ce qui leur arrive, sur lui-même. J'ai utilisé des guillemets à l'instant pour parler de « l'essence » et de « l'homme ». Non pas que je tienne ces vocables pour de piteuses couvertures idéologiques, à l'instar des sciences sociales, de Marx, de Joseph de Maistre - en accord sur ce point de « l'homme ». Mes guillemets veulent seulement dire qu'il y a un présupposé à cette représentation d'une essence de l'homme qui serait questionnante. Ce présupposé est celui du sens. S'il y a une philosophie-de, c'est que tout ce qui peut faire objet de philosophie, soit ici tout, détient un sens, explicite, caché, avoué, secret, distordu - mais un sens. Or, la Shoah n'en a pas, elle a existé, elle existe et pour cela n'a jamais eu besoin de sens ni *a priori* ni *a posteriori*. Tous ceux, historiens, sociologues, philosophes parfois, qui ont tenté d'en déchiffrer la signification, sont contraints par leur geste même de la réduire, c'est-à-dire de la rapporter à autre chose qu'elle-même, de l'inscrire dans un ensemble d'intelligibilité qui permettrait de comprendre et de répondre tant bien que mal à la question : pourquoi la Shoah ?

Si l'on entend plus strictement par philosophie ce qu'elle-même détermine pour soi, on dira d'abord que son élément, comme dit Hegel, est le concept, soit une certaine manière d'articuler l'universel et le particulier - je suis obligé ici de dire les choses à gros traits, autrement je devrais passer en revue l'histoire de la philosophie des origines à nos jours ! La philosophie forme donc un concept de ses objets en en déterminant la dimension universelle, cette dimension devant « inclure en soi le particulier », comme dit Hegel, encore lui. Il faudrait donc former un « concept » au sens strict de la Shoah pour pouvoir constituer une philosophie de la Shoah. Il faudrait pouvoir rapporter son unicité, sa particularité extrême, à une universalité, évidemment introuvable, selon les règles de ce que Kant appelait jugement réfléchissant. On peut s'y essayer à partir de la très riche conceptualité de la *Critique du Jugement*. On buterait à nouveau sur la question du sens, autrement que ne le fait la philosophie de tous les hommes, celle qui se dit et se

parle tous les jours et en tous lieux. Une philosophie de la Shoah courrait le risque de donner du sens et de rendre intelligible la Shoah. La philosophie par concepts donnerait ainsi une réponse aux attentes de la philosophie au jour le jour.

L'une et l'autre s'entre-nourrissent de la même illusion, celle du sens, soit présupposé, soit postposé et construit.

Or il nous faut réaffirmer que la Shoah n'a aucun sens, ce qui ne nous dispense pas d'avoir à la penser, au contraire, mais selon des modalités qui ne seraient ni celle du sens commun qui veut comprendre ce qui lui semble incompréhensible, ni celle de la philosophe disciplinaire qui subsume cet incompréhensible sous ses propres concepts, celle-ci comme celui-là légitimes dans leurs interrogations, mais impuissants à en rendre raison. « Le problème...consiste à se demander si le sens équivaut à l'esse de l'être, c'est-à-dire si le sens qui en philosophie est sens, n'est pas déjà une restriction du sens, s'il n'est pas déjà une dérivée ou une dérive du sens, si le sens équivalent à l'essence...n'est pas déjà abordé dans la présence qui est le temps du Même »².

Levinas dit très bien où se tient une considérable difficulté. Comment engager une pensée en évitant la quasi-inévitable « restriction du sens » emportée par la philosophie, selon sa nature propre en quelque sorte ? Comment penser sans réduire ? Ma réponse sera lapidaire : seule la littérature le peut vraiment, une littérature pensante, bien sûr, mais point philosophante. Primo Levi, Imre Kertesz, Ety Hillesum et d'autres nous instruisent de la Shoah mieux que ne le peuvent la pensée commune ou la pensée par concepts. Il n'y a pas de philosophie de la Shoah. Mais il y a bien une littérature de la Shoah, qui, justement, nous permet d'en approcher le non-sens. Cette expression, non-sens, est problématique car elle a l'air de nier ce qui précéderait, l'existence d'un sens. Alors qu'au contraire le sens, la question du sens et le sens de cette question forment un nœud qui vient bien après l'opaque énigme de ce qui est là à l'état brut, massif, plus ancien que toute ontologie, plus vieux que toute métaphysique, et précédant toute généalogie.

On m'a objecté, de façon rigoureuse et argumentée, que la philosophie s'est posé la question du Mal, immémorialement, tout au moins depuis qu'elle a eu à absorber le christianisme et à inventer un hybride raison/révélation, judaïsme/ aristotélisme - son côté « judéo-grec » selon le mot de Joyce, puis de Derrida. C'est certainement dans ces sombres paysages philosophiques habités par le Mal dans sa sinistre stature qu'il y a de quoi sustenter, même fragmentairement, une méditation sur la Shoah, mais à condition de ne pas en faire « une figure du Mal », ce qui risque, à bien y réfléchir, de n'être pas beaucoup plus satisfaisant que d'y voir la conséquence du Traité de Versailles.

² Emmanuel Levinas, *De Dieu qui vient à l'idée*, Paris, Vrin, 1982, p. 96

Il faut ici faire un sort à la pensée arendtienne de la banalité du mal, et d'abord à ses ententes et ses usages erronés, parfois jusqu'à la caricature. Je me souviens, par exemple, des déclarations d'un comédien qui jouait le rôle de Merah dans une pièce dont j'ai oublié le titre, au Festival d'Avignon de 2017. Elles étaient effroyables de bêtise et trahissaient d'ailleurs la pensée d'Arendt elle-même. Il est inutile de tenter de les redresser. C'est Arendt qui m'intéresse, pas ses trivialisations imbéciles. La catégorie « banalité du mal » me paraît trop embrasser pour bien êtreindre et, sur un point précis, intenable. Le mal dans sa banalité ne s'égle pas à ce que *Eichmann à Jérusalem* décrit comme une incroyable « incapacité de penser » du bourreau: « [Eichmann] disait toujours la même chose, avec les mêmes mots. Plus on l'écoutait, plus on se rendait à l'évidence que son incapacité à parler était étroitement liée à son incapacité à *penser* »³. La question que se pose Arendt consiste à se demander si la pensée peut servir à combattre le mal, voire à l'éviter. Sa réponse est *oui* –même s'il ne faut pas outrageusement la simplifier. En effet, pour elle, si la pensée est réduite à une simple procédure examinatrice et si elle demeure totalement insoucieuse de ses conséquences propres lorsqu'elle s'« applique » sans précaution à des « objets », si elle est simplement « pensée pensée », comme dit Rosenzweig, alors elle peut bien s'aveugler sur le mal, sa radicalité, sa banalité, son inscrutabilité. Mais il suffirait, selon elle, de l'associer à la faculté de juger, par laquelle l'individu pensant se placerait devant le jugement d'autres individus pensants, pour qu'elle soit en mesure, au moins partiellement, de prévenir le mal et sa propagation. L'absence de « pensée pensante » (Rosenzweig) chez Eichmann et ses semblables caractériserait au moins ce type de pensée déliée de toute aptitude à juger puisque, par le jugement seulement, la pensée se déploie dans le monde phénoménal comme faculté de distinguer le bien et le mal. Mais même restituée à sa complexité, comme je viens de le faire sommairement, cette idée selon laquelle une « incapacité de penser » serait congénitalement associée à la banalité d'un mal hyperbolique, me paraît profondément erronée. *Le mal pense* –et nous avons du mal à penser que le mal pense. Il en a la capacité exacerbée, il ne veut même rien laisser en-dehors de sa pensée. Je dirais même qu'il exagère la pensée, grossit la rationalité et pousse la démonstration philosophique jusqu'à l'absurde. Ainsi, il faut tenter de le débusquer là où il n'admet d'existence que si elle est garantie par l'administration préalable d'une preuve, par où l'existant mis en question doit de soi-même fournir une attestation, absolument distincte de son évidence - on aura reconnu dans cette insistance la matrice perverse des complotismes. Kant en discerne la puissance lorsqu'il affirme avec une clairvoyance humble mais audacieuse : « *c'est un scandale*

³ H. Arendt, «Eichmann à Jérusalem. Rapport sur la banalité du mal», in *Les origines du totalitarisme. Eichmann à Jérusalem*, Paris, Gallimard, «Quarto», 2001, p. 1065.

pour la philosophie et pour la raison humaine commune qu'on ne puisse admettre qu'à titre de croyance l'existence des choses extérieures...et que s'il plaît à quelqu'un de la mettre en doute nous n'ayons point de preuve suffisante à lui opposer »⁴.

Est ici mise à nu la racine ontologico-épistémologique de tous les négationnismes, structurés par le refus du « scandale » et le déploiement d'un « jugement ». Le négationnisme réclame sans cesse des *preuves de l'existence* - des chambres à gaz, de l'extermination, des six millions, etc. Cette racine est indéracinable, inéradicable, car elle est profondément enfouie, elle naît et croît sur la terre du sens - de la Shoah. Si la Shoah a un sens, montrez-le, démontrez-le, prouvez-le ! Si elle n'en a pas, c'est parce qu'elle n'existe pas ! La tenaille est à l'œuvre aussi bien pour la « philosophie » que pour la « raison humaine commune », comme le note Kant. Elle est d'autant plus redoutable. Son efficacité ultime tient à l'hypothèse assenée de l'équivalence du sens et de l'existence -voilà bien le mal dans son déploiement de pensée, il appuie exactement là où ça fait mal à la raison.

Si l'on cherche, dans l'histoire de la philosophie, le plus éminent pic de la pensée du mal, il faut sans nul doute escalader le haut massif des *Recherches sur l'essence de la liberté humaine* de Schelling, le grand traité de 1809. Jorge Semprun, déporté en janvier 1944 à Buchenwald, en découvre un exemplaire à la bibliothèque du camp et éprouve immédiatement une fascination pour ce texte fulgurant sur la question du mal, alors même qu'il en subit chaque jour lui-même les terribles épreuves. Pour Schelling, le « Fond », c'est-à-dire pour lui ce qui en Dieu n'est pas Dieu, est à l'origine du mal, par inversion. Il se transpose en l'homme et autorise qu'un homme se saisisse un jour lui-même et de lui-même contre les autres hommes, et contre Dieu, et que l'amour cède ainsi devant la volonté de soi, entêtée en elle-même. Le monde est un monde à l'envers. Selon le traité de 1809, sans la possibilité du mal venue du Fond, l'homme ne serait même pas, et pourtant il est, mais il est comme il n'aurait pas dû être. Ce paradoxe est le paradoxe de la liberté : si les hommes sont, ils ne sont qu'en tant que libres. Et cette liberté est liberté pour le bien et pour le mal, telle est quasi-définitionnellement, la « réalité humaine ». Le mal n'est pas substantiel, il est événement de l'être et c'est l'être lui-même, « le monde terrible de l'être » (Schelling), qui « est le mal » (Levinas) - lequel n'est ni absence de vérité ni absence de pensée, mais inversion et perversion par excès de et sur la vérité et la pensée.

⁴ « *So bleibt es immer ein Skandal der Philosophie und allgemeinen Menschenvernunft, das Dasein der Dinge außer uns (von denen wir doch den ganzen Stoff zu Erkenntnissen selbst für unseren inneren Sinn her haben) bloß auf Glauben annehmen zu müssen, und, wenn es jemand einfällt es zu bezweifeln, ihm keinen genugtuenden Beweis entgegenstellen zu können* », Préface à la seconde édition de la *Critique de la raison pure*, GF Flammarion, trad. J. Barni, Paris, 1976, p. 53.

Semprun, à Buchenwald, a lu ces pages avec une exaltation douloureuse et il a rendu compte après-coup de cette expérience dans plusieurs ouvrages. Longtemps après, il se souvient de cette « formule qui me frappa au plus intime, au point que je la retiendrai pour toujours : 'sans cette obscurité préalable la créature n'aurait aucune réalité, la ténèbre lui revient nécessairement en partage' »⁵. Ou encore : « La ténèbre du mystère de l'humanité de l'homme, vouée à la liberté du Bien comme à celle du Mal, pétrie de cette liberté »⁶. Et pour finir, cette juste conclusion tirée de la lecture mille fois recommencée du traité sur la liberté humaine : « le mal n'est pas l'inhumain...ou alors c'est l'inhumain chez l'homme...Il est donc dérisoire de s'opposer au Mal...par une simple référence à l'homme, à l'espèce humaine. Le Mal est l'un des projets possibles de la liberté constitutive de l'humanité de l'homme, de la liberté où s'enracinent à la fois l'humanité et l'inhumanité de l'être humain ».

Je me suis arrêté, sans pouvoir ici développer davantage, sur les *Recherches sur l'essence de la liberté humaine* et sur la lecture sidérée qu'en fit un écrivain déporté parce qu'elles emportent d'un même mouvement philosophie, littérature et expérience concentrationnaire et parce qu'elles posent ou reposent la question du sens dont je suis parti.

Toutes les réponses génériques apportées à la question du mal ou à l'existence de la Shoah, à leurs « raisons », l'absence d'humanité, le défaut de pensée, vident de sens les élucidations sensées qu'elles proposent, à peine les ont-elles posées. Même la grande hypothèse de la liberté pour le bien et pour le mal reçue par l'écrivain Semprun, où métaphysique et littérature semblent momentanément s'accorder, même Schelling, donc, qui va aussi loin qu'il est possible dans l'endurance de ce qui semble échapper au « sens » -finit, et c'est inévitable, par reconduire quelque chose comme un sens, même si le mal, ici, n'est nullement une substance, c'est-à-dire un principe explicatif, mais une irruption, un surgissement fatal, une éruption, une insurrection dans l'être.

Il va de soi que la question philosophique du Mal constitue le cadre le plus approprié pour toute pensée qui tenterait avec crainte et tremblement d'approcher la Shoah. Mais elle demeure un cadre, soit l'encadrement dans un sens d'une énigme, d'un « sans pourquoi », comme le rappelle le SS à Primo Levi qui, même à Auschwitz, continue de réclamer une cause.

Hors cadre, la Shoah met en question la question, laquelle vise toujours la production d'un sens élaboré à partir d'un pré-sens donné. Lui procurer un sens, en fournir les significations, les raisons, l'inscrire dans une chaîne de causalités -c'est

⁵ *La mort qu'il faut*, Paris, Folio, 2002, p. 135

⁶ *L'écriture ou la vie*, Paris, Folio, 1996, p. 89-90

mentir, c'est mentir sur la Shoah. Il est toutefois des mensonges pieux et nécessaires, comme on sait. Les explications de la Shoah valent mieux que le silence, à tout prendre. Mais elles n'échapperont pas à l'interpellation perverse qui demande et demandera toujours les preuves indubitables de son existence. L'alternative est terrible pour cet athlète du sens qu'est le philosophe toujours tenté de les administrer pour conjurer le « scandale » de l'extériorité.

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BOOK REVIEW

Jad HATEM, *Recherches sur le mal. Schelling et Proust*, Paris, Ôrizons, 2018 ;
Schelling à Buchenwald. Le mal absolu, Bucarest, Zeta Books, 2022 ;
Marx philosophe du mal, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2006.

« Un être réfractaire partout fait irruption »

*Et de mes pièges le plus haut,
Tu gardes les cœurs de connaître
Que l'univers n'est qu'un défaut
Dans la pureté du Non-être*¹

Ce qui me paraît courir comme un fil inlacérable à travers l'œuvre et le travail de Jad Hatem, ou comme une veine souterraine invisible à l'œil nu sauf en ses affleurements discontinus, c'est la question du mal -pour le dire massivement et sans précautions. Le mot malicieux que le regretté Miklos Vetö s'appliquait à lui-même, « *malologie* », lui convient parfaitement. Cette *malologie*, sans répit, s'est déployée dans la lecture, l'investissement, la compréhension d'œuvres où le mal s'existe, si je puis dire, d'œuvres innombrables où sont à l'œuvre, ou contre l'œuvre, à contre-œuvre pourrait-on dire, des figures du mal, toujours singulières, toujours chatoyantes, jamais univoques, simples, immédiates. « Figures du mal »

est une expression trop indéterminée, dont les contours se brouillent à peine approchés. Je dirais plus précisément que le mal veut l'interprétation, d'où la malologie. Au penseur de savoir retourner l'interprétation du mal contre les pulsions herméneutiques qu'il suscite et anime. Le diable, *Teufel*, est peut-être tapi dans le doute interprétatif, *Zweifel*. Il fait œuvre et veut faire œuvre dans les œuvres, pour rivaliser avec l'œuvre divine, la création - le diable veut créer, il créé.

Cette « sensibilité », partout repérable chez Jad Hatem, trouve certainement son origine, son insistance nourrie, dans la longue et continue méditation des *Recherches sur l'essence de la liberté humaine*, le grand traité schellingien de 1809

¹ Paul Valéry, *Ebauche d'un serpent*, in *Œuvres I*, Paris, Gallimard, Pléiade, 1959, p. 139



sur la liberté pour le bien et pour le mal, sur « la possibilité générale du mal » disait son auteur- dont Hatem est assurément le lecteur le plus profond qu'il m'ait été donné de rencontrer. Il en retient en particulier l'idée d'une racine commune aux deux, le bien et le mal. Sous la forme duelle d'une identité et d'une non-identité, un même serait partagé en deux, envisagé sous deux aspects différents -c'est là, dans ce *Zweifälle*, qu'une tragédie s'accomplit à la faveur d'une insinuation, un *agôn* dont la description incombe au malologue.

Mal et bien, bien et mal, sont en lutte. Le nom flamboyant de la commune racine de cette lutte, de son nerf, fut le fait de Schelling, c'est le *Grund* en tant qu'il rivalise avec l'existant et porte chaque ipsité à son inlassable auto-affirmation, à son auto-enfantement en quelque sorte.

Bien et mal exigent chacun quelque chose contre quoi exercer sa puissance, une résistance éprouvée dans la confrontation avec une compacité effective. Le mal n'est pas privation, de bien ou d'être, il n'est pas absence, il est réel, plein, en lutte contre un autre réel et un autre plein, même s'il n'est pas substantiel. Sa réalité, c'est sa positivité interminable. Le réel-positif du mal, sa *Wirklichkeit*, désigne selon la conceptualité schellingienne l'assemblage de parties ajointées en vertu d'une certaine nature du tout, disjonction ou bien unité, mal ou bien, pensée et contre-pensée. Le mal pense bel et bien, en effet. Et si nous avons du mal à penser que le mal pense, il y a peut-être là une ruse, la dissimulation d'une puissance. L'animal n'est pas capable de mal, en lui tout uniment les principes ne sont jamais déliés, et c'est ce qui nous

touche tant dans ses regards, nous désarme ou nous irrite. *L'homme, oui*. La figure schellingienne du dieu inversé est centrale et quasi-permanente dans les écritures de Jad Hatem, elle y est constamment opérative. Quand je dis, comme je viens de le faire, « l'homme, oui », je dis ou veux dire : entre divinité et animalité, l'homme est positivement un dieu inversé, il est le projet même de cette inversion, et pas seulement l'une de ses formes. En relèvent toutes sortes de configurations, le mensonge par exemple, tel que Proust en dresse cliniquement l'image pour mieux en décrire l'affect ou la pathologie à travers la jalousie ou en s'attardant sur l'« artiste du mal » qu'est Mademoiselle Vinteuil dans son voyeurisme, selon les analyses des *Recherches sur le mal. Schelling et Proust* ; mais aussi, pour me rapporter à un tout autre cas, « *les mals* » comme on disait jadis au pluriel pour évoquer les peines du corps, les douleurs physiques, endurées depuis la malédiction biblique de l'enfantement jusqu'aux martyres innombrables.

Le dieu inversé traverse tout ce que Jad Hatem est amené à penser, aussi bien comme matrice ou principe d'intelligibilité du monde, des œuvres, des actes, que comme constat phénoménologique et ontologique. La façon dont il en use en fait un « prisme d'interprétation » central et irradiant, comme on peut lire dans le récent *Schelling à Buchenwald. Le mal absolu*. Sans trêve et sans repos, l'homme fait de son ipsité une volonté absolue, totale, un vouloir-être tenace. Le lien des forces en l'homme, que Schelling met au cœur de ses dispositifs théologico-anthropologiques (je me

permets ici de renvoyer à ma lecture des *Âges du monde*, « une traduction de l'absolu », ce lien des deux volontés, tient du divin. Dieu est liaison. Mais que les deux forces viennent à se délier, à se déliter, qu'elles entrent en discorde, et alors s'élançait le dieu inversé, ce voulant-être qui n'est jamais, cette faim d'être insatiable, cette intarissable pulsion d'être.

L'inversion s'installe alors, dans l'éli-sion du dieu lui-même dont elle n'a plus besoin pour se faire valoir comme telle. Elle prend ses aises à même le monde, l'inversion, dans une inquiétante immanence, celle des solitudes existentielles et tout autant celle des totalitarismes massifiés. De Sade ou Dostoïevski à Milton et Kafka, mais en passant partout dans les littératures, seules à même d'en montrer la vie, si je puis dire, et la mort, et leurs échangeabilités, l'inversion produit ses pandémonismes incertains, insistants, en souffrance, sans terme. L'histoire de l'ontologie en ouvre elle aussi la liste, dressant la soigneuse cartographie de ses nombreux personnages conceptuels, le *conatus essendi* par exemple, dès lors qu'on considère le mal comme un événement dans l'être et que c'est l'être lui-même, « le monde terrible de l'être » (Schelling), qui « est le mal » (Levinas).

Pour Schelling, l'inversion peut échouer en Dieu, c'est moins évident pour Hatem puisque lui nous montre qu'elle persiste dans sa visée d'être, gestation d'ontologie (du mal) à même l'humain, l'homme humain et inhumain, libre pour l'un et pour l'autre, pour l'un ou pour l'autre.

L'inversion ne se peut qu'à partir du moment où s'effectue une disjonction réelle - entre bien et mal, mais plus largement, si on peut dire, entre des principes contraires, des dynamiques heurtées.

Une totalité, car la chose se dit en 1809 dans la langue de l'idéalisme allemand, une totalité, donc, s'ajointe ou se disjointe, se totalise en elle-même ou disjointe, *out of joint*. Cette figure schellingienne du « tout disjoint », temporellement disjointé, est dans le réel ce qui n'est pas réel, pour pasticher l'autre formule. C'est une figure extraordinairement productive, heuristiquement très efficace pour penser quelque chose de la persévérance ontologique de l'être dans son *conatus* (le mal, peut-être). Elle fait en même temps valoir que le monde, notre monde, est un monde à l'envers, avec son ontologie propre, si consistante qu'elle est partout, dans la philosophie, dans la littérature et les arts, dans les religions, dans les formes de pensée les plus diverses, dans la culture au sens très large, en vertu d'une remarquable plasticité anthropocosmologique.

L'inversion caractérise plus qu'une forme de pensée, je l'ai dit, elle est un projet dont le champ est l'être, c'est-à-dire le tout d'une part, sa disjonction de l'autre. Pourquoi parler de projet ? *Marx philosophe du mal* donne sinon la réponse, du moins une clé majeure. L'inversion se présente comme perversion de l'être - ou de Dieu, l'idolâtrie par exemple dans le judaïsme et les monothéismes en général. En bonne logique, il faudrait donc l'inverser. Mais l'inversion de l'inversion pourrait bien être une ruse dialectique du mal. Remettre à l'endroit, remettre sur ses pieds ce qui se tient la tête en bas, remettre de l'ordre vrai dans l'ordre apparent, *renverser*, toutes ces métaphores de la révolution, conservatrice, émancipatrice, ces allégories du retour à l'origine ou de l'affranchissement social, politique, humain,

rien ne nous assure qu'elles ne sont pas l'œuvre d'un souffleur, d'un dieu inversé malignement satisfait de ses créations, en guises du bien.

Être homme, n'est-ce pas les endurer jusqu'à être dieu ou devenir ce que l'on est, inverser l'inversion de l'humain en divin, de l'anthropologie en théologie, selon la ligne feurbachienne, et nietzschéenne, qui gouverne les athéismes dans leur ensemble ? Le « réfractaire » schellingien partout y règne, pas tant comme question-bateau, « et Dieu dans tout ça ? », ou comme apostrophe-blasphème, « le salut, il n'existe même pas » (Beckett) -que comme ligne de force des humanismes contemporains, lesquels consisteraient, selon le mot de Jad Hatem, à *faire loi* de l'ipséité essentialisée en volonté propre, Etat, race, classe, Être suprême, et exhaussée dans sa présomption d'être Tout, au lieu d'*accueillir la Loi*. Voilà pourquoi il est si dérisoire, quand on a compris Schelling, comme fit Semprun à Buchenwald à la lecture des *Recherches* de 1809, de croire s'opposer au mal par l'invocation de l'humanité, de l'Homme, avec une grande hache lui aussi. Selon la règle du *Grund*, et l'exhaussement en liberté, humain et inhumain s'enracinent sur le même socle commun. Le fond, ce qui en dieu n'est pas dieu, renvoie au mal, ce qui en l'homme n'est pas l'homme mais demeure cependant indissociable de son être-homme. Selon le geste et le concept de l'*Anziehung* des *Âges du monde*, l'homme se revêt d'être et s'y attire, double sens du terme allemand (*sich*) *anziehen*, sans parvenir à être cet être actualisé, le non-dieu en dieu, le non-divin, l'humain et son double non-humain.

Voilà pourquoi les crimes contre l'humanité sont aussi des crimes de l'humanité contre elle-même, des crimes humains, trop humains.

Avec Schelling, avec Hatem en ses lectures déployées de tant d'œuvres philosophiques et littéraires, ces attestations de culture où Benjamin discernait autant de clignotements barbares, nous savons que le mal est esprit, lequel est volonté -pour le mal et pour le bien. Croire que le mal ne pense pas, je l'ai indiqué, est une hypothèse fondée sur un point aveugle, oublieux de « l'être réfractaire » ou de « l'obstacle rompu » :

*Comme las de son pur spectacle,
Dieu lui-même a rompu l'obstacle
De sa parfaite éternité ;
Il se fit Celui qui dissipe
En conséquence, son Principe,
En étoiles, son Unité*².

C'est que l'être est incertain et le mal sinueux puisqu'il peut, selon l'état de lassitude de la « parfaite éternité », tantôt s'ontologiser en *conatus*, expansion, tantôt dés-être ce qui est, contraction. La métaphysique de l'extermination n'a rien à reprocher aux exterminés juifs, par exemple d'être ceci ou cela. La guerre ontologique qui leur est faite entend simplement rompre l'obstacle de leur être et les annihiler. « *Ne descends pas des cieux* » implorait Musset, en parlant aux étoiles, comme s'il pressentait « la chute » qui « étincelle au lieu de néant » dont parle Valéry quelques vers après ceux que je viens de citer. Toute descente de ce genre, toute chute des étoiles dans

² *Ebauche d'un serpent, id.*

l'immanence, toute transcendance mimétique risque d'être fatale, catastrophique. L'histoire du XXème siècle, comme histoire des totalitarismes, des massacres de masse, des mises à mort planifiées, en fut l'illustration d'ampleur - avec son cortège d'humiliés, d'offensés, de martyrisés, de néantisés et de gazés par millions. Ne viennent-ils pas trouer, sans jamais l'invalider, toute malologie, en désignant du doigt l'inutilité de la souffrance, les *mals* pour rien, la douleur, « cet envers de la peau »³, le cri des écorchés, des crucifiés, des torturés ? Il n'est pas insensé de se poser cette question...

Entre les pôles schellingiens de la philosophie du *Grund* et de la philosophie de la liberté, Jad Hatem a conçu ses investigations comme une recherche de la base et du sommet d'un « système du mal », selon l'expression de *Marx philosophe du mal*. Ce système consisterait en un précis entre-ajustement des inversions dont le *Marx* dresse la liste : inversions *intersubjective, intrasubjective, on-tique, sémiotique, économique, politique, idéologique*, inversions agglomérées en pensée dans la critique marxienne de la « domination », des analyses de l'argent aux stéréotomies des rapports de production, mais aussi dans la *Recherche* des temps perdu et retrouvé et de leur (in)articulation autour de l'involontaire. Proust et Marx, et certainement d'autres encore bien sûr, désarment tout projet de « métaphysique appliquée » (Habermas).

La loupe hatémienne nous le fait voir, comme elle nous fait voir les séries et les séquences où les inversions font œuvre, à chaque fois alvéolées autrement, foncièrement hétérotéliques, mais que la lumière de la malologie désigne comme autant de structures de répétition, observées au moyen de coupes transversales, toujours identiques, toujours autres.

Ces opérations dessinent une trajectoire, attentive aux récurrences du mal dans ses pulsions de révélation, à ses inhérences sociales et historiques qui finissent par le cristalliser en maladie inguérissable - malgré les politiques, malgré les religions, malgré les arts et les œuvres, malgré la civilisation ? Ou bien à la faveur de leurs prouesses ? « L'histoire nous gâche l'existence, écrivait René Char, avec ses voiles de deuil, ses passes magnétiques, ses dilatations, ses revers mensongers ». Ce gâchis, c'est le mal en sa banalité, c'est-à-dire en sa présence continue, quotidienne, qui est tout le contraire d'une inoffensive réalité. Les compositions conceptuelles inventées par Jad Hatem à travers les innombrables œuvres de culture qu'il aura examinées nous en offrent l'impeccable dramaturgie.

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³ *Autrement qu'être*, p. 85.

