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“Das natürliche Phänomen” and its fourth co-ordinate. The kinship between the phenomenological doctrines of Goethe and Florensky

„Wer weiß etwas von Elektrizität“, sagte ein heiterer Naturforscher, „als wenn er im Finstern eine Katze streichelt oder Blitz und Donner neben ihm niederleuchten und rasseln? Wie viel und wie wenig weiß er alsdann davon?“

Goethe, *Erkenntnis und Wissenschaft*, N. 670¹

Despite the little scientific interest aroused by Goethe’s writings concerning nature, the notions and perspectives presupposed by them contributed to forming Florensky’s *Weltanschauung* – as attested by Florensky self². Starting from the closeness of views manifested by Goethe and Florensky, this paper will focus particularly on the relationship between Goethe’s definition (i.e. identification) of “natural phenomenon” and Florensky’s definition of phenomenon as such. This topic is legitimate insofar as Goethean enquiry concerning nature directly assumes phenomena (*Phänomene*, which Goethe indeed also calls “facts”, *Fakta*³) as the

¹ J.W. Goethe, Hamburger Ausgabe in 14 Bänden, edited by E. Trunz, Wegner, Hamburg, 1948-1969, hereinafter referred to as HA, vol. XII, p. 459.

² Goethe’s approach to nature (as well as his closeness to Florensky’s thought) is indeed directly thematised in many works of Florensky. Here are some of those passages, alongside the very well-known statement: “Я весь в Гете-Фарадеевском мироощущении и миропонимании”; Cf. e.g. P.A. Florensky, *Sochineniya v chetyrekh tomakh*, Mysl, Moskva, 1998, hereinafter referred to as SVCT, vol. I, p. 453. See also Ib., vol. I, p. 299, as well as Ib., vol. III (1), p. 40-45; and Ib., vol. III (1), p. 137-139. Cf. all of that, finally, with the sentence in Ib., vol. I, p. 44: “Гете обладал этою способностью видеть тип наблюдаемого, в исключительной степени; у Гете надо учиться познанию природы”.

³ HA, vol. XIII, p. 23. Cf this passage from *Erfahrung und Wissenschaft* with works like *Der Versuch als Vermittler von Objekt und Subjekt*, but also with *Zur Morphologie* (particularly Ib., Vol XIII, p. 120-127), *Zur Farbenlehre* (particularly Ib., vol XIII, p. 314-329) as well

reference point for knowledge of natural things; nevertheless, it is not obvious what notion of appearance the phenomenon presupposes – since Goethe does not directly thematise any phenomenology *stricto sensu* –, as well as what forms and *delimitations* are proper to it.

Indeed, the difficulty of identifying an *entire* “natural phenomenon” is evident, since it is inevitably changing and unstable: time and the surrounding environment inexorably modify the structure of every natural entity that appears on earth (*Erscheinungen*). As such, the process of the metamorphosis of the leaf – contemplated in the time of its formation and in harmonising with different environmental conditions – constitutes the most famous scientific subject of Goethe’s research in the botanical field. His zoological studies, as well as the geological ones, deal likewise with a dynamic object: the body of different animals develops in size precisely through the various parts of which it actually consists; and these, in turn, develop differently depending on a variety of circumstances and within different timeframes. So where is the entire natural *appearance* as such to be found⁴? How is it possible to bring all differences back to a full unity? What is being formed and transformed⁵?

In consonance with a long tradition, the here intended question concentrates on evidencing the quality of permanence in what participates of changing (*Werden*, i.e. “becoming”). In other words, it regards the qualities shared by the observed phenomena beyond any difference. Nevertheless, this question cannot be solved through a *subtraction* of the individual characteristics of the contemplated object, nor through a fictional inductive method. Far from seeking a permanent model completely detached from the sensory datum, Goethe indeed eschews in every way preconceived theory and generalisation: his research revolves properly around the phenomena, which directly represent “*die Lehre*”⁶. In this

as the other writings on nature dedicated to the Goethean “methodological assumptions”. In general, I refer here mostly to the reading proposed by Siebeck and Haynacher, authors which Florensky himself quotes in *Stolp i utveridenie istiny* in relation to the theme of life in Goethe’s work. Cf. M. Heynacher, *Goethes Philosophie aus seinen Werken*. Verlag von Felix Meiner, Leipzig, 1922, with H. Siebeck, *Goethe als Denker*, Fr. Frommans Verlag, Stuttgart, 1922. For the rest I follow the “idealistic” reading that Beierwaltes admits in W. Beierwaltes, *Platonismus und Idealismus*, Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1972.

⁴ The question at issue here can be explained from the perspective of *Urphänomen*: where can one find that “phenomenon” which explains all other phenomena and which remains, despite this, a *phenomenon*? Heisenberg captures this issue very well by comparing it with the modern notion of D.N.A. Cf. W. Heisenberg, *Das Naturbild Goethes und die technisch-naturwissenschaftliche Welt*, Physikalische Blätter, 24, 193 (VI), 1968, pp. 245-247.

⁵ Cf. M. Donà (edited by), *Urpflanze. La pianta originaria*, Albo versorio Edizioni, Milano, 2014, p. 47.

⁶ HA, XII p. 432, (N. 488): „Das Höchste wäre: zu begreifen, daß alles Faktische schon Theorie ist. Die Bläue des Himmels offenbart uns das Grundgesetz der Chromatik. Man suche nur nichts hinter den Phänomenen: sie selbst sind die Lehre.“.

sense the abovementioned question should be posed to the particular datum itself⁷, or, better, to the momentary experience, seeking thus its wholeness. Which is to say, the question focuses on what is perceived here and now, attempting to unveil its permanent meaning.

Sobald wir einen Gegenstand in Beziehung auf sich selbst und in Verhältnis mit anderen betrachten, und denselben nicht unmittelbar entweder begreifen oder verabscheuen: so werden wir mit einer ruhigen Aufmerksamkeit uns bald von ihm, seinen Teilen, seinen Verhältnissen einen ziemlich deutlichen Begriff machen können.⁸

As can be seen from this short passage from *Der Versuch als Vermittler von Object und Subject*, the observed phenomenon is necessarily the starting point of Goethean research insofar as it represents the direct experience of the object. What is more, the phenomenon here refers just to the object (*Gegenstand*) – and *therefore* to what this object interacts with – but not to the singularity of the observer. And yet the experience of an object “in front” of the subject, i.e. *this* contemplative relationship, remains. The experience, in this sense, can embrace its own object if the “objectivity” of *this* phenomenon is based precisely *on the reference* to the object itself⁹: by abandoning the measure (*Maßstab*) provided by the conditions under which a singular observation takes place, Goethe indeed does not polarise the epistemological relationship by starting from the subjective point of view¹⁰. Rather, the singular experiment (*Versuch*),

⁷ In *Ib.*, vol. XII, p. 662 (Anmerkungen on Goethe's *Schriften zur Literatur*), H. J. Schrimpf writes: “He [Goethe] always starts from the attentive observation of individual phenomena, from the particular, often inconspicuous”.

⁸ *Ib.*, vol. XIII, p. 11. “As soon as we observe an object in reference to itself and in relation to others, and do not immediately either covet or abhor it, then, with calm attention, we shall soon be able to form a fairly clear notion of it, its parts, and its relations”.

⁹ At the very beginning of the *Versuch* (*Ib.*, vol. XIII, p.10) the following statement appears: “Sobald der Mensch die Gegenstände um sich her gewahr wird, betrachtet er sie in Bezug auf sich selbst [...]. Ein weit schwereres Tagewerk übernehmen diejenigen, die durch den Trieb nach Kenntnis angefeuert die Gegenstände der Natur an sich selbst und in ihren Verhältnissen untereinander zu beobachten streben, [denn] von einer Seite verlieren sie den Maßstab der ihnen zu Hülfe kam, wenn sie als Menschen die Dinge in Bezug auf *sich* betrachteten”.

¹⁰ In this sense, it's unequivocal that Goethe refers here to the Kantian system, in which the opposite assumption clearly appears (B 164: “denn Gesetze existieren eben so wenig in den Erscheinungen, sondern nur relativ auf das Subjekt, dem die Erscheinungen inhärieren“). The relationship with Kant, of the utmost importance for Florensky, becomes here evidently important also for Goethe, who often uses its lexicon. As Steiner has indeed already noticed, a sort of “inversion” of the Kantian perspective can be said to exist in the case of Goethe, who wrote to Schulz in 1831 (J.W. Goethe, *Briefe in 4 Bänden*, Hamburg, Wegner, 1962, vol. IV, p.450): “Ich danke der kritischen und idealistischen Philosophie, daß sie mich auf mich selbst aufmerksam gemacht hat, [...]; sie kommt aber nie zum Objekt”.

which never takes place on the basis of conditions assigned by the observer (*Hypothese*), can represent the *medium* (*Vermittler*) of an “objective” relationship, as soon as *this relationship* is taken as the starting point. In this way Goethe can thematise the evident clash¹¹ between experience and theory: on the one hand, in fact, the observed phenomenon cannot but be the objective focus and only subject of the research; on the other, however, this same phenomenon cannot be properly understood without synthetic and necessary relations¹² – i.e. something *beyond* its singular appearance. Precisely in this sense, the Goethean research cannot fail to resonate with the logico-ontological question formulated by Florensky: *how* does the datum really manifest itself *hic et nunc*?

Что действительно? Что познаваемо? Что ценно? Данный ли, здесь и теперь переживаемый, момент, или нечто, хотя и соотносящееся с ним, но вечное и вселенское? — На чем строится жизнь? На что опирается познание? Чем руководиться в своей деятельности? — Метафизическим ли «Carpe diem — лови момент», или иным, высшим, бытием? Воистину есть одно ли только долнее, или и горнее, более сего долнего действительно?¹³

Indeed, Florensky’s question is clearly posed with regard to the appearance of the individual phenomenon, i.e. precisely what shows itself here and now. The series of questions posed by Florensky aims in this way at the search for the meaning of the single and manifesting event, detecting its contradictory nature in the face of a theoretical rule: if one is in fact only aware of “stimuli” that are always different from each other, what *real* unity can follow? As in Goethe’s work, here again the problematisation arises from the fragility of the actual experience, asking whether it is possible for something *else* to *exist*¹⁴ that is nonetheless not an alternative – what would *destroy* experience as such – but “*related* to it”. The-

¹¹ Ib., vol. XII, p. 433: Theory and Experience “stehen gegeneinander in beständigem Konflikt. Alle Vereinigung in der Reflexion ist eine Täuschung“.

¹² Ib., vol. XII, p.443: “Die Theorie an und für sich ist nichts nütze, als insofern sie uns an den Zusammenhang der Erscheinungen glauben macht“.

¹³ SVCT, vol. III (2). p. 73: “What is real? What is knowable? What is worth? Is it the present moment, here and now experienced, or something that is eternal and universal, though related to it? What is the foundation of life? What is the foundation of cognition? What is to guide one’s activity? Is it the metaphysical “Carpe diem – catch the moment”, or some other, higher, being? Is there really the lower world alone, or is there also the higher world, which is more real than the lower one?”.

¹⁴ In reference to Goethe, the connection between *episteme* and ontology (emphasised several times by Florensky) is clear right from the assumption of the phenomenon as the primary object of Goethe’s natural study. This reference was highlighted in a phenomenological perspective by Iris Hennigfeld, on the track opened up by Beierwaltes’ studies. Cf. I. Hennigfeld, *Goethe’s phenomenological way of thinking and the Urphänomen*, Goethe Yearbook, 22 (I), 2015, pp. 143-167.

se questions, which open Florensky's discussion on Platonic universals, must be in fact considered according to Florensky's renowned realism¹⁵: universals are not to be conceived as *conceptus*, *nomina* or *sermones*¹⁶, but rather as a real relation in things (*in rebus*)¹⁷ and, moreover, as a cause preceding the things themselves (*ante res*)¹⁸. This suggests that properly the empirical relation is considered as the first reference of Florensky's research; namely, in Goethe's words, "the object in reference to itself".

As can be seen, both problematisations, although apparently set out from different points of view, are in fact similar and start from the "here and now experienced fact", thematising its *empirical* possibility of being in relation to something necessarily different from itself. As Goethe in fact directly assumes that a certain synthesis is already contained in the phenomenon (as will be shown better in the next pages), so the more problematic approach adopted by Florensky seems precisely to admit the possibility of that same synthesis *in rebus*. Indeed, just as for Florensky it is not possible to obtain any knowledge from the isolated sensation only¹⁹, for Goethe it is equally necessary to maintain a cautious approach to the essence of any singular thing. With the words of the German author, it must therefore be emphasised that we *undertake in vain* any attempt „das Wesen eines Dinges auszudrücken. Wirkungen werden wir gewahr, und eine vollständige Geschichte dieser Wirkungen umfaßte wohl allenfalls das Wesen jenes Dinges“²⁰. This passage clarifies that the same thing perceived here and now cannot be revealed in terms of its essence except, precisely, *as an effect*²¹; at the same time, however, this passage admits evidently the possibility of a *whole* "history of effects". Here, the contradiction revealed by Florensky's problematisation appears clearly: on the one hand, one finds the effect as one of the multiple "stimuli" of which man can become aware, and, on the other, a different "thing" which somehow presupposes that effect. In this way, the difference between the "essence" of a singular thing (as something *posited*) and the "history of effects" itself is shown to be similar to the abovementioned fracture between theory and experience: through perception (*Wahrnehmung*) one does not be-

¹⁵ Ib. III (2), p. 80.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ib., vol. III (2), p. 74.

²⁰ HA, vol. XIII, p. 315: "to express the essence of a thing. We become aware of effects, and a whole history of these effects would encompass at best the essence of that thing".

²¹ Indeed, the translation "effects" (as *opposed* to "stimuli" or "perceptions") emphasises the activity (*Wirken*, i.e. "*tätig sein*") of the phenomenon within the horizon of Goethean realism (opposed to this would be the *passivity* of perception, which refers instead to the subject).

come aware of a *defined* history of effects pertaining to a given object, but rather of a *complete* history of these effects not yet schematised: indeed, if this “history” is ultimately considered to refer only to the relationship established between object and subject – and *therefore* by reference to the object of *this* perception – it will not be permissible to make a singular observer or extraneous schemes the subject of the object’s “historicity”²².

The problematisation proposed by Goethe shows in this sense that there must be something *historical* in the phenomenon itself in order for this same phenomenon, conceived precisely as currently manifesting, to reveal its very essence. According to Goethe, it would in fact hardly be admissible to express the essence even of this same single effect, if not, again, as a “history” of its own perceivable references. In this way the “historical” synthesis of the phenomenon can become for Goethe properly the condition (*Bedingung*)²³ both of experience and existence of the appearance²⁴. The multiplicity of effects in time and perspective cannot thus be understood as an instant marked by the time of a “single” perception but, rather, should be conceived as the *cobesion* of these same contradictory aspects in the perception. Starting from this or that effect would in fact mean hypothetically *determining*²⁵ a “subjective” fracture in the face of the objectivity of the phenomenon.

Es ist [...] ein großer Unterschied, ob man, wie Theoretisten tun, einer Hypothese zulieb ganze Zahlen in die Brüche schlägt, oder ob man einen empirischen Bruch der Idee des reinen Phänomens aufopfert.

Denn da der Beobachter nie das reine Phänomen mit Augen sieht, sondern vieles von seiner Geistesstimmung, von der Stimmung des Organs im Augenblick, von Licht, Luft, Witterung, Körpern, Behandlung und tausend andern Umständen abhängt; so ist ein Meer auszutrinken, wenn man sich an

²² Using the demonstrative pronoun “*diese*” in relation to the term “*Geschichte*” (etymological relative of *schicken* and *Schicksal*), Goethe in fact emphasises again that the *historicity* of effects is only relative to the (natural) appearance of “these” effects.

²³ *Ib.*, vol. XIII, p.25: “hier wird nicht nach Ursachen gefragt, sondern nach Bedingungen, unter welchen die Phänomene erscheinen”.

²⁴ As Heisenberg noticed, this link is granted to the extent that Goethe actually seeks the “*Grundstruktur*” of phenomena through the senses, so that he can intuit (*Anschauen*) the original phenomenon as its “structure”. Cf. W. Heisenberg, *Das Naturbild Goethes und die technisch-naturwissenschaftliche Welt*, *Physikalische Blätter*, 24, 193 (VI), 1968, p. 242. I think one can find the same reading of Goethe in P. Hadot, *Le voile d'Isis*, Éditions Gallimard, Paris, 2004. The link between creation and manifestation in Goethe is in this sense excellently thematised by Beierwaltes in W. Beierwaltes, *Platonismus und Idealismus*, Klostermann, Frankfurt am Main, 1972, pp. 93-100.

²⁵ HA, vol. XII, p.441: “Es gibt Hypothesen, wo Verstand und Einbildungskraft sich an die Stelle der Idee setzen.”.

Individualität des Phänomens halten und diese beobachten, messen, wägen und beschreiben will.²⁶

In this excerpt, it is made quite clear that those contradictions which arise in experience can in fact only apparently be resolved through a theoretical, i.e. hypothetical, *a priori* assumption. The empirical contradiction of the observed phenomenon can, on the other hand, be kept *active* in relation to the unfolding of the pure (*rein*)²⁷ phenomenon²⁸: only in this way momentary perception could grasp in fact a "purely" synthetic trait of that object which, in a certain respect, represents something permanent but in movement²⁹. In this sense, momentary experience cannot therefore coincide with the punctually empty *impression* of a single effect³⁰, since the position of this same "stimulus" would be contrary to the synthetic condition (*Bedingung*) under which only the object, according to Goethe, can be given. The very instant of perception tends, rather, towards a *genetic* co-presence of the effects, overcoming the instantaneousness of the claimed individuality of the phenomenon. By preserving the very contradiction of experience, Goethe thus finds in the moment (*Augenblick*) the possibility of the synthesis of the phenomenon³¹. This

²⁶ Ib., vol. XIII, p. 24. "There is [...] a considerable difference between *making whole figures into fractions for the sake of a hypothesis, as theorists do, or sacrificing an empirical fraction to the idea of a pure phenomenon*. For since the observer never sees the pure phenomenon with his eyes, but much depends on his mental attitude, on the disposition of the organ at the moment, on light, air, weather, bodies, treatment and a thousand other circumstances; *so there is an ocean to be drunk if one wishes to hold to the individuality of the phenomenon and observe, measure, weigh and describe it.*"

²⁷ Here one can observe only *en passant* that the same Kantian adjective acquires a similar meaning from the point of view of the necessary synthesis of things but, at the same time, a completely different meaning with regard to the origin and arising of the synthesis itself.

²⁸ Ib., vol. XII, p. 367: „Das unmittelbare Gewährwerden der Urphänomene versetzt uns in eine Art von Angst: wir fühlen unsere Unzulänglichkeit; nur durch das ewige Spiel der Empirie belebt, erfreuen sie uns.“ This concept of "immediate relation" to the *Urphänomen* is directly taken up by F. Moiso in order to understand Goethe's empiricism. Cf. therefore F. Moiso, *Goethe tra arte e scienza*, CUEM, Milano, 2012, p. 97-99.

²⁹ In fact, the notion of history presupposes both a) *radical change* and b) *the identity of what changes*: a biography that reports differences on the basis of a time extraneous to the evolution of the biographical object (e.g. the "linear time") is thus opposed here to the time of the *biology*, if this is conceived as a stable *logos* that changes in its *permanence*.

³⁰ This very effect would not at all envisage its possible synthesis as given here and now, but rather its *absoluteness* as given here and now. I return to this point later in the text, particularly in relation to Florensky's reflections.

³¹ Cf. HA, vol. XII, p. 367: „Grundeigenschaft der lebendigen Einheit: sich zu trennen, sich zu vereinen, sich ins Allgemeine zu ergehen, im Besonderen zu verharren, sich zu verwandeln, sich zu spezifizieren und, wie das Lebendige unter tausend Bedingungen sich dartun mag, hervortreten und zu verschwinden, zu solidifizieren und zu schmelzen, zu erstarren und zu fließen, sich auszudehnen und sich zusammenzuziehen. Weil nun alle diese Wirkungen im gleichen Zeitmoment zugleich vorgehen, so kann alles und jedes zu gleicher Zeit eintreten.“

Goethean “ungeheuer Augenblick” in fact opens up the instantaneous and *discontinuous*³² convergence of present and past³³, thereby becoming a stable cipher³⁴ of the contradiction active in Goethe’s phenomenological experience. Precisely from this notion of the moment, which is crucial for understanding the phenomenological perspective of time as an “element”³⁵, arises indeed the possibility of a synthesis *overflowing* with effects, of something that goes beyond the tight mesh of assumptions offered by the approach proper to modern science³⁶.

For all that, it will not be difficult to see that Florensky takes up, precisely from these notions, the Goethean intuition of an “originally differentiating phenomenon”³⁷, according to which the interconnection of effects is, in a certain way, present in the indeterminate set of those same effects. In his strong polemic against the Kantian system³⁸, Florensky in fact notices on several occasions that the *isolation* of the datum cannot but be seen as a radical “falsification” of reality. For him it is in fact clear that the attempt to express the essence of a single “effect” falls prey unavoidably to the error of its “hypostatisation”: in the flowing of time and the changing of perspective, the same thing would have to be arrested and properly “broken”. Such a “fictional” determination, which Florensky clearly perceives in any *position* of a single “fact of experience”, cannot

³² The word “discontinuous” is meant to indicate that these effects remain in their contradiction without a link that flattens them on the basis of something other than themselves.

³³ P. Hadot, *N’oublie pas de vivre. Goethe et la tradition des exercices spirituels*, Albin Michel, Paris, 2008, p. 63. Cf. this with the famous stanza of the poem *Vermächtnis* in HA, vol I, pp. 369-370, where Goethe, after exhorting trust in the senses („Den Sinnen hast du dann zu trauen, / Kein Falsches lassen sie dich schauen“), writes: „Genieße mäßig Füll’ und Segen, / Vernunft sei überall zugegen, / Wo Leben sich des Lebens freut. / Dann ist Vergangenheit beständig, / Das Künftige voraus lebendig, / Der Augenblick ist Ewigkeit“.

³⁴ P. Eichhorn proposes in his work *Idee und Erfahrung im Spätwerk Goethes* (Freiburg, K. Albert, 1971) the proximity between the notion of symbol, fundamental in this sense for both Goethe and Florensky, and that of moment (*Augenblick*).

³⁵ *Ib.*, vol. XII, p. 377.

³⁶ *Ib.*, vol. XII, p. 458: „Um sich aus der grenzenlosen Vielfachheit, Zerstückelung und Verwicklung der modernen Naturlehre wieder ins Einfache zu retten, muß man sich immer die Frage vorlegen: Wie würde sich Plato gegen die Natur, wie sie uns jetzt in ihrer größeren Mannigfaltigkeit, bei aller gründlichen Einheit, erscheinen mag, benommen haben?“.

³⁷ Cf. M. Donà (edited by), *Urpflanze. La pianta originaria*, Albo versorio Edizioni, Milano, 2014, p. 55.

³⁸ The “ambiguity” of the relationship between Florensky and Kant has been highlighted by various commentators, here it is however relevant to note that the notion of Kantian antinomy, central to Florensky’s thought (cf. F. Haney, *Pavel Florenskij und Kant. Eine wichtige Seite der russischen Kant-Rezeption*, Kant Studien, 92 (I), 2001), is interpreted by Goethe as inspiring precisely from the “revision” of that discussed in the *Kritik der Urteilskraft*. Cf. E. Förster, *Goethe als Philosoph*, Die Drei. Zeitschrift für Anthroposophie in Wissenschaft, Kunst, und sozialem Leben, 6 (I), 2008.

but rest on the “*pathos*” that animates the “terministic”³⁹ research: that research, that is, which aims to *assign* perspective to things starting precisely from the individual observer who experiences them. In this sense, the *superimposition* of an artificial integrity on the infinite particularities of the world extraordinarily resembles the superimposition of theory and experience discussed by Goethe.

Those “fractures of experience”, from which the doubt regarding the “meaninglessness” of the singular phenomenon was born, are not indeed to be overcome through the false “solidity” of a hypothetical empty instant: for such a concept of instant to be formed, it is necessary for both authors to leave experience itself, imposing on it an order that would flatten the very divergences formed by the object. The instant itself, if conceived in this sense as a punctual immediacy, would only be “только фикция (атом, монада и т. п.), только гипостазированное отвлечение от момента и точки, в себе — не сущих”⁴⁰. Indeed, as Florensky has observed⁴¹, this approach is based on the law of immediate identity $A = A$. But this “empty” identity, which forgets both what it defines and its global context, can only be based, according to Florensky’s “realist” paradigm, *on the opposition to another A* (namely a B). For otherwise there would be neither B, nor C, nor anything else *spontaneously* connected by anything. Following Florensky, one can for all that see that properly in the maintenance of contradiction ($A = B$) as integrity in motion, the reality of things can be contemplated as “objective”. And yet this very synthesis as a *condition* of analysis does not fall prey to a *regressus in indefinitum* if, by not standing in the “individuality of the phenomenon”, it is already understood as *mysterious wholeness*⁴², i.e. as that history of effects which, with Goethe’s words, embraces the essence of the thing. In this sense it is particularly relevant that Florensky proposes in *Stolp i utverdenie istiny* the intuition-discourse (интуиция-дискурсия)⁴³ as a dialogic figure of truth:

³⁹ SVCT, vol. III (2). p. 80.

⁴⁰ P. A. Florensky, *Stolp i utverzdenie Istiny*, Akademičeskij Proekt, Moskva, 2017, p.35. Cf. P. A. Florensky, *The pillar and the ground of Truth*, Princeton University Press, 1997, p. 24 “Only a fiction (an atom, a monad, etc.), only a hypostatized abstraction of a moment and a point, which, in themselves, do not exist.”

⁴¹ P. A. Florensky, *Stolp i utverzdenie Istiny*, Akademičeskij Proekt, Moskva, 2017, p. 32.

⁴² This topic cannot be dealt with here; however, it should be noticed that the very condition of the phenomenon in Goethe – as well as in the case of Florensky’s idea – are never properly *deduced* precisely because they are “hidden” (but “evident” in their inexhaustibility). Even the presentation of the four-dimensionality proposed by Florensky in *Smysl idealizma* starts from the depth (as a hidden being) of ideas. Cf. SVCT, vol. III (2), chpt. XI (particularly on pp. 103-105). A fundamental role in this respect, for both authors, is the “double status”, so to speak, of perception: observation in fact has to do with the sensible but, at the same time, is already somehow directed by (or towards) the intelligible.

⁴³ P.A. Florensky, *Stolp i utverzdenie Istiny. Opyt pravoslavnoj teodicej v dvenadcati pis'mach*, Akademičeskij Proekt, Moskva, 2017. p. 48.

what is therefore neither a “tyrannic” analysis nor a “frenzied” synthesis of things, but rather the harmonious convergence of the two processes.

Although this attitude could be perhaps found quite clearly in Goethe’s work, it must be seen here how Goethe himself stands properly in front of the analysis of the datum, in order to understand whether Florensky’s aversion to the isolated moment is *in its very premises* traceable in Goethe and how the co-presence of synthesis and analysis would be defined in a similar horizon.

Indeed, in Goethe’s work not only one can clearly see “daß jede Analyse eine Synthese voraussetzt”⁴⁴, but also one realises that, properly by *forgetting the contradictory harmony*⁴⁵ of synthesis and analysis, analysis could be prioritised as a particular method.

According to Goethe, analysis should be conceived in fact as a methodology of investigation that must aim to unveil something that is already (naturally) synthetic. However, the analytical method only works on the basis of an object that is analytically contemplable, i.e. a synthesis of *given parts*. In this sense, although analysis can unveil the “vorübereilte[...] Synthese, d.h. [...] Hypothese”, this same procedure can give also rise to a “falsche Synthese”, when the *objectivity* of the phenomenon is abandoned through this method and the necessity of the *determination* of the object is therefore left to analysis alone. The aim of Goethe’s work *Analyse and Synthese* is indeed not to banish analysis; rather, it will be a matter of reducing its *demands* or, in Florensky’s words, freeing the search for truth from its “tyranny”. In a similar way to Florensky, Goethe expresses in fact perplexity about the enthusiasm for the “new” analytical method, on which “das neue Jahrhundert [...] bloß verlegt”⁴⁶: the *immediate* recourse to this procedure by investigating nature not only runs evidently the risk of superficially⁴⁷ breaking down the phenomenon. Rather, this exact⁴⁸ approach seems to *preclude* access⁴⁹ to the “objective” experience itself. In fact, a purely analytical perspective would establish the boundaries of any appearance (*Erscheinung*) from a single aspect of it, by *putting together* the object itself:

⁴⁴ HA, vol. XIII, p.51.

⁴⁵ Ibid.: “nur beide zusammen, wie Aus- und Einatmen, machen das Leben der Wissenschaft“. Cf. also Ib., vol. XIII, pp. 26-27.

⁴⁶ Ib., vol. XIII, p. 317.

⁴⁷ Cf. Goethe’s reflections conceiving analysis with the XIX distich (*Analytiker*) from *die Xenien* in Ib., vol. I, p. 210: “Ist denn die Wahrheit ein Zwiebel, von dem man die Häute nur abschält? / Was ihr hinein nicht gelegt, zieht ihr nimmer heraus.“.

⁴⁸ Referring to the interpretations proposed by Cassirer and Spengler, M. Donà speaks of exactitude in Goethe as the “arch-enemy of truth”. Cf. M. Donà, *Una sola visione. La filosofia di Johann Wolfgang Goethe*, Bompiani, Milano, 2022, pp. 24.

⁴⁹ Goethe aims clearly „den Geist in seinen alten Rechten, sich unmittelbar gegen die Natur zu stellen, wieder einzusetzen“. Cf. HA, vol. XIII., pp. 24-25.

Ein Sandhaufen läßt sich nicht analysieren; bestünd' er aber aus verschiedenen Teilen, man setze Sand und Gold, so ist das Waschen eine Analyse, wo das Leichte weggeschwemmt und das Schwere zurückgehalten wird. So beruht die neuere Chemie hauptsächlich darauf, das zu trennen, was die Natur vereinigt hatte; wir heben die Synthese der Natur auf, um sie in getrennten Elementen kennenzulernen.

Was ist eine höhere Synthese als ein lebendiges Wesen; und was haben wir uns mit Anatomie, Physiologie und Psychologie zu quälen, als um uns von dem Komplex nur einigermaßen einen Begriff zu machen, welcher sich immerfort herstellt, wir mögen ihn noch so viele Teile zerfleischt haben.⁵⁰

As a priority part of contemplation itself, analysis could become therefore a *coercively* separative procedure insofar as its object cannot but be an aggregation of parts already *assumed*, the sum of which becomes *the only* synthesis that could remain. In this way, this procedure can only fall into the void of "the ever lesser", producing concepts that disintegrate themselves *in indefinitum*. In analogy to Florensky's reflections, *separated* concepts here can only contradict and destroy themselves: their position – as well as their own *truthfulness* – in fact becomes entirely arbitrary to the moment of the observation, i.e. to the observer, as did (even before) the very conditions under which the object was observed.

And indeed, the isolated fact, which is only identical to itself, not only sacrifices the possibility of genuine openness to the phenomenon in its *appropriated* complexity. It also becomes a victim of individual arbitrariness and thus risks being manipulated, since it must in fact be *postulated*. In this sense, a purely analytical method – which can find just in the hypothesis a restraint on *regressus in indefinitum* – could only operate in a certain *emptiness of experience*, running in fact "eine große Gefahr, in welche der Analytiker gerät [...], deshalb die: wenn er seine Methode da anwendet, wo keine Synthese zugrunde liegt"⁵¹. The emptiness, from which these "facts" of experience emerge, becomes thus clear when viewed in the light of the method *that establishes their possibility of existence*: just as their differentiation occurs only according to the assumed

⁵⁰ Ib., vol. XIII, pp. 51-52: "A heap of sand cannot be analysed; *but if it were composed of different parts*, suppose sand and gold, washing is an analysis in which the light is washed away and the heavy retained. Modern chemistry is thus mainly based on separating what nature has combined; *we abolish the synthesis of nature in order to learn about it in separate elements*. What is a higher synthesis than a living being; *and what have we to trouble ourselves with anatomy, physiology, and psychology, other than to form some idea of the complex, which is continually being produced, no matter how many parts we may have dismembered?*"

⁵¹ Ib., vol. XIII, p.52: "a great danger in which the "Analytiker" finds himself is when he applies his method where there is no underlying synthesis".

stability of a single observation, their “grouping” cannot but be “nur eine Aggregation [...], ein Nebeneinander, ein Miteinander”⁵².

Wir haben oben gesehen, daß diejenigen am ersten dem Irrtume unterworfen waren, welche ein isoliertes Faktum mit ihrer Denk- und Urteilkraft unmittelbar zu verbinden suchten. Dagegen werden wir finden, daß diejenigen am meisten geleistet haben, welche nicht ablassen alle Seiten und Modifikationen einer einzigen Erfahrung, eines einzigen Versuches nach aller Möglichkeit durchzuforschen und durchzuarbeiten.⁵³

The same problem is made even clearer in the controversy over the corpuscular nature of light with Newton – to whom Goethe refers precisely in *Analyse und Synthese*: Newton in fact commits „den Fehler, ein einziges und noch dazu verkünsteltes Phänomen zum Grunde zu legen, auf dasselbe eine Hypothese zu bauen, und aus dieser die mannigfaltigsten grenzenlosesten Erscheinungen erklären zu wollen”⁵⁴. In fact, Newton “belongs”, as Goethe writes, to that “class” of people who “genial, produktiv und gewaltsam [...] eine Welt aus sich selbst hervor[bringt], ohne viel zu fragen, ob sie mit der wirklichen übereinkommen werde”⁵⁵.

What Florensky would later affirm with regard to *terminismus* seems thus to be closely related to the same tendency that Goethe here perceives in Newton. The same *pathos* of those who attempt to investigate nature in Newton’s manner is in fact marked for Goethe by the artificiality and isolation of the phenomenon, *hypostatized* from its claimed singularity⁵⁶. The attitude to reality of this “Klasse” of scientists, just as in the case of the *terminismus* in Florensky, contains indeed within itself

⁵² Ib., vol. XIII, p. 52: “only an aggregation [...], a juxtaposition, a coexistence”.

⁵³ Ib., vol. XIII, p. 17: “We have seen above that those were first subject to error *who sought to connect an isolated fact directly with their reasoning and judgement*. On the other hand, we shall find that those have suffered most who do not desist from *investigating and working through all the sides and modifications of a single experience, of a single experiment, in every possible way*”. I quote here the formulation proposed by Goethe in *Der Versuch*, the same conclusion is however present in *Analyse und Synthese* on p. 50 of the same volume.

⁵⁴ Ib., vol. XIII, p. 50: “the mistake of taking a single and, what is more, *artificial* phenomenon as a basis, *building* a hypothesis on it, and wanting to explain the most diverse and boundless phenomena from it”.

⁵⁵ Ib., vol. XIV, p. 143: “ingeniously, productively and *violently* [...] brings forth a world out of themselves, without asking whether it will coincide with the real one”.

⁵⁶ This very “singularity” arises therefore precisely from distrust of a truly cohesive phenomenon as synthetic and thus, above all, from *distrust of the senses* (that are properly “nature”). According to Goethe this consideration is applicable with regard to the paradigm adopted by much of modern science. In this sense cf. e.g. H Böhme, *Lebendige Natur – Wissenschaftskritik, Naturforschung und allegorische Hermetik bei Goethe*, Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte, vol. 60, 1986, p. 255.

the arbitrariness of this procedure: *it is the method itself that serves the hypothetical construction of the edifice of science, not the phenomenon as such*. In this way, not only analysis is placed in relation to the *pathos* that animates its claimed authority, but rather the analysis shows itself in the emptiness of its *self-referentiality*.

Through the substitution of the natural appearance (*Erscheinung*) for the artificial schematization of the subject, the proximity between Florensky's thought to Goethe's can therefore converge, as Florensky himself notices⁵⁷, on the idea of the vitality of the phenomenon that nature *reveals*. According to Goethe, the language of nature speaks indeed *through* the phenomena⁵⁸, its "signs" are namely to be found in them as a living whole of circumstances and effects, i.e. in *the links* that naturally connect this "givenness" with the whole. Properly in this sense the observer can gain "direct access" to the thing contemplating "all the sides and modifications of a single experience": this co-presence of "*Seiten und Modifikationen*" allows thus the "objective" manifestation of the phenomenon – conceived here as the natural and synthetic link between the whole and the parts.

Just as the Goethean "complex" phenomenon, the phenomenon in Florensky can only demand *four-dimensionality* insofar as its *appearance* is already the synthesis of what occurs at different moments and is therefore perceived from different visual angles⁵⁹. Without recourse to anything extraneous to the experience – nor, thus, by taking as a temporal starting point any singular visual angles (i.e. a time *unrelated* to the phenomenon) – the four-dimensionality of reality is directly thematised by Florensky from the inexhaustible vital-manifestative activity that connects each part "into a living whole"⁶⁰. Indeed, the synthesis detected in the four-dimensional contemplation represents a cohesion *in rebus* of the multiplicity itself, conceived as unity *in* unfolding: this very "unfolding"

⁵⁷ Cf. SVCT, vol. III (2), p.91: "Идеализм есть «да» жизни, ибо жизнь-то и есть непрерывное осуществление *εν και πολλά*. И если спрашивать себя, из чего могло образоваться учение об идеях, то едва ли можно найти что-нибудь более пригодное сюда, нежели живое существо. Живое существо—это наиболее наглядное проявление идеи. Однако, не всякое восприятие «животного», разумея это слово как церковно-славянское животное, как греческое ζῷον, или как латинское animal, а только то, которым воспринимается жизнь его, есть восприятие синтетическое, выводящее за пределы «здесь» и «теперь»."

⁵⁸ HA, vol. XIII, p. 315: „es [ist] nur die Natur, die spricht, ihr Dasein, ihre Kraft, ihr Leben und ihre Verhältnisse offenbart, so daß ein Blinder, dem das unendlich Sichtbare versagt ist, im Hörbarer ein unendlich Lebendiges fassen kann“.

⁵⁹ SVCT, vol. III (2), p. 98.

⁶⁰ If the *idea* expresses itself *in rebus*, it will give itself as a link between things that manifest *themselves relatively*, i.e. synthetically. For the reference to the life of the universal *in rebus*, I keep in mind here especially chpt. III, VI, VII, VIII, IX, XI, XIII, XIV of *Smysl idealizma* as well as letters II, III, X, XI of *Stolp i utverzdenie Istiny* (according to the order proposed by the Russian publisher).

of the phenomenon cannot but take place in fact in *its temporality*, i.e. in a “time” that is not reducible to the instantaneousness of a single observer’s perception. To give the reader an idea of that, Florensky poses the question whether the very synthesis that constitutes the unitary phenomenon of a cube cannot develop, *on the same plane of experience*, as the instantaneous succession of a *total multiplicity of its own perceptions*:

Положим, мы видим некоторый куб, последовательно обходя его со всех шести его сторон или, наоборот, последовательно поворачивая его всеми шестью сторонами. Нельзя ли, спрашивается, превратить этот ряд последовательных впечатлений от куба, полученных под разными углами зрения, в одно целостное восприятие, т. е. иметь одно синтетическое восприятие куба со всех сторон его? Или, если пойти далее, нельзя ли получить синтетическое восприятие куба, как одного целого, зараз, совне и изнутри?⁶¹

Precisely the ability to *depersonalise*⁶² the vision of the thing, that is, to embrace the plurality *from every visual angle*, constitutes the possibility of a newly synthetic perception: a perception, that is, that grasps the *syntheticity* (Синтетичность) of the world. In this sense the phenomenon can be contemplated in the contradiction to which time gives rise as its “fourth co-ordinate”⁶³, looking therefore at the very instant in which it manifests itself as properly “*ungeheuer*”⁶⁴.

Just as perspective becomes in this way only one possible form of contemplation (i.e. “the three-dimensional contemplation”⁶⁵), the phenomenon can be understood in its wholeness, according to Florensky, by maintaining *its* real unfolding as the fourth coordinate of its own manifestation. And if, therefore, the very phenomenological *development* of

⁶¹ Ibid.: “Suppose we see a cube by successively looking at it from all six sides or, on the contrary, by successively turning it on all six sides. Is it not possible, it is asked, to turn this series of successive impressions of the cube, received from different angles of vision, into a single holistic perception, i.e. to have *one synthetic perception of the cube from all its sides*? Or, to go further, is it not possible to have a synthetic perception of the cube as a whole, from inside and outside at once?”.

⁶² Ib., vol. III (2), p. 99.

⁶³ The idea of a spatiality that is altered by the temporal co-ordinate (as its contradictory depth) is at the heart of much of Florensky’s mathematical-physical works and is therefore not restricted to his perspective-phenomenological philosophy alone. Among all, one should note the proximity of these concepts to what Florensky discussed in *Mnimosti v geometrii*.

⁶⁴ Thus, taking up the image mentioned above in footnote 29th, only in this way can biography and biology coincide, i.e. *from the time of the phenomenon* and not from the time of perception. It is quite significant that Jablonsky, in interpreting Goethe’s “scientific works”, directly mentions that same Platonic notion of time as the “image of eternity” that recurs explicitly in Florensky’s numerous writings. Cf. W. Jablonsky, *Goethe e le scienze naturali*, Laterza, Roma-Bari, 1938, chpt. I-II.

⁶⁵ SVCT, vol. III (2), p. 99.

things can lead to a fourth co-ordinate, this same connection must refer to what allows the vital appearance of things as *already* synthetic. Only in this way it is in fact possible, in Florensky as in Goethe, to perceive the idea of the thing⁶⁶, its *pure* aspect (*Urphänomen*), which coincides, indeed, with its *Grundstruktur*. What in fact acts *in rebus* represents in this way both the condition of existence of the phenomenon and that of its direct experience⁶⁷. The phenomenon therefore can open up to the eyes of the observer as a manifestative-vital activity that goes beyond the punctuality of a given perspective, in the real *expression* of something that "speaks" through it, i.e. that refers to something other than what the phenomenon taken *per se* alone would be:

Понять явление, как целое, можно, не выделив из него один момент и на таком сосредоточив все внимание, а охватывая купно все стадии развития. [...]. Мы говорим, что личность, единая и себе тождественная, познается в своей биографии; но что иное может значить это само-противоречивое утверждение, как не признание неисчерпаемости личности никаким частным моментом в бытии, т. е., другими словами, сверх эмпирической природою ее. Каждый момент биографии данной личности есть срез ее реальности пространством эмпирии, т. е. реальность низшего порядка. Самая же личность, в ее целостности, конкретно не созерцается, но отвлеченно мыслится, как искомый синтез всех моментов своей биографии.⁶⁸

This position could be called perhaps Goethean, even before being Florenskyan. In fact, the phenomenon itself, contemplated by Goethe as a coherent but *open* whole, cannot but be seen as the natural formation (*Bildung*)⁶⁹ of its appearance (*Erscheinung*) through "direct" perceptions

⁶⁶ Heisenberg reports precisely in this context that Schiller recognises the entirely Platonic-ideal nature of Goethe's *Urphänomen*, i.e. its proximity to the Platonic idea. Cf. W. Heisenberg, *Das Naturbild Goethes und die technisch-naturwissenschaftliche Welt*, *Physikalische Blätter*, 24, 193 (VI), 1968, p. 244; Cf. that with the definition of "idea" provided by Goethe in HA, vol. XII, p. 366: „Was man Idee nennt: das, was immer zur Erscheinung kommt und daher als Gesetz aller Erscheinungen uns entgegentritt.“

⁶⁷ In this sense, the reference to the Kantian perspective is very clear, although this approach must be understood starting from the realism of both authors.

⁶⁸ SVCT, vol. III (2), p. 110: "It is possible to understand a phenomenon as a whole not by isolating one moment out of it and focusing all attention on it, but *by encompassing all stages of its development*. [...]. We say that the personality, unified and identical to itself, is knowable in its biography; but what else can this self-contradictory statement mean but *the recognition of the inexhaustibility of the personality by any particular moment in existence*, i.e., in other words, beyond its empirical nature. Each moment of the biography of a given personality is a section of its reality by the space of empiricism, i.e. the reality of the lowest order. The personality itself, in its wholeness, is not observed in detail, but is *reflected abstractly as the synthesis of all the moments of its biography*".

⁶⁹ Cf. Goethe's scheme in HA, vol. XIII, p. 34.

(*Wahrnehmungen*). Just as the analytical position rests, for both Goethe and Florensky, on an assumption preceding experience – thus leading to the “death” of the phenomenon itself –, Goethe’s “morphological” thinking and Florensky’s “four-dimensional” thinking move *from experience itself*⁷⁰ and *its fractures* in time and space, detecting its *active life*. In the experiment, understood as an “encounter”, the possibility of an identity of the various “effects” that follow one another opens indeed up in the variety itself. Goethe and Florensky discover in this way an *identity* that must be sought in *its* very occurrence, in its succession and in its own differentiation (*Vermannigfaltigung*)⁷¹ as *simultaneousness*⁷².

It will therefore come as no surprise that the analogy proposed by Florensky’s above-mentioned passage – between contemplation of the phenomenon and contemplation of the personality – is used precisely in this sense also by Goethe: carrying on the reflections presented by the passage from *Zur Farbenlehre* quoted at the beginning of this paper, Goethe indeed compares the mysterious “history of effects” to the whole set of a man’s actions, *which only in their unity* give a clear *image* of the character. For Goethe, indeed, the difficulty of expressing the essence of any given thing resembles the impossibility faced by those who “vergebens bemühen [...], den Charakter eines Menschen zu schildern; man stelle dagegen seine Handlungen, seine Taten zusammen, und ein Bild des Charakters wird uns entgegentreten”⁷³. The “pure” phenomenon can be in this way *present* in its effects and, at the same time, irreducibly something different, insofar as any one action performed by a man differs from the “character” that is their *cause-condition* (something *ante res*). In this sense, following Florensky’s reflections in Chapter VI of *Smysl idealizma*, it is not difficult to find further evidence of the relationship between the four-dimensional phenomenon and Goethe’s pure (*rein*) phenomenon: just as the stars of Posad and Moscow⁷⁴ are the same although contemplated in different times and spaces, so the series of different effects, to which the “*ursprüngliche*” synthesis of the *Urphänomen* gives rise, are from the point of view of any observer in full identity. In the same way, two diffe-

⁷⁰ SVCT, vol. III (2), p. 506: “Природа едина и метафизически и эмпирически. (Доказывается) что она в основе едина и на опыте оказывается таковою, Гёте.”

⁷¹ HA, vol. XIII, p. 17-18: “Da alles in Natur, besonders aber die gemeinern Kräfte und Elemente in einer ewigen Wirkung und Gegenwirkung sind, so kann man von einem jeden Phänomene sagen, daß es mit unzähligen andern in Verbindung stehe, wie wir von einem freischwebenden leuchtenden Punkte sagen, daß er seine Strahlen auf allen Seiten aussendet. [...] Die Vermannigfaltigung eines jeden einzelnen Versuches ist also die eigentliche Pflicht eines Naturforschers“.

⁷² SVCT, vol. III (1), p. 137.

⁷³ HA, vol. XIII, pp. 315.

⁷⁴ SVCT, vol. III (2), pp. 86-87.

rent horses⁷⁵ are *contained* (содержится) in each other, just as Goethe's *Urpflanze* properly "contains"⁷⁶ all the plants that appear in the world as infinite manifestations of the same *idea*⁷⁷. And again, for there to be this theoretical "relationship", there is no need to reduce all horses or plants to a hypothetical single unity "behind" themselves. In fact, it is precisely their logical product that "gives form to a new essence"⁷⁸, without this being based in any way on their apparent *similarity*.

Although Florensky's mathematical approach may be said to be completely unfamiliar to Goethe, the German author uses the same image of complexity to indicate this *reciprocal correspondence* of the variety in the single phenomenon:

Was ist das Allgemeine?
Der einzelne Fall.
Was ist das Besondere?
Millionen Fälle.⁷⁹

In this regard, it is very meaningful that Florensky declares the consonance of his philosophical perspective with Goethe's precisely by quoting the passage just provided⁸⁰: the attempt Florensky makes in that part of *Mysl y yazyk* is in fact to show that, firstly, not the single datum (distorted by modern science)⁸¹, but rather *the event here and now experienced* contains symbolically the absolute. And, furthermore, that this same universal cannot but be *expressed* in the innumerable simultaneous succession⁸² of its own manifestations, in a reciprocal correspondence of what lives and forms itself.

As can be seen, the *symbolically* tension between "particular" and "ge-

⁷⁵ Ib., vol. III (2), p. 86.

⁷⁶ In *Zur Morphologie* Goethe speaks indeed of an "ursprüngliche Identität aller Pflanzenteile". Cf this passage in HA, vol. XIII, p. 164 with the introduction to the same work *Der Inhalt bevorwortet* on pp. 59-63.

⁷⁷ Ib., vol. XIII, p. 63.

⁷⁸ SVCT, vol. III (2), p. 86.

⁷⁹ HA, vol. XII, p. 433. "What is the universal? / The individual case. / What is the particular? / Millions of cases". In this respect cf. also Ib., vol. XII, p. 366: "Urphänomene: ideal, real, symbolisch, identisch. / Empirie: unbegrenzte Vermehrung derselben, Hoffnung der Hülfe daher, Verzweiflung an Vollständigkeit. / Urphänomen: ideal als das letzte Erkennbare, real als erkannt, symbolisch, weil es alle Fälle begreift, identisch mit allen Fällen." Florensky also quoted this passage in SVCT, vol. III (1), p. 525.

⁸⁰ SVCT, vol. III (1), p.137. S. Tagliagambe admits clearly in *Simbolo e Confine. Goethe e la cultura russa* that "the feature of Goethe's general conception that attracted Florensky and had a decisive influence on his formation and the development of his thought is the specific relationship he theorised between the "particular" and the "general". Cf. G. Giorello, A. Grieco, *Goethe scienziato*, Einaudi, Torino, 1998, p. 107.

⁸¹ SVCT, vol. III (1), p. 136.

⁸² Ib., vol. III (1), p.137.

neral”, between “experience” and “idea”, is thus contradictorily present in the notion of experience of both these authors. This view culminates indeed for both Goethe and Florensky in the concept of phenomenon as what *objectively* expresses – albeit in full discontinuity – the tension of the “living universal” in the face of what can be *subjectively* discerned in experience. As attested by both authors, it is precisely the notion of the symbol that can thus become the prism through which the phenomenological doctrines of Goethe and Florensky aim to observe the world: the possibility of science emerges indeed only through the symbol, conceived as something universal but, at the same time, particular.

If no mistake has been made, then perhaps it may be repeated for Florensky, with Goethe’s words, that it is properly this view of the symbolic in the world which “verwandelt die Erscheinung in Idee, die Idee in ein Bild, und so, daß die Idee im Bild immer unendlich wirksam und unerreichbar bleibt und, selbst in allen Sprachen ausgesprochen, doch unaussprechlich bliebe”⁸³.

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⁸³ HA, vol. XII, p. 470 (N. 749): “transforms the appearance into an idea, the idea into an image, and in such a way that the idea in the image remains always infinitely effective and impenetrable and, even spoken in all languages, would still remain inexpressible”.

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“Das natürliche Phänomen” and its fourth co-ordinate

L'obiettivo di questo scritto è quello di definire, sulla base dei numerosi riferimenti a Goethe presenti nell'opera di Florenskij, la somiglianza tra alcuni presupposti fenomenologici della loro ricerca filosofica, dimostrandone la relazione strutturale. Questo testo si basa quindi sull'avversione teorica di Florenskij per l'istante chiuso (момент) e sull'avversione di Goethe per il puro dato di fatto (das Faktum): la comune diffidenza verso la vuota puntualità di questo dato fornisce un collegamento tra il *modus investigandi* dei due autori e, di conseguenza, tra la definizione dell'oggetto a cui è orientata la loro ricerca. Diventa così possibile mostrare che proprio l'aspetto vitale del fenomeno, che lo pone in incessante connessione con ciò che è altro da sé, è la chiave adottata da entrambi gli Autori per mostrare come il fenomeno percepito sia in realtà concepito come una manifestazione necessariamente aperta e vivente all'interno della stessa ricerca che cerca di indagarne il senso.

Parole chiave: Goethe, Florensky, fenomeno, esperienza, idealismo.

“Das natürliche Phänomen” and its fourth co-ordinate

The aim of this paper is to define, on the basis of the numerous references to Goethe in Florensky's work, the similarity between some phenomenological assumptions of their philosophical research, demonstrating the structural relationship between them. This text is therefore based on Florensky's theoretical aversion to the closed instant (момент) and Goethe's aversion to the pure factual datum (das Faktum): the common distrust towards the empty punctuality of this datum provides a connection between the *modus investigandi* of the two authors and, consequently, between the definition of the object to which their research is oriented. It thus becomes possible to show that precisely the vital aspect of the phenomenon, which places it in incessant connection with what is other than itself, is the key adopted by both Authors to show how the perceived phenomenon is in fact conceived as a necessarily open and living manifestation within the same research that seeks to investigate its meaning.

Keywords: Goethe, Florensky, Phenomenon, Experience, Idealism.