

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 –, dionism – 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 Dyonysios in Tartarus⁴⁹ 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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