SCENARI

Rivista di estetica e metafisica

MIMESIS

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Aesthetics and Everyday Life

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Introduzione

Già Hegel ha scritto che "ciò che in generale è noto, proprio perché è *noto*, non è conosciuto"[1], e se prendiamo seriamente l'idea secondo la quale la filosofia sia un modo per avere a che fare ciò che ignoriamo, allora la necessità di un confronto con quanto è più prossimo e apparentemente immediato, ossia con la dimensione del quotidiano, dovrebbe risultare ineludibile per un'interrogazione filosofica rettamente intesa; ciò non di meno, essa è stata per lo più trascurata proprio in ambito filosofico. Negli ultimi anni, il rapporto tra filosofia e dimensione quotidiana sta però vivendo un momento di rinnovato interesse con l'emersione di quelle correnti dell'estetica contemporanea che si occupano dei diversi processi di estetizzazione. Rispetto alla tradizione, queste prospettive si caratterizzano per una diversa determinazione del campo di problematizzazione proprio dell'estetica, che viene situato non più, primariamente, nel mondo delle arti, quanto all'interno di quella sfera dell'esperienza che definiamo come quotidiana. È in questa regione diffusa e pervasiva del quotidiano che, infatti, si forma e si esercita anzitutto la sensibilità, intesa come primo ambito di mediazione con le cose e con il mondo. Per questo suo carattere liminale, teso tra percezione, cognizione e costruzione di senso, tale campo assume un'importanza strategica per comprendere le forme concrete di esercizio di quella *aisthesis* che definisce l'oggetto proprio dell'estetica – e specialmente in una società, come quella contemporanea, nella quale i processi di estetizzazione investono in misura sempre maggiore i diversi ambiti della vita.

Uno di questi campi è quello che negli ultimi decenni si è andato definendo come *Everyday Aesthetics*, prospettiva nata alla fine degli anni Novanta negli Stati Uniti e nell'Europa del nord, e che sta ora sviluppandosi nel resto del continente affiancandosi alle riflessioni sull'estetica classica.

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[1] G.W.F. Hegel, *Die Phänomenologie des Geistes*, tr. it. *Fenomenologia dello Spirito*, a cura di V. Cicero, Bompiani, Milano 2019, p. 85.

Si tratta di un ambito dai tratti non nettamente delineati, che invita a ripensare l'estetica ampliandone le prospettive e rifiutandone l'identificazione come filosofia delle belle arti, mettendo al proprio centro l'esperienza della vita quotidiana. Alcuni dei contributi che abbiamo raccolto provengono da questa corrente ed offrono ai lettori dei saggi di come questa prospettiva si approcci al tema della vita quotidiana. Lo scopo di questa sezione è di illustrare alcune prospettive promettenti che, in maniera diversa, convergono con il campo d'indagine di questo nuovo ambito di studi, mostrando come una rivalutazione della salienza estetica del quotidiano consenta non solo di tenere insieme, ma anche di arricchire approcci teorici e correnti filosofiche anche molto diverse tra loro. I saggi qui raccolti, pur non potendo esser tutti ricondotti direttamente alla cosiddetta *Everyday Aesthetics*, sono infatti attraversati da un filo conduttore comune, che individua nel campo del sociale un riferimento importante per una riflessione estetica liberata da rigidi compartimenti disciplinari e scolastici. In controtendenza rispetto alle accuse di solipsismo e di soggettivismo condotte da autori come Parsons, Carlson e Soucek[2] contro l'impostazione fondamentale della *Everyday Aesthetics* – accuse mosse sulla base della distinzione kantiana di bello e gradevole e negando ogni valenza estetica a quest'ultimo –, i saggi che seguono mostrano come invece l'estetica del quotidiano, intesa in senso ampio e transdisciplinare, lungi dall'indicare uno sterile sforzo di estetizzazione o un ripiegamento nella mera particolarità, implichi una revisione del potenziale sociale del campo estetico in senso anti-elitista, come già le riflessioni di Berleant, Saito e Di Stefano hanno mostrato[3].

Da autore di riferimento della contemporanea *Everyday Aesthetics*, Leddy propone quindi, tramite un'originale analisi di Andy Warhol come scrittore, un'anticipazione dell'estetica del quotidiano e una sconfessione della concezione proposta da Danto, il quale, proprio a partire da Warhol aveva sviluppato la propria concezione di un "mondo dell'arte". Secondo Leddy la concezione di Danto rientra in realtà in una concezione dualistica che separa arte e vita comune. Al contrario, Warhol, sulla stessa linea di Dewey, sarebbe in grado di mostrare lo straordinario nell'ordinario, come il riferimento emblematico ai blu jeans dimostra. Secondo l'autore, la *Everyday Aesthetics* deve essere considerata una filo-

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[2] Cfr. G. Parsons, A. Carlson, *Functional Beauty*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2008; B. Soucek, *Resisting the Itch to Redefine Aesthetics: A Response to Sherri Irvin*, "The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism", 67, 2, 2009, pp. 223–226.
[3] Cfr. A. Berleant, *Art and Engagement*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia 1991; Y. Saito, *Aesthetics of the Familiar: Everyday Life and World-Making*, Oxford University, Oxford Press 2017; E. Di Stefano, *Designing Atmospheres. The Role of Aesthetics in the Requalification of Space*, Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Environmental Design, De Lettera Publishers Milan, 2017 pp. 15–21.

sofia *engaged*, mostrando un intento anti-elitistico nei confronti dell'arte e della società. Per questo Leddy propone, tramite Warhol, un recupero di nozioni tradizionalmente escluse dall'estetica classica, quali quelle di "fun", "charming", "clever", e pretty", le quali hanno in realtà una valenza fondamentale nello spiegare le esperienze estetiche ordinarie.

Welsch invece mostra in maniera programmatica come un approccio come quello della *Everyday Aesthetics* tenti di dare risposta a una questione urgente quale quella ecologica. Il saggio si concentra sull'esempio delle pale eoliche, da alcuni esteticamente disprezzate ed accusate di deturpare il paesaggio, considerate invece come emblema per comprendere e ripensare il rapporto tra esseri umani e natura. Questo autore infatti parte da una prospettiva sul paesaggio che ne nega la naturalità, motivo per cui non si deve concepire un paesaggio ingenuamente intatto che verrebbe poi corrotto dalla presenza delle turbine. Al contrario, ogni paesaggio ha alla propria origine una interazione, un "*interplay*" tra natura e cultura. Porre l'attenzione su questo aspetto consente infatti una maggiore responsabilizzazione degli esseri umani nei confronti del paesaggio, rendendoli attori.

L'interrogazione filosofica della dimensione del quotidiano, inoltre, può anche esser rivitalizzata attraverso il recupero di temi e di strumenti concettuali tratti da alcune tra le maggiori correnti dell'estetica e del pensiero contemporaneo. Molti sono stati infatti i pensatori che hanno fatto propria questa necessità della filosofia, ovvero riportare l'interrogazione filosofica alla concretezza dell'esperienza vissuta e quindi, in senso lato, anche al confronto con la dimensione del quotidiano. Essi possono essere anche molto differenti fra loro, e non provenire nettamente dall'ambito degli studi filosofici, ibridandosi con discipline differenti – come la sociologia, la storia, l'antropologia, la biologia, la letteratura e la poesia – al fine di assumere così strumenti e metodi capaci di offrire nuove vie di accesso all'analisi di quel campo indeterminato e diffuso, che l'interrogazione filosofica tradizionale derubricava a quotidianità prefilosofica. Un'ibridazione particolarmente rilevante oggi, in un momento nel quale le tradizionali barriere tra discipline vengono sempre più messe in discussione dalla realtà complessa e sfaccettata della nostra società.

In questa prospettiva, il lavoro di Tadas sottolinea il rimando alla vita ordinaria nella filosofia di Adorno a partire da *Minima Moralia*. Ciò ha un aspetto fondamentale che consente di mostrare come anche l'esperienza ordinaria soggettiva sia in realtà densa di connotazioni sociali. L'autore mostra quindi come il riferimento all'esperienza quotidiana, in Adorno, costituisca una base di interrogazione dei "poteri oggettivi" e dei loro effetti sugli individui.

Il tentativo di mostrare un possibile contributo dell'ermeneutica di Gadamer nell'ambito della *Everyday Aesthetics* è poi al centro del saggio

di Romagnoli, che propone un ripensamento dell'estetica gadameriana in senso continuista e anti-eccezionalista, a partire dal quale essa può contribuire nell'ambito del filone "espansivo" della Everyday Aesthetics. Facendo leva sulla critica all'estetizzazione del mondo contemporaneo e al rifiuto del concetto dell'artista geniale è possibile un ripensamento in senso "orizzontale" dei fenomeni estetici anche extra-artistici. In particolare i concetti di ripetizione e di occasione sono indagati al fine di far emergere la dinamica che muove l'esperienza estetica non solo della "Grande arte", ma anche di fenomeni ordinari, che, nella loro ripetizione, al contempo, dispiegano l'unicità che li caratterizza a partire da una determinata occasione.

Mozzachiodi segue invece un altro percorso, analizzando i testi poetici e teorici di Giovanni Giudici al fine di mostrare la centralità del rapporto tra quotidianità e alienazione, alla base del ripensamento tra teoria e prassi. Anche in questo saggio emerge il problema sociale e il rapporto tra la figura di Giudici come poeta da un lato e come impiegato dall'altra, ovvero la sua vita ordinaria, quotidiana, come descritta nelle poesie. Mozzachiodi fa emergere come tale prospettiva non possa essere considerata un orizzonte pacificante, e così ci mostra come il tema della vita quotidiana sia di grande rilevanza all'interno dell'elaborazione poetica di un autore di rilievo come Giudici, offrendoci una prospettiva che, partendo da problemi poetologici e storici, permette di comprendere le possibili ramificazioni di quello stesso tema che, negli altri saggi, è stato invece affrontato sotto una luce filosofica.

Thomas Leddy
Andy Warhol and the Aesthetics of Everyday Life

In this paper I will argue that Andy Warhol presents us with interesting insights into the aesthetics of life and of everyday life in his book *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: (From A to B and Back Again.)* [1] He is like Plato in some respects and unlike him in others. Like Plato, he presents a utopia, an ideal society, which has its own profoundly aesthetic character; he valorizes beauty; and he asks what beauty is. But, unlike Plato, and surprisingly like John Dewey, he is a pragmatist and fiercely anti-dualist. For him, beauty is a matter of context, and his utopia, again unlike Plato's, is democratic. I will also contrast him with Arthur Danto, the later philosopher being fundamentally like Plato in that he posits two realms. Whereas Plato holds up the realm of the Forms, which are real, as superior to the realm of appearances, which are not, Danto distinguishes the realm of everyday life, of "mere things," and the artworld. Mere objects advance ontologically as they are transfigured into the artworld. However, rather than transfiguring objects into the realm of art, Warhol deconstructs the distinction between art and life. In this respect one can see him as, like Diogenes of Sinope, a philosopher qua performance artist. He does things, and his actions make philosophical points. Warhol's cultural insight, unlike Plato's and Danto's was essentially Nietzschean, not only in his aphoristic style, and his synthesis of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, but as a philosopher who says "yes" to life. All of this is ironic since Danto first developed his theory of art inspired by seeing an exhibit of Warhol's Brillo Boxes in 1964[2].

Warhol was famously shot in his studio by a madwoman. In *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol,* he imagines how a close friend (called "B") might describe this event to him. A and B are the lead characters in this book. B represents any close associate of Warhol. However we can assume that

[1] A. Warhol, *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol: (From A to B and Back Again.)*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, San Diego 1975.
[2] A. Danto, *The Artworld*, "Journal of Philosophy", 61, 19, 1964, pp. 571-584. His last major book on this topic was *What Art Is?*, Yale University Press, New Haven 2014.

whatever a "B" says is just as likely an expression of Warhol's own views as not. One should see this book as a dialogue between A and B, where A directly represents Warhol and B indirectly represents him or represents another side, or represents the views of a close associate. B says "The founder of the Society for Cutting Up Men [the shooter] wanted you to produce a script she'd written and you weren't interested and she just came up to your work studio one afternoon. There were a lot of people there and you were talking on the telephone. You didn't know her too well and she just walked in off the elevator and started shooting. Your mother was really upset. You thought she'd die of it. Your brother was really fabulous, the one who's a priest. He came up to your room and showed you how to do needlepoint. I'd taught him how in the lobby! (12)"

As with many of his vignettes, this one is funny, although of course it is also scary. The first four sentences are straightforward. But, as with Nietzsche's aphorisms, the twist comes at the end. The next two sentences make sense since Warhol was close to his mother, although they are written in a deadpan way. The last two sentences are more philosophically interesting. His brother is a priest. But he is not behaving in a priestly way. Instead, he shows Andy how to do needlepoint. Of course this is a story told by Warhol himself, and it is intended to make a point. Warhol, in telling the story, focuses on an everyday life skill used as a hobby, more often by women than men in our society. The priest does the opposite of what he is supposed to do, qua priest, especially at this moment when, according to their mother, Andy might die. Moreover, he learns this hobby skill from B just before coming up to Andy's room. Divine salvation is rejected in favor of an everyday life that involves aesthetic making.

In this paper I will interpret *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* as a contribution to the aesthetics of everyday life, and more broadly to *life* aesthetics. When most philosophers hear the name "Andy Warhol" in relation to aesthetics they think of Arthur Danto. Danto frequently refers to the moment he walked into the Stable Gallery in New York City and saw Warhol's *Brillo Boxes* as the moment in which he discovered the essential nature of art. He first mentions this in his famous artworld paper of 1964. But in 1975 Warhol writes *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, which, I shall argue, implicitly refutes an essential aspect of Danto's philosophy of art. Danto's point was that Warhol's art provided him with an insight that gave him his definition of art. That definition changed over the years, but basically, in 1964, it was that something is art if it can be seen AS art by someone with appropriate art-historical knowledge. Having appropriate art-historical knowledge is what makes one a member of the artworld. In being seen AS art, an object has what Danto calls the "is" of artistic identification. Danto had asked what makes the *Brillo Boxes* art and their indiscernible counterparts in a warehouse not art. His answer was that,

because Warhol's boxes are in an art gallery at a particular time in art history, they are appropriately seen as art, i.e. under the artist's interpretation: they had been "transfigured" into the world of art.

Danto shows himself to be essentially a kind of dualist in that he holds that there are two realms: the realm of art and the realm of "mere things." The brillo box in a warehouse is a mere thing, but in the gallery, made by Warhol, it is art. Of course he is not a dualist in the classical sense: he does not hold that the realm of art is a realm of souls or a spiritual realm. However the term "transfiguration" meant at least somewhat seriously: he speaks of latent objects waiting to be "transfigured" like water into wine. There is a movement from one realm into another. As he says later, the *Brillo Boxes* insofar as they are in the gallery have "aboutness" whereas the brillo boxes as mere things do not. Thus even if we assumed that Danto did not literally believe in anything supernatural the *structure* of his theory is dualist. As a result, it would make no sense to Danto to talk about the aesthetics of everyday life. Aesthetics, for him, has been reduced to the philosophy of art. Moreover, on his view aesthetics isn't important anyway since *Brillo Boxes* and the commercial brillo boxes have the same look and hence the same "aesthetic." What distinguishes them is something the eye cannot descry! i.e. cannot be determined by close looking.

Warhol, writing nine years later, is essentially opposed to Danto. What he really meant by his *Brillo Boxes* had nothing to do with the apotheosis of objects into the artworld or the creation of art as a two-sided thing: mere material object as body, and meaning as soul. Warhol demolishes this idea, which Danto shared with earlier writers such as Collingwood. The point of Warhol, even back in 1964, is deconstruction of the world/artworld dichotomy -- NOT setting up a wall between the two. For Warhol, having art historical knowledge, or more specifically, knowing about the art scene in New York City, is pretty much irrelevant to art, or at least to his art. Indeed Warhol explicitly (although perhaps satirically) reduces art to a business, thus leaving little room for an artworld distinct from the businessworld. Describing the period after he was shot, he writes: "I had by that time realized that 'business' was the best art. Business art is the step that comes after Art. I started as a commercial artist, and I want to finish as a business artist." (92)

One cannot read *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* as a normal philosophy book. It should be read more as one reads Nietzsche. The style is aphoristic, and, and as I have suggested, much of it is not to be taken seriously. Warhol values humor highly, and this is a very funny book. Yet it has a complex structure and considerable depth. It consists of a prologue and fifteen chapters: B and I: How Andy Puts his Warhol On, Love (Puberty), Love (Prime), Love (Senility), Beauty, Fame, Work, Time, Death,

Economics, Atmosphere, Success, Art, Titles, The Tingle, and Under-
wear Power. The chapters most relevant to the concerns of aestheticians
are "Beauty," "Atmosphere," and the last four. "The Tingle" is a dialogue
between "B" and "A" about obsessively cleaning one's apartment, where
it can be seen that a certain style of cleaning can transcend mere cleaning
and take on, through ritual-like practices, an aura of its own, perhaps
even an aura of the sublime. The chapter on underwear, which describes
a foray into a New York department store by A and B to buy briefs, does
something similar in relation to shopping. I will be focusing on the first
four chapters here.

I say "life aesthetics" or "aesthetics of life" since, in part, I want to
forestall those who would say that the life of Andy Warhol is as far from
"the everyday" as one can get. Although he was fascinated by fame and
glamour he was equally fascinated with everyday life. One could say that
he devoted his life to making the extraordinary seem ordinary and the
ordinary seem extraordinary. I will start my analysis with the prologue:
"B and I: How Andy Puts his Warhol On.".

Warhol's paradigm of beauty is personal appearance. And of course
this includes fashion. So let us turn to his defense of bluejeans, which
comes in the middle of the prologue. As he puts it: "I believe in blue-
jeans." (13) His discussion of bluejeans was in the context of his talking
about the value of uniforms, and as we all know, jeans were a kind of uni-
form of the early 70s. They were essential to everyday life. People, mostly
the young, wore them as a symbol of solidarity with the cultural left (the
hippie movement) and the political left (what was called the "new left").
But Warhol treats them as objects of aesthetic delight. He sets up a prin-
ciple of evaluation. As he writes, "The ones made by Levi Strauss are the
best-cut, best-looking pair of pants that have ever been designed by any-
body. Nobody will ever top the original bluejeans. They can't be bought
old, they have to be bought new and they have to be worn in by the
person. To get that look. And they can't be phoney bleached or phoney
anything. You know that little pocket? It's so crazy to have that little little
pocket, like for a twenty-dollar gold piece." (13) Jeans are not aestheti-
cally simple. There are levels of quality, for example Levi Strauss being at
the top for a variety of reasons, including cut. One aspect of the aesthetic
excellence of Levi Strauss jeans is that they are the originals. However,
some impose a phony aesthetic onto jeans, where they think that they
have to look worn and that this is best effected inauthentically by various
means, including bleaching, that do not involve the owner wearing them
for a long time. An example of the charming authenticity of the originals
is the little pocket. On reading the Wikipedia article on jeans, we realize

that Warhol must have done thorough research on them since the information and the set of aesthetic issues are essentially the same[3].

The dialogue continues, when B says "French bluejeans?" and A replies "No, American are the best. Levi Strauss. With the little copper buttons. Studded for evening wear." (13) As observed in the Wikipedia article, the buttons, which were put in for structural support, also had a secondary aesthetic function. Thus, having the buttons, which LOOK nonfunctional, yet are not, enhances the jeans, even, ironically for something essentially informal, for evening wear. The talk about American jeans being the best again has to do with authenticity, in this case cultural authenticity. It was movie stars, westerns, and youth rebellion -- all distinctly American, that gave jeans their meaning.

There is even a proper way to clean jeans: "No, I put fabric softener. The only person who irons them is Geraldo Rivera." (13) Ironing them would be inauthentic in the very way that Geraldo Rivera, with his fake hair and manner, was notoriously inauthentic.

Warhol then muses, "This talk of bluejeans was making me very jealous. Of Levi and Strauss. I wish I could invent something like bluejeans. Something to be remembered for. Something mass." (13) It may strike one as odd that Warhol envied anyone, and yet from his perspective, having this kind of impact on the aesthetics of everyday life would be massive, hence the reference to "mass." Of course he is remembered by us for his art. He is hardly known at all for his writing and philosophy. For him, a memorable accomplishment would be inventing jeans, or something like that, in the way Levi and Strauss did: something both tasteful and nearly universal.

The Aesthetic Presidency and the Utopia of Andy Warhol

"Oh, A," B said impulsively, "you should be President! If you were President, you would have somebody else be President for you, right?" (13) Why would he make a good President? Because his approach would be utopian, aesthetic, everyday and radically democratic. He would delegate responsibility in a democratic way. B says "You would videotape everything. You would have a nightly talk show – your own talk show as President. You'd have somebody else come on, the other President that's the President for you, and he would talk your diary out to the people, every night for half an hour. And that would come before the news, What the President Did Today. So there would be no flack about the President

[3] "Jeans." Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jeans Access date 11/7/2022.

does nothing or the President just sits around. Every day he'd have to tell us what he did, if he had sex with his wife… You'd have to say you played with your dog Archie – it's the perfect name for the President's pet – and what bills you had to sign and why you didn't want to sign them, who was rotten to you in Congress… You'd have to say how many long-distance phone calls you made that day. You'd have to tell what you ate in the private dining room, and you'd show on the television screen the receipts you paid for private food for yourself. For your Cabinet you would have people who were not politicians. Robert Scull would be head of Economics because he would know how to buy early and sell big. You wouldn't have any politicians around at all. You'd take all the trips and tape them. You'd play back all the tapes with foreign people on TV. And when you wrote a letter to anyone in Congress you would have it Xeroxed and sent to every paper." (13-14)

Warhol realizes, as we found with Trump, that the Presidency is the ultimate platform for popularity and fame. Unlike Trump, who was not a talk show host but a Reality TV host, a very different, less intellectual thing, Warhol would make his Presidency a nightly talk show, thus raising the level of intellectual discourse on a daily basis for the entire country.

I am in accord with Warhol here. My philosophy of everyday aesthetics has to do not just with description but also with serious thinking about the ideals of everyday life, as, for example, was engaged in by such thinkers as William Morris and Le Corbusier. Note that Warhol, as President, would not consume a great deal of time and space: his show would be half an hour every night, and it would involve talking about his day, which would be the same sort of stuff we are getting in this book; that is, reflections on the aesthetics of everyday life. That's why it would come before the News. News, in an important way, is NOT about everyday life, or ordinary things. It is about murder and wars and other such things. If it were everyday stuff it would not be "news." So, although we may see the News every day, and although that is part of our everyday experience, the News itself is precisely NOT a window onto anyone's everyday world qua everyday.

Warhol realizes that what is everyday includes such mundane, but important, stuff as having sex with your wife or playing with your dog. It includes worries over moments of disrespect from colleagues, and over what and how you age. Warhol, as President would be a hero of returning to the everyday.

The rest of this account of Warhol's presidency is probably influenced by Plato. We are talking here about an ideal aesthetic republic. So, instead of politicians, Warhol would hire experts to, for example, manage the economy. And, unlike Nixon or Trump, or many other politicians, he would not hide his tapes or letters. He would be totally transparent. Of

course he would not agree with Plato's idea of the noble lie. So his politics would combine expertise and democratic openness in a way much more conducive to harmony than Plato's version.

B says: "You'd be a nice President. You wouldn't take up too much space, you'd have a tiny office like you have now. You'd change the law so you could keep anything anybody gave you while you were in office, because you're a Collector. And you'd be the first nonmarried President. And in the end you'd be famous because you'd write a book: 'How I Ran the Country Without Even Trying.' Or if that sounded wrong, 'How I Ran the Country with Your Help.' That might sell better. (14)"

This relates not only to politics but also to ethics. Warhol's ethics is based on aesthetics. So niceness is more important than duty since niceness demands empathy and sympathy, which require imagination, which is the aesthetic faculty. This faculty would compel him to be an aesthetic minimalist President in his tiny office. He would not take up airs. He would not let ego take over. Also, along aesthetic lines he would give value to collecting loveable objects. And of course he is a Taoist, trying to achieve goodness in the state through action through non-action, i.e. through aesthetic simplicity. The Taoist says you can run the country best when you follow the Way and do not even try. You do not make being the ruler a matter of power and glory but a matter of elegant action that achieves harmony as in the work of a master craftsman. And then it is no surprise that the alternative version of America imagined by his book entails a great democratic modesty, more appropriate to the true spirit of America. So, the title of "First" is moved from the pathetic secondary position of the first lady to the primary position of a man of excellence who follows the Tao and actualizes will to power in an authentic way, to paraphrase Nietzsche.

The fantasy about his presidency goes on along these lines: "You'd have no live-in maid at the White House. A B would come in a little early to clean up. And then the other Bs would file down to Washington to see you just like they file in to see you at the Factory. (14)" Warhol recognizes the inevitable hypocrisy of everyday life when one hires maids. In our household we learned this I think per necessity during the pandemic. We previously had cleaners who came in once every two weeks. We prided ourselves in our democratic treatment of them. But that was false in a way. After we had to lay them off because we were in partial quarantine, we had to clean everything at the same level of perfection (my wife's demand) once per week. We achieved this with great efficiency, and by doing so we avoided the hypocrisy of false smug appeals to democratic sentiments. We also became much more mindful, along the lines of Thich Nhat Hanh of mindfulness itself, of paying attention to minutiae of dirt and grime, and to the subtle joys of cleanliness.

It is wonderful the way Warhol conceived his own studio workplace as something everyday by calling it a factory and treating it as such. We are just a business, he implied. We on the outside always saw the setup as one of glamour. But it was quite the opposite, just as it was the opposite of Danto's idea of an isolated Artworld. To repeat my introduction, Warhol was the non-Danto. So, instead of the Presidential world being like Plato's world of Forms or Kant's transcendent or transcendental domain, Warhol's Presidency would not involve a President-World (Danto being himself just another Platonist with dualist assumptions and thin surface of anti-dualism) or an Artworld, but just another factory making things for the people.

Part of interest in the everyday is paying attention to the senses other than seeing and smelling. Warhol took smells much more seriously than most aestheticians of his time. He has a wonderful humorous riff on his love of perfumes, which he collected. (151) He expresses a desire for a "smell museum" so that certain smells cannot be lost forever. He talks about walking around New York being aware of the many smells, and then lists them in rich detail, for example, "the hot dogs and sauerkraut carts." (152) Again, this fits in with his multiculturalism: "it's wrong for people who are the same type to go and live together in the same groups with the same food. In America it's got to mix 'n' mingle." (155)

Beauty

Warhol insists "I've never met a person I couldn't call a beauty." (61) He sees beauty everywhere, much like the philosopher described by Diotima in Plato's *Symposium* who, when reaching the second to top rung of the "ladder of love," sees a vast sea of beauty. At a lower rung Diotima describes the philosopher neophyte as discovering the beauty of all human bodies. Warhol would agree, although he considers this true relativized to time. As he puts it, "Every person has beauty at some point, or set of points, in their lifetime." (61) He does not share the common belief that personal beauty is stable and exclusive. As he says, "Sometimes they have the looks [i.e. of a beauty] when they're a baby and they don't have it when they're grown up, but then they could get it back again when they're older. Or they might be fat but have a beautiful face. Or have bow-legs but a beautiful body." (61) Neither beauty nor ugliness is permanently attached to any person.

Drawing from this, I would argue that experience of personal beauty and evaluation of it is part of the aesthetics of everyday life. Warhol's own situation is of course unique to him. However, he draws our attention to it in order to draw our attention to something universal, and to promote

certain changes in attitude, an increase in this case in democratic attitude and contextualist openness.

Like a professional philosopher, Warhol thinks about what we say when we use the word "beauty": "I always hear myself saying, "She's a beauty!" or "He's a beauty!" or "What a beauty!" but I never know what I'm talking about. I honestly don't know what beauty is, not to speak of what "a" beauty is. So that leaves me in a strange position, because I'm noted for how much I talk about "this one's a beauty" and "that one's a beauty." For a year once it was in all the magazines that my next movie was going to be The Beauties. The publicity for it was great, but then I could never decide who should be in it. If everybody's not a beauty, then nobody is, so I didn't want to imply that the kids in The Beauties were beauties but the kids in my other movies weren't so I had to back out on the basis of the title. It was all wrong." (61)

In short, everybody is a beauty. Warhol is quite aware that he is doing philosophy. He even pins down the difference between beauty and "a beauty." He can judge it, but cannot define it.

He further says: "I really don't care that much about "Beauties." What I really like are Talkers. To me, good talkers are beautiful because good talk is what I love." This could be straight out of the *Symposium.* Diotima places love of the soul of the interlocutor at a higher stage of the ladder of love than mere physical beauty.

Unlike Plato, however, Warhol prioritizes fun. He just thinks it more fun to be with talkers, and generally, with people who are doing things, than with beauties, who are just *being* something. "Fun," we might also observe, is a primary category in the aesthetics of everyday life. In my book I talked about "fun" as a neglected aesthetic property, one among many.[4] What does it mean to prioritize fun?

Warhol's Platonism extends to his handling of portraiture. He observes that, "[w]hen I did my self-portrait, I left all the pimples out because you always should. Pimples are a temporary condition and they don't have anything to do with what you really look like. Always omit the blemishes – they're not part of the good picture you want. (62)" This must have been how the idealistic Greek sculptors saw it too.

Returning to the question of relativism, Warhol says "When a person is the beauty of their day, and their looks are really in style, and then the times change and tastes change, and ten years go by, if they keep exactly their same look and don't change anything and if they take care of themselves, they'll still be a beauty. (62)" There is a "beauty of their day" for example Twiggy, a beauty that is in style. And yet it is not just style:

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[4] T. Leddy, *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary*: *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, Broadview, Peterborough 2012.

there can be a kind of permanence even in a world dominated by fashion. Marilyn Monroe is still a beauty.

For Warhol, there are certain looks and styles that are eternal in a way in that they are right as long as authentic: "Schrafft's restaurants were the beauties of their day, and then they tried to keep up with the times and they modified and modified until they lost all their charm and were bought by a big company. But if they could just have kept their same look and style, and held on through the lean years when they weren't in style, today they'd be the best thing around. You have to hang on in periods when your style isn't popular, because if it's good, it'll come back, and you'll be a recognized beauty once again. (62)" There is a kind of dialectic of beauty, the thesis being the original, the antithesis being the decline, and yet there can be a return.

"Beauties in photographs are different from beauties in person. It must be hard to be a model, because you'd want to be like the photograph of you, and you can't ever look that way. And so you start to copy the photograph. Photographs usually bring in another half-dimension. (Movies bring in another whole dimension. That screen magnetism is something secret – if you could only figure out what it is and how to make it, you'd have a really good product to sell. But you can't even tell if someone has it until you actually see them up there on the screen. You have to give screen tests to find out.)" Photographs can idealize beauties and can cause even a model to be frustrated, never being able to meet that ideal, and then ending up trying to copy the photograph.

"Very few Beauties are Talkers, but there are a few." Of course as we saw earlier, the talkers are to be preferred.

"Even beauties can be unattractive. If you catch a beauty in the wrong light at the right time, forget it. I believe in low lights and trick mirrors. I believe in plastic surgery." Continuing on the topic of relativism, beauty can be relative to light, and to time. Plastic surgery can rectify that a bit. Warhol, unlike Plato,

It is as if he were arguing directly against Plato when he says "If people want to spend their whole lives creaming and tweezing and brushing and tilting and gluing, that's really okay too, because it gives them something to do." Plato attacks the art of cosmetics in the *Gorgias.* This could have been one of his arguments: i.e. that people unduly spend time on self-beautification. Warhol does not make this into an ideal activity. He is simply open-minded and democratic about it: it "gives them something to do."

Yet another variation of the relativism of beauty: "Sometimes people having nervous breakdown problems can look very beautiful because they have that fragile something to the way they move or walk. They put out a mood that makes them more beautiful."

Like Diogenes of Sinope, Warhol can turn his approach to beauty into a practice. "When you're interested in somebody, and you think they might be interested in you, you should point out all your beauty problems and defects right away, rather than take a chance they won't notice them. Maybe, say, you have (65) a permanent beauty problem you can't change, such as too-short legs. Just say it. "My legs, as you've probably noticed, are much too short in proportion to the rest of my body." Why give the other person the satisfaction of discovering it for themselves? Once it's out in the open, at least you know it will never become an issue later on in the relationship, and if it does, you can always say, "Well I told you that in the beginning (65)." Beauty is seen here in the context of a personal erotic relationship.

"On the other hand, say you have a purely temporary beauty problem – a new pimple, lackluster hair, no-sleep eyes, five extra pounds around the middle. Still, whatever it is, you should point it out. If you don't point it out and say, "My hair is really dull this time of the month, I'm probably getting my friend," or "I put on five pounds eating Russell Stover choco-lates over Christmas, but I'm taking it off right away" – if you don't point out these things they might think that your temporary beauty problem is a permanent beauty problem. Why should they think otherwise if you've just met them? Remember, they've never seen you before in their life. So it's up to you to set them straight and get them to use their imagination about what your hair must look like when it's shiny, and what your body must look like when it's not overweight, and what your dress would look like without the grease spot on it. Even explain that you have much better clothes hanging in your closet than the ones you're wearing. If they really do like you for yourself, they'll be willing to use their imagination to think of what you must look like without your temporary beauty problem."

If you're naturally pale, you should put on a lot of blush-on to com-pensate. But if you've got a big nose, just play it up, and if you have a pimple, put on the pimple cream in a way that will make it really stand out – "There! I use pimple cream!" There's a difference.

But what makes a person beautiful? "I always think that when people turn around to look at somebody on the street it's probably that they smell an odor from them, and that's what makes them turn around and on. (66)" It is not just the way a person looks: it can also be the odor. It can also be a matter of the attitude: "Diana Vreeland, the editor of Vogue for ten years, is one of the most beautiful women in the world because she's not afraid of other people, she does what she wants. Truman Capote brought up something else about her – she's very very clean, and that makes her more beautiful. Maybe it's even the basis of her beauty. (66)" Being very clean and not afraid can make one beautiful. "Being clean is so important. Well-groomed people are the real beauties. It doesn't mat-

ter what they're wearing or who they're with or how much their jewelry costs or how much their clothes cost or how perfect their makeup is: if they're not clean, they're not beautiful. The most plain or unfashionable person in the world can still be beautiful if they're very well-groomed."

"Children are always beautiful. Every kid, up to, say, eight years old always looks good. Even if the kid wears glasses it still looks good. They always have the perfect nose. I've never seen an unattractive baby. Small features and nice skin. This also applies to animals – I've never seen a bad-looking animal. Babies by being beautiful are protected be-cause people want less to hurt them. This applies also to all animals. (67)"

Finally, I want to consider the expansion of everyday life aesthetics in terms of a democratic openness not only to certain terms but also ways of life. Warhol notes that "in some circles where very heavy people think they have very heavy brains, words like "charming" and "clever" and "pretty" are all put-downs; all the lighter things in life, which are the most important things, are put down. (69)" It is of course controversial whether these are indeed the most important things in life. Yet reading someone who says they are is at least refreshing and different. As I argued in my encyclopedia article on "pretty" the term is amazingly neglected compared to the beautiful and the sublime (Leddy 2014).

I want to close with a quote once again on personal beauty. "Weight isn't important the way the magazines make you think it is. I know a girl who just looks at her face in the medicine cabinet mirror and never looks below her shoulders, and she's four or five hundred pounds but she doesn't see all that, she just sees a beautiful face and therefore she thinks she's a beauty. And therefore. think she's a beauty, too, because I usually accept people on the basis of their self-images, because their self-images have more to do with the way they think than their objective-images do. Maybe she's six hundred pounds, who knows. If she doesn't care, I don't. (69)"

Yet Warhol was not a total relativist. He had values, although often quite different from others. He writes: "Everybody's sense of beauty is different from everybody else's. When I see people dressed in hideous clothes that look all wrong on them, I try to imagine the moment when they were buying them and thought, "This is great. I like it. I'll take it." You can't imagine what went off in their heads to make them buy those maroon polyester waffle-iron pants or that acrylic halter top that has "Miami" written in glitter. You wonder what they rejected as not beautiful – an acrylic halter top that had "Chicago" (72)?" Bad taste exists, and sometimes it is just funny.

It is not surprising, given his democratic instincts, that Warhol would have had something positive to say about graffiti art, a premonition of his later alliance with Basquiat: "Usually people are very tired when they ride on a subway, so they can't sing and dance, but I think if they could sing

and dance on a subway, they would enjoy it… The kids who spray graffiti all over the subway cars at night have learned how to recycle city space very well. They go back into the subway yard in the middle of the night when the cars are empty and that's when they do their singing and their dancing on the subway." (155)

At the same time, Warhol had, perhaps tongue-in-cheek, a minimalist aesthetic. This, again, is couched in terms of aesthetic praise of something ordinary and everyday, i.e. the suitcase. "Suitcase space is so efficient. A suitcase is full of everything you need: one spoon, one fork…. One suitcase in one empty room. Terrific. Perfect." (155) He even elaborates on this in describing a minimalist ideal city. "One elevator, one doorman…" (156)

Conclusion

Eleven years after Danto appropriated him for his own purposes Warhol articulated his own philosophy of art and other things in his witty and aphoristic *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol*. The point of this work was almost the opposite of Danto's instead of setting up a dichotomy between two worlds, the world of life and mere things, and the world of art, a world of transfigured things, Warhol sought to transform life itself, glamorizing it by way of breaking down the distinction between art and life. Indeed, that is exactly what he tried to do in his famous *Brillo Boxes*, which Danto so dramatically misinterpreted. Whereas Danto privileged an elite who could see what the eye cannot descry, Warhol, in his deadpan way, democratized art… and life. He was an unacknowledged founder of an aesthetics of everyday life in which the smells of the street of New York achieve great prominence, whereas art becomes mere business. Instead of art, Warhol glorified beauty, not the beauty found in art, but personal beauty and the beauties of the street. "I really believe in empty spaces, although, as an artist, I make a lot of junk. Empty space is never-wasted space. Wasted space is any space that has art in it." (143) For Warhol, words like "charming" and "pretty" are pretty darn important.

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Andy Warhol and the Aesthetics of Everyday Life

Andy Warhol presents us with interesting insights into the aesthetics of life and of everyday life in his book *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol.* Like Plato, he presents a utopia, an ideal society, which has its own profoundly aesthetic character; he valorizes beauty; and he asks what beauty is. But, unlike Plato, and like John Dewey, he is a pragmatist and fiercely anti-dualist: for him beauty is a matter of context, and his utopia is democratic. I also contrast him with Arthur Danto, the later philosopher being fundamentally like Plato in that he posits two realms. Whereas Plato holds up the realm of the Forms, which are real, as superior to the realm of appearances, which are not, Danto distinguishes the realm of everyday life, of "mere things," and the artworld. Mere objects advance ontologically as they are transfigured into the artworld. Rather than transfiguring objects into the realm of art, Warhol deconstructs the distinction between art and life. In this respect one can see him as, like Diogenes of Sinope, a philosopher qua performance artist. He does things, and his actions make philosophical points.

KEYWORDS: Warhol, Danto, Everyday Aesthetics, democracy.

Luca Mozzachiodi
Quotidianità e alienazione nella poetica di Giovanni Giudici

Di Giovanni Giudici permangono nella tradizione diverse immagini: quella del poeta-impiegato, quella di un neocrepuscolare che fa di una biografia ordinaria materia poetica, quella del traduttore-trovatore e anche quella del poeta religioso. Ognuna di queste figure ha qualche cosa di vero e questo scritto non le rifiuta, ma piuttosto, sulla scia di diversi contributi critici e del ricco lavoro di commento compiuto da Rodolfo Zucco[1], cerca di contestualizzarlo utilizzando come categoria chiave quella della rappresentazione di una quotidianità alienata.

Per non percepire le fratture a cui potrebbe condurre privilegiare solo alcune parti dell'opera di Giudici o concentrare l'attenzione solo sull'analisi dei testi poetici, il nesso tra quotidianità e alienazione andrà indagato dunque combinando criticamente saggi, opera poetica e riflessioni diaristiche o epistolari, in questo modo sarà possibile percepire come, fin dall'inizio, il problema dell'alienazione non sia semplicemente l'argomento o la materia dei versi di Giudici (cosa che per altro è più valida per le prime che per le ultime raccolte), ma sia uno degli snodi teorici intorno ai quali quest'autore ridefinisce di volta in volta la propria idea di poesia e il rapporto tra creazione poetica e storia collettiva. In questo percorso vi sono alcune costanti che l'articolo metterà in evidenza e alcuni momenti chiave riassumibili intorno alle riflessioni teoriche elaborati nei saggi e nelle lettere degli anni Sessanta e poi in quelli degli anni Ottanta, momenti che a volte anticipano la prassi poetica vera e propria, altre volte la seguono come tentativo di formulazione e sistemazione, anche in chiave politica, della propria estetica; è certamente il caso degli esordi, per i quali Alberto Cadioli ha parlato di fase preteorica, nel rapporto con alcuni saggi di *La letteratura verso Hiroshima*[2].

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[1] Cfr. G. Giudici, *I versi della vita*, a cura di R. Zucco, Mondadori, Milano 2000, pp. 1355-1828. Di Zucco si veda anche almeno R. Zucco, *Teatro del perdono. Per Giudici. L'amore che mia madre*, Libreria Agorà Editrice, Feltre 2008.
[2] Cfr. A. Cadioli, *La poesia al servizio dell'uomo. Riflessioni teoriche del primo Giudici*, in "istmi", 29-30, 2012, pp. 99- 117.

Quando nel 1965 appare *La vita in versi*, Giovanni Giudici si è prevalentemente mosso nel sottobosco letterario degli anni Cinquanta e Sessanta con alcune *plaquettes* la principale delle quali è *L'intelligenza con il nemico* (1957) seguita poi da *L'educazione cattolica* (1963) (quest'ultima sarà però rifusa, nel libro del '65, e con una serie di poesie pubblicate però molto significativamente sul numero 4 della rivista "*il Menabò*" dedicata a letteratura e industria)[3]. In particolare queste ultime sarebbero state rifuse nella raccolta mondadoriana del 1965, alla quale il poeta pensava già dal 1960, come testimoniano i passi delle agende personali[4]. Un manoscritto per una possibile silloge era già dal 1962 in attesa di pubblicazione da Mondadori, dove uscirà poi come *La vita in versi* con l'intercessione, e in parte la correzione, di Vittorio Sereni[5].

Oltre che come poeta, poco conosciuto, ma con legami importanti con le generazioni precedenti quali Sereni, Fortini, Noventa, Giudici aveva però già intrapreso un'importante attività pubblicistica e di riflessione teorica e culturale in prosa, soprattutto per le letture filosofiche e teologiche stimolata dalla vicinanza a Fortini, come ha recentemente sottolineato Riccardo Corcione curando il carteggio tra i due poeti[6], in parte determinata dal particolare ambiente della stessa Olivetti, dove il poeta lavorava e della rivista a matrice aziendale «Comunità» dove appariranno i primi importanti contributi di Giudici.

A leggere il primo libro di saggi giudiciani uscito nel 1976 quando il poeta era ormai affermato, ovvero *La letteratura verso Hiroshima*, si potrebbe essere indotti a un errore prospettico ritenendolo un'appendice consequenziale alla scrittura in versi; in realtà la maggior parte dei saggi precede cronologicamente la *Vita in versi* e segnatamente tutti quelli che compongono la sezione *Al di qua della letteratura* e molti di quelli inclusi in *Poetica e polemica*. Sebbene questi saggi nascano spesso da attività di recensione e di confronto diretto con autori (è il caso, ad esempio, delle *Esperienze Pastorali* di Don Milani, di *La morale della storia* di Gorz, e di *I dannati della terra* di Fanon), è obliquamente attraverso questi che il poeta elabora una propria teoria della società e non solo immediatamente una poetica. Un breve sommario dei temi affrontati dovrebbe includere senz'altro il problema del cattolicesimo e del suo scontro con la mutazione italiana da società rurale a società capitalistica avanzata, il ruolo che in questa nuova società spetta all'intellettuale, le possibilità di una costru-

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[3] G. Giudici, *Se sia opportuno trasferirsi in campagna*, in "Il Menabò di letteratura", A.III, 4, pp. 185-216.
[4] Si veda in particolare *Istmi*, A. XV, 29-30, 2012 *Prove di vita in versi, il primo Giudici*.
[5] Cfr. G. Giudici, *I versi della vita*, cit., p. 1368. Si veda in generale ivi tanto l'apparato di Zucco quanto C. Di Alesio, *Cronologia*, pp. XLVII-C.
[6] F. Fortini, G. Giudici, *Carteggio 1959-1993*, Olschki, Firenze 2018, pp. 1-71.

zione oppositiva al presente (qui in senso positivo viene letto l'appello rivoluzionario di Fanon, in senso negativo soprattutto la rivoluzione interna alla letteratura promossa dalla Neoavanguardia).

Tutto ciò è convogliato con notevole attenzione in una analisi dell'appartenente al ceto medio inserito nell'apparato produttivo, di cui Giudici, impiegato, fa parte (*L'uomo dell'organizzazione*).

Si capirà dunque scorrendo l'indice del volume di versi, in cui campeggiano titoli come *Se sia opportuno trasferirsi in campagna*, *Dal cuore del miracolo*, *Cambiare ditta* e l'intera sezione *L'educazione cattolica*, come vi sia una stretta dipendenza tra le letture e meditazioni di fine anni Cinquanta e primi Sessanta e la loro riuscita in versi. Potremmo dire anzi che uno dei punti focali della polemica giudiciana con le generazioni di poeti emersi all'attenzione del mercato letterario e culturale, soprattutto i Novissimi, sia appunto questa: per Giudici in questi anni, come scrive a Fortini nel febbraio '63 è essenziale "tendere a una forma come proposta nel corpo della storia […] a una letteratura […] della vita"[7]. La quotidianità è allora parte del proprio travestimento e permette di mantenere un canale di comunicazione verso il lettore che nella situazione versificata si riconosce così come l'utilizzo di "forme logore" per rappresentarla (ad esempio le quartine a rima alternata) è speculare al rifiuto della posizione dei Novissimi, nei quali lo svecchiamento formale traduce un'essenza conservatrice:

> L'intelligenza dei vari neoavanguardisti […] è stata quella di aver individuato lo stesso problema dell'obsolescenza dell'istituto su cui vertono i nostri discorsi, ma un fatto è individuarla dal punto di vista di un semplice successo personale, (e quindi in senso omologo alle strutture di classe vigenti) altro fatto è individuarla sulla base dell'esigenza poetica e inventiva individuale e parimenti sulla base dell'esigenza rivoluzionaria.[8]

Oltre la non velata accusa di carrierismo, traspare da queste parole una questione chiave: per i Novissimi la letteratura ha per oggetto se stessa, e dunque anche l'irruzione della quotidianità e lo scompaginamento degli istituti retorici classici rappresentano una questione interna; per Giudici stesso invece rappresentazione letteraria e vita quotidiana stanno tra loro in rapporto dialettico[9].

Se esigenza poetica e inventiva individuale sono dunque non i mezzi dell'affermazione personale ma dell'esercizio della letteratura animato da

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[7] Ivi, p. 85.
[8] Ivi, p. 95.
[9] Su questi passaggi, e in generale sulla corretta collocazione della teoresi giudiciana e dei suoi risvolti o antecedenti pratici cfr. S. Morando, *Vita con le parole. La poesia di Giovanni Giudici*, Campanotto Editore, Pasian di Prato 2001.

una esigenza rivoluzionaria, occorre dunque darsi un fine nella propria azione secondo una visione del mondo.

L'idea della necessità e inevitabilità di una mediazione ideologica nel rapporto con la contemporaneità e dunque nella poesia diventa perciò il metro con cui misurare la faglia che divide la propria posizione da quelle inclini a uno progressismo scientista e un tecnicismo (anche letterario) antiideologico.

> Quale concezione del mondo? Non importa: per l'idea di concezione del mondo. Le divisioni ideologiche hanno perduto gran parte del loro senso da quando ci si può dividere in altro modo: quelli che sono per una concezione del mondo e quelli che sono contro una concezione del mondo. L'ideologia dell'ideologia e l'ideologia della non-ideologia. Io sarei per la prima. Troppi peccati da scontare, troppi sbagli da rimediare, troppa ignoranza da colmare.[10]

L'utilizzo particolare che qui Giudici fa della prima tesi benjaminiana di *Sul concetto di storia*, l'articolo si intitola infatti *La teologia è piccola e brutta*, crea una possibile, e assolutamente eterodossa, vicinanza tra teologia, ideologia e marxismo, che, se non è priva di referenti storici immediati (siamo negli anni del Concilio Vaticano II, della *Pacem in terris* e della attività di una rivista come la «Rivista Trimestrale», luogo di incontri teorici tra cattolicesimo e comunismo), costituisce la cifra specifica della poetica giudiciana in tutto il suo svolgersi.

Le prime recensioni colgono sì l'aspetto di sostanziale novità e di attenzione alla condizione sociale del nuovo ceto medio[11], oppure come in «Paese Sera» l'aspetto religioso[12], difficilmente però riconoscono in pieno la capacità di Giudici di rappresentare liricamente l'alienazione e di fare della propria vita, in una forma di distacco straniante[13], il luogo

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[10] G. Giudici, *La teologia è piccola e brutta*, in *La letteratura verso Hiroshima*, Editori Riuniti, Roma 1976, p. 180. Quando l'articolo era in fase di revisione ne è uscita una edizione a cura di Massimiliano Cappello, *G. Giudici, La letteratura verso Hiroshima e altri scritti 1959-1976.*, Milano, Ledizioni 2022.

[11] L. Baldacci, *La poesia di Giudici come specchio dell'uomo moderno*, "Epoca", XVI, 769, pp. 104-107. G. C. Ferretti *Il dramma di un poeta dal cuore del miracolo*, "L'Unità" 2 Giugno 1965.

[12] I. Toti, *La fede è dubitosa per le schiere dei desti*, "Paese Sera" 3 agosto 1965.

[13] Una speciale forma di distacco e di gestione del proprio "personaggio autobiografico", tipica della scrittura di Giudici è stata efficacemente analizzata da Teresa Franco, cfr. T. Franco, *Essere Giovanni* in *Nomina sunt L'onomastica tra ermeneutica, storia della lingua e comparatistica* a cura di M.P. Arpioni, A. Ceschin, G. Tomazzoli, Venezia Edizioni Ca' Foscari 2016, p. 232. "Muovendosi tra finzione e desiderio autobiografico, Giudici mette in atto due modalità autorappresentative: da un lato, infatti, si nasconde dietro l'anonimato, spesso accompagnato da un eccesso di determinanti burocratici, e dall'altro, nominandosi, esibisce l'opacità del suo nome proprio".

di osservazione privilegiato delle contraddizioni della quotidianità; in questo senso anche le più simpatetiche letture di Fortini rimangono a metà strada[14].

Si veda ad esempio una poesia come la seguente:

> Mi chiedi cosa vuol dire
>
> Mi chiedi cosa vuol dire
> la parola alienazione:
> da quando nasci è morire
> per vivere in un padrone
>
> che ti vende – è consegnare
> ciò che porti – forza, amore,
> odio intero – per trovare
> sesso, vino, crepacuore.
>
> Vuol dire fuori di te
> già essere mentre credi
> in te abitare perché
> ti scalza il vento a cui cedi.
>
> Puoi resistere, ma un giorno
> è un secolo a consumarti:
> ciò che dài non fa ritorno
> al te stesso da cui parte.
>
> È un'altra vita aspettare,
> ma un altro tempo non c'è:
> il tempo che sei scompare,
> ciò che resta non sei te.[15]

Si può notare, pensando alla ricordata necessità di rappresentazione del quotidiano, che la scorrettezza grammaticale del finale non è solo un tentativo di mimesi del parlato ma getta sull'intero componimento una luce che permette di leggerlo come *persona loquens* ed evidentemente la poesia versifica la teoria dell'alienazione per come esposta nei *Manoscritti economico-filosofici* di Marx.

I testi del giovane Marx fanno parte di un nutrito gruppo di letture che Giudici intraprende, anche su impulso di Fortini[16], e che insieme

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[14] F. Fortini, *Una nota su Giudici*, in "Rinascita-Il contemporaneo" 7 luglio 1965, pp. 22-23.
[15] G. Giudici, *I versi della vita*, cit., p. 35.
[16] R. Minore, *La promessa della notte, conversazione con i poeti italiani*, Donzelli, Roma 2011, p. 76. "Con questa idea del catechismo che ho in testa se uno mi dice di fare una

resteranno il principale punto di riferimento marxiano nell'itinerario del poeta (nei saggi del resto la sola opera marxiana post 1848 citata è il *Capitale*, ma solo come evento storico-culturale, significativamente in accostamento frequente alla poesia di Rimbaud, le analisi di tipo storico-economico dipendono del resto chiaramente dai *Manoscritti* e dal *Manifesto*). Il Marx cui Giudici si accosta e che usa, soprattutto nelle prime raccolte e nei saggi di *La letteratura verso Hiroshima*, è essenzialmente un Marx dell'antialienazione letto in chiave umanistica, che si riflette ampiamente negli scritti maggiori su Gorz e su Fanon[17] e nell'interesse per le novità filosofiche e letterarie che emergono dai paesi dell'est Europa, in particolare dalla Polonia[18] (si pensi a Schaff) e dalla Repubblica Ceca[19]. Certo il dialogo tra i due scrittori è volto a instaurare quella che Corcione ha chiamato "una religione per la storia"[20] e, più in generale, a indagare le forme esistenziali di alienazione e a epurare, o tentare di epurare, il marxismo dagli aspetti positivistico progressivi che, soprattutto per Fortini, animavano l'azione delle forze comuniste in Italia e di conseguenza anche a fare della rivista "Questo e altro", per la quale insieme progettavano un rinnovamento, l'argine letterario a difesa di questo marxismo non scientista[21]. La specificità del discorso giudiciano risiede però nel fatto che questa intenzione più che essere teorizzata è espressa figurativamente ed, *e contrario,* attraverso la rappresentazione poetica della propria quotidianità alienata e insieme delle contraddizioni (che sono sia impulsi all'azione che manifestazioni di fede e speranza).

Si vedano alcune strofe della poesia *Una sera come tante*:

> Ma che si viva o si muoia è indifferente,
> se private persone senza storia
> siamo, lettori di giornali, spettatori

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cosa io la faccio. Così se Fortini mi diceva di leggere i manoscritti di Marx io li leggevo e mi piacevano pure".

[17] G. Giudici, *Sul fronte dell'alienazione* e *Frantz Fanon l'uomo dalla roncola* in G. Giudici, *La letteratura verso Hiroshima*, cit., pp. 139-148 e 156-167. Sul secondo scritto in particolare si veda il mio L. Mozzachiodi, *L'uomo dalla roncola*, *il Fanon degli scrittori*, in "Ticontré", 14. 2020.
[18] Cfr. G. Giudici, *Polonia, la verità difficile*, in "Comunità", XIII, 73, 1959, pp. 83-87.
[19] Giudici mostra in particolare interesse ad alcuni aspetti della *Dialettica del concreto di Karel Kosík* che poteva leggere attraverso l'antologizzazione in F. Fortini, *Profezie e realtà del nostro tempo*, Laterza, Bari 1965, pp. 485-598, l'estratto è significativamente intitolato *La quotidianità*.
[20] F. Fortini, G. Giudici, *Carteggio*, cit., p. 63.
[21] Buona parte del carteggio degli anni Sessanta tra i due è rivolta a questo proposito prima con Sereni e la rivista "Questo e Altro", poi con un ipotetico supplemento letterario dei "Quaderni Rossi", di cui entrambi erano lettori. In questo senso anche Giudici recupera il discorso di Tronti e Panzieri sul piano capitalistico e l'integrazione, ma per trasporlo sul piano della già ricordata critica alla neoavanguardia.

televisivi, utenti di servizi:
dovremmo essere in molti, sbagliare in molti,
in compagnia di molti sommare i nostri vizi,
non questa grigia innocenza che inermi ci tiene

qui, dove il male è facile e inarrivabile il bene.
È nostalgia di un futuro che mi estenua,
ma poi d'un sorriso si appaga o di un come-se-fosse!
Da quanti anni non vedo un fiume in piena?
Da quanto in questa viltà ci assicura
la nostra disciplina senza percosse?
Da quanto ha nome bontà la paura?[22]

In questa poesia, probabilmente una delle più famose[23], a riflessioni di taglio politico, sociologico e culturale, che portano ad esempio ad identificare gli omologhi del soggetto poetante come "private persone senza storia|[…], lettori di giornali, spettatori|televisivi, utenti di servizi", cioè come completamente integrate nella sfera del consumo della società neocapitalistica, si assommano una serie di riferimenti teologici se non proprio catechistici: la difficoltà di giungere al bene e la facilità del male, "l'impostura" come condizione del debole nella fede in quelle "antiche speranze della salvezza" e il senso di bisogno e mancanza che generano la "nostalgia di futuro", paradosso non solo poetico ma che si richiama strettamente alle metafore benjaminiane e blochiane sulla storia[24].

"La storia è oggetto di costruzione il cui luogo non è il tempo omogeneo e vuoto, ma quello pieno di "tempo-ora"[25]. La fedeltà a metà dell'io poetante non è dunque solo quella dell'impiegato alienato a se stesso o al padrone, ma anche quella del cristiano e implicitamente scrivere, come Giudici fa, "versi cristiani" nella Milano degli anni Sessanta non può che essere fatto in questa forma estremamente contraddittoria e apparentemente desublimata, la poesia eponima della raccolta esorta a "entrambi i sensi/del sublime l'infame, l'illustre"[26].

Nell'assolutamente prosaico e quotidiano scenario in cui si svolge questa meditazione su storia e fede emergono elementi che per tradizione

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[22] G. Giudici, *I versi della vita*, cit., p. 60.
[23] Per una accurata lettura soprattutto prosodico-stilistica si può vedere A. Bertoni, *Una distratta venerazione*, *La poesia metrica di Giovanni Giudici*, Book Editore, Modena 2001.
[24] Si veda E. Bloch, *Differenziazioni nel concetto di progresso*, a cura di G. Sforza, Argalia, Urbino 1962 e si pensi alla meta finale di *Il principio speranza* «qualcosa che nell'infanzia riluce a tutti e dove nessuno è ancora mai stato: la patria». E. Bloch, *Il principio speranza*, tr. it. di T. Cavallo, E. De Angelis Garzanti, Milano 2005², p. 1588.
[25] W. Benjamin, *Angelus Novus Saggi e Frammenti*, tr. it. di R. Solmi, Einaudi, Torino 1962, p. 20.
[26] G. Giudici, *I versi della vita*, cit., p. 115.

apparterrebbero a un registro comico (gli escrementi, il "dialogo" a suon di busse con il cane ribelle), ma proprio a questi è riservato un verso come l'alessandrino rimato, uno dei versi più inusuali e altisonanti della tradizione, generalmente associato alla poesia francese classica e al teatro tragico. Più che pensare ad una semplice commistione di elementi alti e bassi in una volontà mimetica del quotidiano occorre qui guardare alla proposta giudiciana di una gestione ironica della poesia. Nel saggio *La gestione ironica*, apparso sui "Quaderni Piacentini", il poeta formalizza teoricamente alcuni nessi della sua prassi poetica, tra i quali quello tra forme tradizionali (cioè codificate dalla storia come quelle metriche concettuali e retoriche presenti in *Una sera come tante*) e possibilità di comunicazione con il pubblico; vi è al fondo una proposta sul tipo di fruizione della poesia in rapporto al mutamento sociale. Tale proposta fondata sull'omologia-differenza tra prassi poetica e prassi politica propone un ossequio minimo formale alle istituzioni, ironico appunto, come veicolo di un messaggio che tradisca questa ironia sulla base della complicità che le istituzioni garantiscono tra autore e lettore e sviluppi poi una più profonda solidarietà:

> Un atteggiamento siffatto si vuole intendere per gestione ironica della forma istituzionale: conoscere poetico o prassi politica che sia il campo in cui si esplica il progetto non rischia di alienarsi, (o rischia molto meno) nei suoi strumenti che vengono assunti a un grado neutro, tenuti a distanza, esorcizzati. Quando la rivoluzione non è possibile e l'intervento riformatore si prospetta inefficace la gestione ironica è un tipo di approccio che non compromette la volontà organizzativa differenziante, che non la isola dalla realtà del suo tema.[27]

Come si può constatare, si tratta di un tentativo di rigiocare il nesso poesia e storia su basi diverse da quelle del vecchio *engagement* letterario ma senza ridurlo a gioco formale o a critica interna degli istituti letterari, cioè mantenendo vivo il nesso tra poesia e realtà. Aver cancellato questo nesso in favore di una critica solo formal-lessicale degli istituti letterari è per Giudici l'errore capitale della Neoavanguardia della quale in una lettera si legge che sarebbe "letteratura della letteratura"[28] e tenderebbe a una "forma vertente su se stessa"[29], che in *Una sera come tante* è in antitesi alla vita.

È questa prospettiva estetizzante della Neoavanguardia che le rende non necessarie e anzi antitetiche le visioni del mondo ricordate all'inizio e la teologia (qui anche come sinonimo di discorso sulla totalità) non deve

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[27] Id. *La gestione ironica*, in *La letteratura verso Hiroshima*, cit., p. 214.
[28] F. Fortini, G. Giudici, *Carteggio*, cit., p. 85
[29] *Ibid.*

allora più essere "nascosta" o gestita ironicamente, ma astrattamente cancellata. Contro questo tentativo, forse per certi versi inconsapevole[30], di svuotamento del concreto e sua estetizzazione si muove il tentativo implicito di Giudici di elaborare un'estetica del quotidiano in cui le stratificazioni storiche e gli aspetti trascendenti conservino una loro presenza e anzi ne strutturino la stessa percezione[31].

Ciò significa che se il campo letterario italiano degli anni Sessanta, come racconta benissimo Nello Ajello nel suo *Lo scrittore e il potere*[32], era stato completamente scosso dalla scoperta, e dalla conseguente moda, del problema dell'alienazione, come una delle manifestazioni del nuovo stadio di sviluppo della società italiana, dalla Neoavanguardia rapidamente recepito e trasformato in arma contro i vecchi assetti della comunità letteraria, la proposta alternativa di Giudici implicava la necessità di sfidare le teorie neoavanguardiste sul loro stesso terreno, come si evince dall'epistolario[33].

Nei fatti il personaggio e l'estetica di *La vita in versi* e *Autobiologia*, con i suoi interni piccolo borghesi, gli uffici, il lavoro e i traffici (materiali, economici, sentimentali e sessuali) tipici del lavoro impiegatizio (si vedano ad esempio poesie come *Tempo libero*, *Cambiare ditta*, *Il fresco a Milano, In onore della signora Gemma Alfè*), sono avvicinati alla di poco

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[30] Giudici fa vari nomi: Sanguineti, Balestrini, Arbasino, e nell'epistolario soprattutto Eco, visto anche come prototipo dell'intellettuale arrampicatore sociale, ma se ne possono fare altri, Pagliarani ad esempio, per cui l'omologia del risultato non è scontata.

[31] Per una più complessiva lettura degli aspetti ideologici dell'opera poetica di Giudici si può vedere ora L. Neri, *I silenziosi circuiti del ricordo: etica, estetica e ideologia nella poesia di Giovanni Giudici*, Carocci, Roma 2018.

[32] N. Ajello, *Lo scrittore e il potere*, Laterza, Bari 1972, p. 67. "Il terremoto scoppiò all'improvviso e si comunicò sotterraneamente a tutte le molecole della società letteraria. Sulla metà del 1962 gli scrittori italiani si videro presi in un vortice, si scoprirono animati da un'insolita predisposizione alla rissa, al litigio pubblico. Argomento della contesa era l'"alienazione', una parola che sarebbe diventata presto di largo dominio, trasformandosi in una collettiva infatuazione verbale. Questa parola era la prima sigla culturale degli anni Sessanta, ed è oggi un punto di partenza sicuro per tentare una cronaca di oltre un decennio di polemiche letterarie italiane".

[33] F. Fortini, G. Giudici, *Carteggio*, cit. pp. 83-84. "Una delle funzioni obiettive dell'echismo poetico è di provocare una svalutazione del *medium* letterario al cospetto dei possibili destinatari, non solo e non sempre per svuotare l'intervento letterario di qualsiasi apprezzabile potere d'incidenza storica nel senso di un adempimento, di una marcia verso una verità globale, ma soprattutto per neutralizzarlo nel suo valore ontologico e per renderlo in definitiva sempre più disponibile e docile alle esigenze funzionali della sovrastruttura (il momento della moda, la produttività editoriale, il non leggere due volte lo stesso libro). È una vera e propria operazione di marketing-merchandising. […] è anche vero che nell'operare letterario la coerenza con un determinato agire politico si manifesta nel salvaguardare gli strumenti di intervento storico (tra cui la letteratura) che gli agenti (nel nostro caso letterari) tentano di distruggere o di svuotare conforme[mente] alla loro funzione strutturale rispetto alla classe dominante".

antecedente uscita di *Memoriale*, romanzo di intessitura lirica sul mon-
do della fabbrica e sul miracolo economico, tanto che Giudici si vede
costretto a dover chiarire a Fortini di non voler fare "l'albinosaluggia"[34],
cioè di rifiutare esattamente la via d'uscita manieristico impiegatizia. Così
lo stesso personaggio si frange in molteplici *personae*, e la gestione ironi-
ca evolve in pantomima e in una riscoperta del monologo drammatico,
e così ad esempio la quotidianità e le tensioni nella serie *la Bovary c'est
moi* sono quelle di un ritratto di strega «cittadina e condominiale»[35] lata-
mente ispirata alla *Strega* Michelet[36], che cerca però, secondo un modello
marcusiano frequente in Giudici, l'eros come totalità opposto alla sessua-
lità quale sua degradazione consumistica. Nelle *Pantomime di Praga*, che
sorgono da una certa frequentazione della capitale ceca a ridosso dei fatti
del '68 e da un approfondimento dei legami con quella cultura, (oltre a
Kosík possiamo citare senz'altro Orten e Kafka, ma anche una antolo-
gia prodotta appositamente: *Omaggio a Praga*[37]) descrizioni della città
e delle persone che vi abitano (*Tigre di carta*, *Quinta pantomima*) fanno
da sfondo al racconto di una breve fuga amorosa e, ancora una volta, a
meditazioni sulla storia in cui però essa viene a coincidere fattivamente e
non più (o non solo) figuralmente con il quotidiano: "Lo spazio di ogni
vita di uomo dura la storia non è vero che dura millenni".[38]

Si può dire che a questo punto si tenti una via d'uscita positiva dall'o-
rizzonte delle "private persone senza storia" verso una storicizzazione del
quotidiano e, in effetti, sempre più spesso la prospettiva impiegatizia o
di impiegato-scrittore è trasferita dalla produzione poetica alla riflessione
teorica e saggistica anche con l'aiuto della sociologia americana più all'a-
vanguardia. Un passaggio da un saggio su Whyte riguardo l'ascesa della
classe media americana e del suo *way of life* come modello di conformi-
smo sociale anche in Europa:

> Ci si rifiuta di analizzare e risolvere i problemi di lunga scadenza: l'im-
> portante è salire il *prossimo gradino*, realizzare la sintesi chimica che consen-
> ta la produzione immediata di una nuova materia plastica con determinate
> caratteristiche, non avere noie con i vicini di casa, non perdere terreno nei
> confronti dei colleghi… È fuor di dubbio che il prepotere delle cose sia per-
> venuto nella società industrializzata di cui parla il Whyte a un livello dav-
> vero soverchiante; altrettanto indubitato è che l'uomo dell'organizzazione

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[34] Ivi, p. 212, Albino Saluggia è il protagonista del romanzo *Memoriale.*
[35] G. Giudici, *La vita in versi*, cit., p. 1432. Si vedano ivi le interessanti osservazioni di
Zucco.
[36] Cfr. J. Michelet, La Strega, Einaudi, Torino 1971.
[37] G. Giudici (a cura di) *Omaggio a Praga: cinque poesie e tre prose con una piccola antolo-
gia di poeti cechi del '900*, All'insegna del pesce d'oro, Milano 1968.
[38] G. Giudici, *La storia*, in *I versi della vita*, cit., p. 227.

si sia arreso incondizionatamente a questo prepotere per sopravvivere nel migliore degli inferni possibili. […] Il problema non è più quello di agire positivamente, bensì di schivare il colpo, di mettersi nella stessa direzione del vento per non essere spazzati via: il *primum vivere* diventa un *primum non vivere*, proprio per non morire.[39]

Il saggio risale al 1960, ma negli anni immediatamente seguenti Giudici legge Wright Mills (*Le élites dominanti* e *Colletti bianchi*) e Vance Packard (*I cacciatori di prestigio*) e del primo traduce una antologia di classici della sociologia[40]. Tutta questa preparazione sociologica sarà poi impiegata dall'autore quando, a partire dai tardi anni Sessanta e dunque a seguito dell'affermazione poetica, Giudici diviene consapevole di non poter non incarnare in qualche misura la figura dello scrittore integrato (anche se questa integrazione significa anche alienazione e ripartizione del tempo quotidiano tra lavoro d'ufficio e lavoro letterario): il saggio *Le rendite dell'intellettuale* si allontana dal vecchio consiglio di Eliot di trovare un impiego di scarsa responsabilità se si desidera coltivare la poesia, proprio perché secondo Giudici ciò non significa più necessariamente maggiore disponibilità di tempo, e anzi spesso nella società a modello manageriale è chi ha minor responsabilità decisionale a portare il maggior carico del tempo di lavoro e la ricerca della poesia si riduce a una perpetua "scuola serale"[41] nella vita di un autore.

La divisione della vita individuale tra tempo del lavoro e tempo libero (tempo del lavoro creativo, tempo della poesia, ma anche tempo dell'eros e probabilmente Giudici non è estraneo a certe suggestioni marcusiane anche sul piano più propriamente politico dopo la lettura a fine '64 di *Eros e civiltà*[42]) non è pero vissuta più tragicamente, una volta ricomposta la scissione tra storia e vita individuale nella forma dell'autobiografia poetica (o *Autobiologia*) e il libro del '72 *O beatrice* si apre con la breve poesia *Mi piacerebbe ma non vorrei essere un poeta tragico*.

> Comico suo malgrado è il colmo del comico.
> Spesso patetico fu il comico con intenzione.
> Tragico suo malgrado è il solo possibile
> esito imprevedibile della commedia.
>
> Non cerco la tragedia ma ne subisco la vocazione.[43]

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[39] G. Giudici, *L'uomo dell'organizzazione*, in *La letteratura verso Hiroshima*, cit. pp. 124-125.

[40] C. Wright Mills (a cura di), *Immagini dell'uomo: la tradizione classica della sociologia*, Edizioni di Comunità, Milano 1963.

[41] G. Giudici, *Le rendite dell'intellettuale*, in *La letteratura verso Hiroshima*, cit., p. 50.

[42] H. Marcuse, *Eros e civiltà*, Einaudi, Torino 1964.

[43] G. Giudici, *I versi della vita*, cit., p. 241.

A partire dai libri successivi e in maniera crescente nel corso degli anni Ottanta e Novanta la ricerca di un'estetica del quotidiano si fa meno esplicita e non di rado espressa più nella saggistica, con diversi articoli dedicati al cambiamento dell'industria culturale e alla materialità dei processi di scrittura. Tanto più che il tentativo di vivere "comicamente la tragedia" si risolve in una dicotomia che assegna al tempo della poesia un valore di autenticità, al punto che all'inizio degli anni Ottanta lo stesso autore parlerà di una sua aspirazione a essere un poeta romantico[44]. Tra i principali risultati estetici di questa diversa chiave di lettura è certamente *Salutz,* che traveste una materia sentimentale che già era stata della *Bovary c'est moi* in linguaggio neotrobadorico con una allusione ai canzonieri provenzali. Non più dunque la ricerca (sconfitta ma possibile) di una autenticità e totalità nella vita quotidiana rappresentata, ma semmai la consapevolezza che solo quella rappresentazione (cioè la facoltà poetica) è autentica, capace di integrare razionale e irrazionale senza sottomettere l'uno o l'altro al controllo sociale capitalistico. La necessaria contropartita di questa posizione neoromantica però risiede in uno spostamento della poeticità in una dimensione di alterità dal quotidiano (come è via via più evidente da alcune sezioni di *Il ristorante dei Morti* fino a *Salutz* e per cui si rimanda a i ricordati lavori di Zucco e Morando). In questa cornice di accettata vocazione si inscrive un recupero della categoria teorica dell'ispirazione, che l'ansia programmatica e politica degli anni Sessanta sembrava salvare solo nella forma dell'inventiva. Essa diventa dunque soprattutto un processo linguistico parzialmente inconscio, la *Dama non cercata* dell'omonimo libro di saggi:

> Ecco un problema secondo me centrale della lingua poetica: come rinverdire la parola appassita, far nuovo ciò che è vecchio, render ciò che è svilito memorabile. Ma non vi sono procedimenti sicuri che portino a risolverlo; cioè: esso non è risolvibile per via d'artificio *dal di fuori* della lingua, ma è risolvibile soltanto *dal dentro* per virtù intrinseca della lingua stessa, una virtù autoliberatoria che l'*artifex* […] riesce a percepire, può opportunamente assecondare […]. Io tenderei a pensarlo come naturalezza senza alternative e a pensare la poesia come naturalità (riconquistata, riappropriata) della lingua; e "invenzione" nel senso etimologico di qualcosa che c'era già ma non sarebbe, senza "l'inventore", venuta alla luce.[45]

Al "fuori dalla poesia", ora divenuto un quotidiano prosastico contrassegnato dall'oppressione, è assegnato il compito materia grezza dell'operazione poetica che costituisce una sorta di liberazione compensativa:

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[44] Cfr. Id. *Gli aeroplanini di Kafka o riflessioni sul poema* in *La dama non cercata*, Mondadori, Milano 1986, p. 26.
[45] Ivi, pp. 37-45.

"L'esercizio della poesia deve sempre garantirsi con la coscienza del suo (apparente) contrario; così come il contrario (apparente) della poesia, la condizione dell'oppresso e dell'emarginato, non può non chiedere ai modi della poesia almeno un indizio del proprio autosuperamento"[46].

I problemi di status, come li chiama nel relativo saggio, sorgono allora quando il poeta, pur avendo raggiunto la naturalezza nella sua condizione di *artifex* e servitore della lingua, è privo di quel vecchio mandato sociale che al poeta romantico *strictu sensu* la società affidava con il compito di poetizzare la vita, e in questo senso il romanticismo storico con la sua rottura della teoria dei generi e la commistione di elementi tragici e comici, umili e sublimi, trascendenti e quotidiani è anche l'anticamera di una rottura delle figurazioni di ordine politico che le estetiche classicistiche e normative sottintendevano[47].

Nella società contemporanea tale rottura non può manifestarsi, se non in forma feticizzata (come Giudici riteneva avesse a suo tempo fatto la Neoavanguardia), e a una certa rete di mediazioni politiche, che nel lavoro dello scrittore significano forme e funzioni dell'industria culturale, non è possibile non assoggettarsi. Una seconda distinzione, dunque, Giudici la traccia tra sé e la generazione di autori nati tra gli anni Quaranta e Cinquanta. Riconosce nei più giovani una decisa volontà di affermazione come scrittori di professione che si abbina al rifiuto di un "secondo mestiere" e tenta semmai di ricucire la frattura tra tempo del lavoro e tempo della scrittura scegliendo mestieri affini (per esempio nell'editoria, nell'accademia o nella televisione), escludendo però, per incapacità di astrazione della propria funzione assunta, una possibile presa di distanza critica da questi stessi istituti.

A tutto ciò oppone una riflessione di taglio invece artigianale sul proprio lavoro: il riconoscimento di una certa similarità tra il linguaggio del *copy* (inserzioni di testo nei prodotti, manuali d'istruzioni, garanzie, avvertenze e testi pubblicitari) che è stato di fatto il campo lavorativo di Giudici per più di trent'anni (suo è il nome della Mercator, una macchina contabile prodotta dalla Olivetti[48]) e linguaggio poetico.

Scrittura di copy e scrittura di versi presentano un altro importante aspetto comune: l'esigenza, per ragioni in parte analoghe e in parte diverse, di un massimo rigore nell'uso delle parole. Nel testo pubblicitario e nella poesia ogni parola ha un peso da far sentire, è indispensabile che intorno ad essa venga fatto il massimo di chiarezza, il massimo di pulizia. […] Il testo della

[46] Ivi, p. 79.
[47] Su questo aspetto si può vedere J. Ranciére, *Politica della letteratura*, Sellerio, Palermo 2010.
[48] Su tutta la complessa relazione tra la Olivetti e la letteratura negli anni Cinquanta-Settanta si può ora consultare "L'Ospite Ingrato" N. S. A. XIII, 6, 2021, *Umanesimo e tecnologia*, *Il laboratorio Olivetti*.

lingua poetica è contraddistinto da un alto grado di fisicità, materialità, concretezza. Il testo pubblicitario non può, ne intende, aspirare ad altrettanto, ma surrettiziamente e occasionalmente utilizza, al livello tecnico artigianale della sua confezione, alcuni aspetti di quella fisicità e materialità, che gli conferiscono, a volte, una qualche capacità di significato ulteriore rispetto a ciò che è scritto o detto.[49]

Senza dubbio è lungo il percorso dall'elaborazione di una "religione per la storia", attraverso la gestione ironica come proposta politica per fare fronte all'alienazione, fino all'accettazione di una impossibilità di conciliazione delle esigenze di liberazione integrale dell'uomo nella storia e la sua trasposizione sul piano della creazione poetica. Potremmo però pensare che, malgrado tutto, questo esito fosse inscritto nella tendenza cattolica di Giudici, al punto che nella prima redazione poemetto autobiografico *Da un banco in fondo alla classe* (1978) scriveva "anche se rivoluzione|è parola troppo lunga|perché alcuno la raggiunga|senza vera religione"[50], e che dunque le differenti metamorfosi di valore estetico del quotidiano fossero in qualche modo destinate ad approdare a un riconoscimento di doppia professionalità tutto sommato lucidamente assunta come quello appena citato, a un certo grado cioè di tecnicismo. In questo senso assume valore la proposta Ferroni, che in un volume dal titolo *Gli ultimi poeti* assegna a Giudici (e a Zanzotto) il ruolo di una cesura storica nell'evoluzione dei rapporti tra poesia e società. Per lo studioso romano i due poeti sarebbero gli ultimi ai quali, per via della mutazione della funzione della tradizione letteraria nella pedagogia, (particolarmente delle classi medie) sarebbe stato possibile fare della poesia una chiave di mediazione universale dell'esistenza sociale[51]. In particolare Giudici riuscirebbe in questo processo grazie alla maschera di impiegato (e pensionato) costruita negli anni e alla ricerca e perfezionamento del tono dimesso-sublime che, in forme diverse, contraddistingue la sua intera produzione. Si tratterebbe dunque, per questo autore, più di un tecnicismo come vocazione, che di un tecnicismo come specializzazione, quale si mostra invece nelle generazioni più giovani; una "religione della parola", come l'ha chiamata Alessandro Di Prima[52], che si affianca alla "religione della storia".

Sebbene queste argomentazioni siano evidentemente condivisibili, tuttavia nell'ultima stagione di Giudici, comprendente i libri *Quanto spera*

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[49] G. Giudici, *Carriera da copywriter*, in *La dama non cercata*, cit., p. 145.
[50] F. Fortini, G. Giudici, *Carteggio*, cit., p. 144.
[51] Cfr. G. Ferroni, *Gli ultimi poeti, Giovanni Giudici e Andrea Zanzotto*, Il Saggiatore, Milano 2013, pp. 33-42.
[52] A. Di Prima, *L'eresia di un'empia speranza. La poesia di Giovanni Giudici (1993-1999)*, Sciascia, Caltanissetta 2010, p. 230.

di campare Giovanni, *Empie stelle*, *Eresia della sera*, sembra si profili una nuova istituzione del nesso tra teologia e politica, non solo perché significativamente la sezione di apertura dell'ultimo libro si intitola *Frammenti dal comunismo*, ma perché nelle ultime raccolte ciò che era analisi sociale e rappresentazione di una specifica condizione lavorativa aspira a divenire universale.

Considerando, ad esempio, la poesia *Brevi lucignoli*, che apre la trilogia di raccolte, si nota come venga accampata subito la domanda chiave "Quale importanza dare|alla piccola storia individuale"[53] poi accostata a una rappresentazione della dialettica all'opera nel quotidiano dove falsa coscienza e subordinazione continuano ad essere gli elementi distintivi dell'esistenza:

> Il più diventa il meno e questo il più
> il no è l'affermativo.
>
> Così mentiscono in questa
> Inevitabile algebra i negozi quotidiani
> Il far l'amore uccidere e rubare
> E adorare gli idoli e sperare
> Speranze non nostre e pensieri di schiavi
> Pensando che ci dicono liberi.[54]

Ora però a questo polo di assoluta negatività che è il quotidiano non si oppone più un tempo interno alla storia, ma un tempo esterno, una negazione della storia e della biografia che invece sono ancora intimamente connesse (si prenda ad esempio la poesia *1989*, ma in generale vale per tutto *Quanto spera di campare Giovanni*).

Il tempo in questione diventa così un tempo dell'attesa, *Il tempo che resta* secondo un titolo di sezione, e la centralità della teologia e dell'escatologia cristiana, di Sant'Agostino e Dante, è stata giustamente messa in evidenza[55]. La metamorfosi della maschera da impiegato a pensionato appare allora tanto naturale quanto la vocazione stessa: da un lato essa è, secondo la linea di Ferroni, il terreno minimo comune tra sé e il lettore che Giudici conserva, dall'altro essa è figura dell'attesa e di per sé immagine del mutamento come nella poesia eponima del libro.

Qualcosa che arricchisce e scombina questa linearità si manifesta quando la maschera individuale è posta a confronto con una alterità (e una collettività sullo sfondo) e la quotidianità negativa non viene rappre-

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[53] G. Giudici, *I versi della vita*, cit., p. 923.
[54] *Ibidem*
[55] A. Di Prima, op. cit., pp. 33-35.

sentata sul piano di una lirica metafisica, che pure nell'ultimo Giudici è presente, soprattutto nelle raccolte finali[56], ma in quello di una poesia descrittiva e seminarrativa.

Si prendano ad esempio alcuni versi del poemetto *Sotto il Vòlto*

> I
> […]
> Un uomo vecchio non è che una misera cosa
> Albero spoglio del suo vanto – uscire
> Al quotidiano ufficio rincasare
> Reduce di pensosi negozi:
> Dunque non troppe domande povero caro
> Lasciatelo cogitare – lui solo
> Sa ciò che è giusto
> […] macché poeta e poeta!
> Risciacquo i piatti, ti aiuto a piegare un lenzuolo
> La colpa è mia se non combacia agli orli
>
> III
> […]
> Avessi io gli atti infiniti
> Del tuo lavoro a castigare la mia boria
> «Io non sto bene ancora, non starò
> Mai più bene» – è tardi per entrare
> Dentro ogni gesto tuo di quarant'anni
> Dove fu amore vero il trafficare
> Ad accudirmi a farmi cena e pranzo
> Tenuti a bada i figli per lasciarmi recitare
> A me stesso una vita di romanzo
> […]
> Vecchia moglie spremuta
> Che interrogavi la tua angoscia muta:
> Perché fossero mie
> Tutte le tue poesie.[57]

Qui la poesia non è più solo immagine di integrità risarcitoria e linguaggio paraliturgico dell'attesa, ma svela il suo lato di rituale sociale, la sua antitesi, all'esistenza quotidiana che anche l'*artifex* conduce: "macché poeta e poeta!|Risciacquo i piatti, ti aiuto a piegare un lenzuolo|La colpa è mia se non combacia agli orli" e anzi essa implica, quanto più persegue una condizione di separatezza dalla materialità opprimente, l'esistenza di

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[56] Cfr. Zucco, *Teatro del perdono* cit. e C. Ossola, *Giovanni Giudici, L'anima e il nome*, in *I Versi della vita*, cit. pp. XI-XLIII.
[57] G. Giudici, *I versi della vita*, cit., pp. 981-983.

una altrettanto quotidiana oppressione subita dagli esclusi dall'operazione poetica (la moglie in questo caso), i quali tentano di appropriarsi dei modi e delle forme della poesia anche se ipostatizzate seguendo vecchi miti: "Lasciatelo cogitare poverino||lui solo sa ciò che è giusto…".

Se gli esclusi dall'operazione poetica manifestano un desiderio di appropriazione legato però a schemi che non corrispondo più (o non hanno mai corrisposto in quanto ideologie estetiche) alle condizioni reali di produzione della poesia, appunto quelli individualistico-romantici del poeta come mente eletta e incomprensibile, anche se, bisogna dirlo, in questo caso con un misto di ammirazione e compassione ironica dato dal "poverino", l'*artifex* stesso è invece maggiormente consapevole e infatti il portone alzato dai due operai (uno volontario) della seconda sezione, gli appare in esplicita antitesi con il proprio lavoro poetico, di essi dice: "Dal profondo di secoli vivranno||Per nuove mani d'opere venture||"[58]. La sopravvivenza qui e persino l'eternità sono, verrebbe da dire, materialisticamente intese e la possibilità per l'artefice poeta di raggiungere un risultato analogo è invece scarsa, la sua tensione si configura come "boria" che deve essere "castigata" dal lavoro. È la rappresentazione di una doppia separazione: da un lato moglie e operai che si trasferiscono nel lavoro e in esso, anonimamente, sopravvivono e che sperano di attingere al significato della creazione poetica (nel caso della moglie immaginato tutto interno alla biografia e alla vita interiore del marito), dall'altro il poeta che vorrebbe invece vivere nell'autenticità della lingua poetica, ma che nei fatti conduce, anche un po' goffamente, una vita quotidiana ordinaria o recita "una vita da romanzo". Sotto la superficie della lirica autobiografica e privata sono qui ancora poste in scena mutilazioni della personalità e la dimensione universale è raggiunta, più che nella divinizzazione del linguaggio poetico e dell'ispirazione, in quella compassione che il poeta vuole muovere per se stesso e per le altre piccole storie individuali che nella storia universale si manifestano.

Possiamo dunque dire che se la rappresentazione estetica del quotidiano nella poesia di Giudici non può avere mai del tutto quel potere risarcitorio che pure l'autore in qualche passaggio avrebbe voluto attribuirle e nemmeno, come almeno agli inizi dovette essergli sembrato, un potere diretto di significazione politica[59]; resta però vero che i cortocircuiti rappresentativi generati dalla poesia permettono di verificare, anche in un orizzonte che sembrerebbe pacificato, il permanere di contraddizioni che rimandano sempre, *al di fuori della lingua*, e che dunque la teologia

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[58] *Ibidem.*
[59] La prima raccolta organica pensata da Giudici, dal titolo *Il Benessere*, era infatti un esperimento brechtiano ricco di citazioni e imitazioni dal poeta di Augsburg, il cartone preparatorio si legge, a cura di R. Zucco, in *Prove di vita in versi*, cit.

utilizzata per leggerle, per quanto "piccola e brutta"[60], non potrà essere nascosta: il quotidiano della vita trasposta in versi non occulta dunque, ma svela l'orizzonte della totalità.

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[60] G. Giudici, *La teologia è piccola e brutta*, in *La letteratura verso Hiroshima*, cit. Si tratta, come è noto, di un richiamo a *Sul concetto di storia* di Walter Benjamin.

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Quotidianità e alienazione nella poetica di Giovanni Giudici
Everyday life and alienation in the poetic of Giovanni Giudici

The article analyses the development of Giovanni Giudici's poetic theories and his own poetical works. In his poetry the representation of an alienated everyday life tends to be not only a superficial topic but the specific term of comparison between theorisation and practice.

Starting with his first book *La vita in versi* the exposition combines essays from the two collections *La letteratura verso Hiroshima* and *La dama non cercata* with poems and letters to show the different meaning assumed by the poetic description of an ordinary life (as a employed or as a retired old man). Finally the emergence, from late Seventies on, of a spiritualised idea of poetry seen as capable of expressing human integrity against oppression is criticised by showing that Giudici is aware, in his last poems, of the contradiction between the public and collective image of the poet as a special individual and the concrete condition of his life and of poetry as a work rather than a vocation.

KEYWORDS: Giudici, alienation, poetry, theology, dialectic.

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Between Repetition and Occasion.
A Gadamerian Contribution to Everyday Aesthetics

1. Introduction

According to the traditional reading of Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophy, his aesthetics is based on an ontological concept of "image" as the emanation of the original, inherited from Neoplatonic philosophy[1]: a concept that has been accused of classicism and considered incapable of accounting for contemporary aesthetic phenomena, such as installations or Body Art[2]. In reality, it is possible to show a different Gadamerian paradigm that conceptualizes the aesthetic phenomenon, not as an object but rather as a practice, a path opened by the concept of "play" inaugurated by Gadamer's *Truth and Method* (1960) and developed in his subsequent essays[3]. Based on this, and on a reassessment of hermeneutics in a dialogue with "pragmatist aesthetics"[4], it is possible to rethink Gadamer's aesthetics as a philosophy of interaction, that is capable

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[1] See TM 141. On this point, see the relevant works of J. Grondin, *The Universality of Hermeneutic Understanding. The Strong, Somewhat Metaphysical Conclusion of Truth and Method*, in *The Gadamerian Mind*, ed. by T. George, G.-H. van der Heiden, Routledge, London 2021, pp. 24-36.
[2] See, among others, the strong critique of J.D. Caputo, *Radical Hermeneutics: Repetition, Deconstruction and the Hermeneutic Project*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 1987. In contrast, Cynthia Nielsen stressed the relevance of Gadamer for the phenomena of Jazz: C.R. Nielsen, *Gadamer and the Event of Art, the Other, and a Gesture Toward a Gadamerian Approach to Free Jazz*, in "Journal of Applied Hermeneutics" March 2016, https://doi.org/10.11575/jah.v0i0.53277.
[3] For a different paradigm of Gadamer's aesthetics see C.R. Nielsen, *Gadamer's Hermeneutical Aesthetics. Art as a Performative, Dynamic, Communal Event*, Routledge, New York-London 2022. For a conception of art as human praxis, see G.W. Bertram, *Kunst als menschliche Praxis. Eine Ästhetik*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M. 2014, transl. by N. Ross, *Art as Human Praxis. An Aesthetics*, Bloomsbury, New York 2019.
[4] Here, I cannot delve into this argument; I have stated this thesis in E. Romagnoli, *From a Remote Pedestal to Everyday Life. The Social Role of Art in Gadamer and Dewey*, in "European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy", 14, 1, 2022, https://journals.openedition.org/ejpap/2760.

of taking into account not only contemporary artistic phenomena but also extra-artistic aesthetic experiences. My intention is to show how, thus reconsidered, Gadamer's aesthetics can contribute to solving some pressing questions of *Everyday Aesthetics*, by leveraging Gadamer's anti-exceptionalist views towards a continuistic conception of artistic phenomena and everyday life.

Gadamer criticized the outcomes of the "aesthetic consciousness"[5] which originated in post-Kantian philosophy and then grew into the aestheticism of contemporary aesthetics, blamed for operating by "aesthetic differentiation", i.e., in abstraction from any connection with reality, giving rise to the musealization of art[6]. Contrary to this, Gadamer works out a *continuistic* aesthetics, against the separation and abstraction of artistic experience from everyday life, related to connection and continuity with social human lives. Against the monadic temporal suspension of the common life of the spectator, as operated by the aesthetic consciousness, Gadamer recalls indeed that "a spectator's ecstatic self-forgetfulness corresponds to his continuity with himself. Precisely that in which one loses oneself as a spectator demands that one grasp the continuity of meaning"[7]. By leveraging such continuity, hermeneutics can be redirected towards everyday life, in consideration of aesthetic phenomena of ordinary experiences. A path not explicit in Gadamer's reflection, but one that contemporary hermeneutics can fruitfully walk on.

Without any presumption of exhaustivity, I will try to point to a possible path for hermeneutics in the context of *Everyday Aesthetics*. First of all, I will explain in which sense Gadamer's philosophy can support the "expansive" approach of this branch. Then, I will analyse the contribution provided to everyday aesthetics by the two concepts of "repetition" and "occasion"[8], starting with Gadamer fundamental retrieval of occasional and decorative arts against a conception of art as the product of artistic genius and recalling the social continuity of aesthetic experiences: the mutual dynamic of repetition and occasion can properly describe ordinary aesthetics phenomena.

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[5] TM 81 ff.

[6] TM 79 ff. A point also developed by J. Dewey, *Art as Experience*, 1934, in *The Later Works*, vol. 10, ed. by J. Ann Boydston, Southern Illinois University Press, Carbondale-Edwardsville 2008², pp. 12-18. See also R. Dreon*, La «distinción de lo estético» en clave pragmatista. Dewey, Gadamer y la antropología de la cultura*, in *John Dewey: una estética de este mundo*, ed. by L. Arenas, R. del Castillo, Á. M. Faerna, Prensas De La Universidad De Zaragoza, Zaragoza 2018, pp. 213-233.

[7] TM 130

[8] Of course, these concepts could be considered in an exceptionalist way that places emphasis on the concept of sacred art as the dominant paradigm. However, I claim that in Gadamer's work there is the possibility of a different consideration, something that goes in the direction of pragmatist aesthetics.

2. Gadamer's Aesthetics and the Expansive Approach

As is known, *Everyday Aesthetics* is a line of enquiries of contemporary aesthetics that was born out of the work of Katya Mandoki, Yuriko Saito and Thomas Leddy[9] in the early 2000s, in the Anglo-American tradition, and was then taken up in the context of Northern European philosophy (especially the Finnish one). Currently, *Everyday Aesthetics* is consistently attracting aesthetic reflections: this does not only imply an extension of the possibilities of aesthetics as a discipline, but also (and above all) a rethinking of the social role of such aesthetic phenomena, which touch the lives of individuals in a 'horizontal' sense and can therefore lead to ethical and political considerations[10].

Everyday Aesthetics refers, more or less critically, to John Dewey's aesthetics, as well as to Richard Shusterman's questioning of the separation between the high arts and the popular arts[11], and aims to broaden the concept of aesthetics in order to question the separation between the sphere of art and the everyday sphere, traditionally considered unworthy of philosophical examination. As of today, this field of study includes very heterogeneous positions and knows no accurate boundaries, as Elisabetta Di Stefano aptly highlighted[12]. I am interested in showing how rethinking Gadamer's aesthetics towards a processual understanding of art may allow us to show Gadamer's potential contribution to this aesthetic strand, by accepting the *desideratum* of providing *Everyday Aesthetics*, which originated in the American milieu, with a solid rooting in the categories of the so called Continental European tradition[13]. In this direction, it is possible to highlight the centrality of Gadamer's aesthetics as a philosophy of continuity with anti-elitist overtones, capable of being developed in an anti-exceptionalist direction.

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[9] See K. Mandoki, *Everyday Aesthetics: Prosaics, the Play of Culture, and Social Identities*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2007; Y. Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford-New York 2007; T. Leddy, *Everyday Surface Aesthetic Qualities: "Neat", "Messy", "Clean", "Dirty"*, in "The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism», 53, 3, 1995, pp. 259-268, and T. Leddy, *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary: The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, Broadview Press, Peterborough 2012.

[10] See A. Berleant, *Ideas for a Social Aesthetic*, in *Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, ed. by A. Light, J.M. Smith, *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, Columbia University Press, New York 2005, pp. 23-38.

[11] See J. Dewey, *Art as Experience*, and R. Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics. Living Beauty, Rethinking Art*, Second Edition, Rowman and Littlefield, New York 2012, pp. 139-235.

[12] See E. Di Stefano, *Che cos'è l'estetica quotidiana*, Carocci, Roma 2017, pp. 11-35.

[13] See G.L. Iannilli, G. Matteucci, *Modes of Experience: Everyday Aesthetics between Erlebnis, Erfahrung, and Lebenswelt*, in "The Slovak Journal of Aesthetics", 10, 2, 2021, pp. 39-55: pp. 50 ff. Despite the two authors taking a critical perspective towards hermeneutics, and in particular towards Gadamer's development of the concept of *Erlebnis*.

In particular, Gadamer's aesthetics could contribute to the "expansive" approach of the *Everyday Aesthetics*, which differs from the "reductive" approach[14] in that it aims to extend aesthetics to everyday experiences by finding "the extraordinary in the ordinary", as Leddy[15] suggestively defined it. As Giovanni Matteucci points out[16], the reductive approach, on the other hand, postulates a discontinuity between artistic and everyday aesthetic phenomena and rejects the adoption of categories traditionally employed for the Great art, thus entailing a *dualistic* treatment of aesthetics, which should deal with two distinct domains: that of art and that of everyday life. On the contrary, the expansive approach considers it appropriate to apply the same aesthetic categories to both cases, precisely because of the *continuity* between everyday phenomena and art. The reference to the everyday, however, does not hint at the typical aesthetization of aestheticism – i.e. making everything a work of art – which Gadamer explicitly criticized. It would be rather a sort of "aesthetic egalitarianism"[17], according to Matteucci's claim: "The other continuistic option is that of considering art as an accentuation and intensification of aesthetic elements already operative in common experience, thus making a Copernican revolution of the system of relations between the world of art and everyday life"[18].

The expansive approach of *Everyday Aesthetics* fits in well with the reassessment of Gadamer's aesthetics as interaction and performance: indeed "the encroachments between art and life that characterise contemporary performance practices make it plausible to use the conceptual System of art also for *Everyday Aesthetics*"[19]. In fact, for Gadamer, aes-

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[14] On the former, see T. Leddy, *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary*, and C. Dowling, *The Aesthetics of Daily Life*, in "British Journal of Aesthetics", 50, 3, 2010, pp. 225-242; on the latter, see Y. Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, Oxford University Press, Oxford-New York 2007, A. Haapala, *On the Aesthetics of the Everyday: Familiarity, Strangeness, and the Meaning of Place*, in *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, ed. by A. Light, J. M. Smith, Columbia University Press, New York 2005, pp. 39–55, and K. Melchionne, *The Point of Everyday Aesthetics*, "Contemporary Aesthetics", 11, 2014, https://contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=700&searchstr=melchionne. In particular, Haapala is strongly influenced by Heidegger's philosophy, stressing the concepts of familiarity and identity of places. For an overview of the panorama of studies in *Everyday Aesthetics*, see G.L. Iannilli, *Everyday Aesthetics*, in "International Lexicon of Aesthetics", Autumn 2018, https://lexicon.mimesisjournals.com/archive/2018/autumn/EverydayAesthetics.

[15] See T. Leddy, *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary*.

[16] See G. Matteucci, *The Aesthetic as a Matter of Practices: Form of Life in Everydayness and Art*, in "Comprendre", 18, 2, 2016, pp. 9-28.

[17] Ivi, p. 13

[18] Ivi, p. 13.

[19] See Di Stefano, *Che cos'è l'estetica quotidiana*, p. 32. In this direction Dowling affirmed that "it seems that my recommending a particular meal (a token of which I have just consumed) is no more problematic than my recommending you attend tonight's performance of La *Bohème* based on my assessment of the sounds that have long died away after last night's performance. While there are clearly some interesting issues to investigate in this

thetic experience is not limited to the work of art as an object opposed to a subject, but is rather reconceptualized as a living and dynamic human activity, in continuity with ordinary experience: "The identity of the work is not guaranteed by any classical or formalist criteria, but is secured by the way in which we take the construction of the work upon ourselves as a task"[20]. In particular, this emerges in the conception of art as a play, based on presentation [*Darstellung*], and, moreover, on the assumption that "all presentation is potentially a representation for someone. That this possibility is intended is the characteristic feature of art as play"[21]. This implies, then, a movement and an interaction between audience and public: "Basically the difference between the player and the spectator is here superseded. The requirement that the play itself be intended in its meaningfulness is the same for both"[22]. The unity of the work lies only in its unceasing motion: "It is quite wrong to think that the unity of the work implies that the work is closed off from the person who turns to it or is affected by it"[23]. In contrast with a dimension of the work of art as an object, Gadamer explicitly stated: "The work of art is precisely not the product that is finished when the artist's work on it is done. Also, the art-work is not at all an object that one can approach with a measuring tape in one's hand"[24]. The emphasis on the dimension of movement and inter-action at the basis of Gadamer's aesthetics makes it possible to thematise as aesthetic not only specific objects of everyday life (e.g. design objects), but also practices or activities, such as watering flowers or tasting a wine.

Everyday Aesthetics draws on Dewey's philosophical continuism[25] according to which every experience has an aesthetic aspect making it

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domain, I see no reason to cast an adequate art-centred aesthetic as too restrictive to accommodate the multi-sensory nature of some everyday aesthetic experiences [C. Dowling, *The Aesthetics of Daily Life*, p. 237]". Barbara Formis also drew attention to the link between *Everyday Aesthetics* and the performing arts in B. Formis, *Estétique de la vie ordinaire*, PUF, Paris 2010.

[20] H.-G. Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful. Art as Play, Symbol and Festival*, in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays,* ed. by R. Bernasconi, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, pp. 3-53: p. 28.

[21] TM 113.

[22] TM 114.

[23] H.-G. Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, p. 25.

[24] H.-G. Gadamer, *The Artwork in Word and Image: "So True, So Full of Being!"*, in *The Gadamer Reader. A Bouquet of the Later Writings*, ed. by R.E. Palmer, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, Illinois 2007, pp. 192-226: p. 214.

[25] See K. Puolakka, *Dewey and Everyday Aesthetics. A New Look*, in "Contemporary Aesthetics", 12, 2014, https://digitalcommons.risd.edu/liberalarts_contempaesthetics/vol12/iss1/18/; G.L. Iannilli, *L'estetico e il quotidiano. Design, Everyday Aesthetics*, Mimesis, Milano-Udine 2019; T. Leddy, *A Deweyan Approach to the Dilemma of Everyday Aesthetics*, in "European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy", 13, 1, 2021, https://journals.openedition.org/ejpap/2273.

integral, even though a difference exists between ordinary experience and proper aesthetic experience Similarly, Gadamer's aesthetics also has a continuistic and integral conception at its core: the essays that followed *Truth and Method*, in particular *The Relevance of the Beautiful. Art as Play, Symbol and Festival* (1975), stress the continuity between the ordinary experience of human beings and aesthetic experience. This emerges in the concept of play[26] that acts as the *trait d'union* between the human world and the natural world, although in human it takes on a peculiar perfection that leads it precisely to become an artwork. In *The Play of Art* (1977), Gadamer explicitly claimed: "If we wish to avoid the interpretative framework of the dogmatic Cartesian philosophy of self-consciousness, it seems to me methodologically advisable to seek out just such transitional phenomena [*Übergangsphänomene*] between human and animal life"[27]. Play represents the aesthetic experience *qua* relational, which is identified as properly artistic when performed for a spectator: a common trait connects everyday and artistic experience. By leveraging such aspect, hermeneutics may be directed towards the aesthetics of the everyday, as opposed to the dualistic tendency of the reductive approach, which proposes the same dualism that traditional aesthetics defended, by separating the Great art from common phenomena. Only a relational and continuistic perspective can account for the social bearing of aesthetics, bringing together the arts and the aesthetic phenomena that every individual can enjoy in everyday life.

One should note that Dan Eugen Ratiu had already referred to Gadamer's philosophy in an expansive direction, in order to develop *Everyday Aesthetics* as "practical" aesthetics. Ratiu has focused on the link between Gadamer's practical philosophy and Aristotle's *phronesis*, referring to concepts taken from the humanistic tradition (*Bildung*, judgment, *sensus communis*, and taste)[28] in order to construct a relational conception of aesthetics. He aims at stressing the concept of human life "as a whole", meant as the totality of private and public experience at the basis of ordinary life: "It means that the discreteness of experiences or aspects of life is preserved in the 'hermeneutic continuity of human existence', for the experiencing self is structured as a 'unity in division

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[26] See TM 106-114.
[27] H.-G. Gadamer, *The Play of Art*, in *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, ed. by R. Bernasconi, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998, pp. 123-130: p. 125. See also H.-G. Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, p. 23.
[28] D.E. Ratiu, *Everyday Aesthetic Experience: Exploration by a Practical Aesthetics*, in C. Friberg, R. Vasquez (ed. by), *Experiencing the Everyday*, NSU Press, Copenhagen 2017, pp. 22–52, pp. 32 ff. See also D.E. Ratiu, *Remapping the Realm of Aesthetics: On Recent Controversies about the Aesthetic and Aesthetic Experience in Everyday Life*, in "Estetika: The Central European Journal of Aesthetics", 50 / 6, 1, 2013, pp. 3–26.

and articulation' in terms of Gadamer"[29]. Ratiu has then drawn attention to the fundamental concepts of *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung* for a redefinition of experience within *Everyday Aesthetics*, in particular in contrast to the "monadic-isolation premise" embraced by a the line of enquiry in Everyday aesthetics (Määttänen; Mandoki)[30] that considers "everyday aesthetic life as a mere *private* world in absolute discontinuity with the *public* world[31] (not only the art-world, but also other forms of public everyday aesthetic experience) and thus ignoring or neglecting its intersubjective dimension"[32].

While agreeing with Ratiu's assumptions, I consider promising here focusing on the Gadamerian concepts of repetition and occasion, which emerge from an interpretation of Gadamer's aesthetics as interaction[33], highlighting the contribution these can make to the expansive approach of *Everyday Aesthetics*. Indeed, while it is true that *Everyday Aesthetics* must include some traditionally excluded aesthetic phenomena that are nonetheless worthy of constituting aesthetic experiences, this does not imply that every human activity (e.g. doing the laundry or feeding the cat) should be considered an aesthetic phenomenon, as Di Stefano rightly points out[34]. A distinction must therefore be made between aesthetic phenomena and merely insignificant and banal phenomena, from an aesthetic point of view: as Leddy highlighted, this is a distinction between things in everyday life that are made special through actions or in our perception, and things that are not[35]. From this perspective, the dynamic of repetition and occasion, which Gadamer develops in relation to artistic practices, can also be adequately applied to common experiences.

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[29] D.E. Ratiu, *Everyday Aesthetic Experience*, p. 37.
[30] K. Mandoki, *Everyday Aesthetics: Prosaics, the Play of Culture, and Social Identities*, Ashgate, Aldershot 2007; P. Määttänen, *Aesthetics of Movement and Everyday Aesthetics*, in "Contemporary Aesthetics" 1, 2005, https://digitalcommons.risd.edu/liberalarts_contempaesthetics/vol0/iss1/5.
[31] D.E. Ratiu, *Everyday Aesthetic Experience*, p. 37.
[32] Ivi, p. 38.
[33] D.E. Ratiu, *Everyday Aesthetic Experience*, p. 40. Concerning the conceptual couple *Erlebnis-Erfahrung* as worked out by Dilthey and developed with reference to *Everyday Aesthetics*, see B. Highmore, *Ordinary Lives. Studies in the Everyday*, Routledge, London 2011, pp. 65-70.
[34] See E. Di Stefano, *Che cos'è l'estetica quotidiana*, p. 33. See P. Rautio, *On Hanging Laundry: The Place of Beauty in Managing Everyday Aesthetics*, in "Contemporary Aesthetics", 7 2009, https://digitalcommons.risd.edu/liberalarts_contempaesthetics/vol7/iss1/7/.
[35] Leddy, *The Extraordinary in the Ordinary*, p. 76.

3. Repetition and Uniqueness

Repetition underlies everyday activities: what distinguishes between an exceptional phenomenon and an ordinary one would be its unique and non-repeatable character. However, Gadamer's aesthetic conception is underpinned by the consideration that the aesthetic phenomenon is unique and at the same time always repeatable. An event is always iterable without this leading to a loss of its distinctive aesthetic character: that is, the dimension of repetition is not limited to the sphere of what is common and becomes mere routine, which underlies aesthetic events, as in the case of the "festival", understood as an emblem of art[36].

Gadamer interprets art as iterability: that is to say, as a phenomenon that repeats itself identically while, paradoxically, being different each time. This reading of art also allows us to show how the Gadamerian conception fits into the aesthetic debate of the twentieth century: Gadamer's concept of "festival"[37] allows us to highlight the iterable character of art, which implies its being intrinsically temporal and therefore changing, and its having a social character, its ability to gather a community. Already in the pages of *Truth and Method*, and then in *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, Gadamer refers to the presentation of the work of art as a presentation of a "structure [*Gebilde*]" that remains identical, a fact that allows us to identify that work as a specific work of art[38]. However, each presentation of such work is different from the others: "Here 'repetition [*Wierderholung*]' does not mean that something is literally repeated – i.e., can be reduced to something original. Rather, every repetition is as original as the work itself"[39]. The intrinsic temporality of aesthetic phenomena is expressed by Gadamer with reference to the concept of festival, especially in the case of periodic festivals: the main quality of a festival is that it exists only in its "being celebrated"[40]. The distinctive feature of a celebration is that it changes over time, while remaining identical: for example, the celebration of the 14th July commemorates the same unique

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[36] This concept is referred to the temporal continuity of art, as opposed to "aesthetic consciousness": "It is precisely continuity that every understanding of time has to achieve, even when it is a question of the temporality of a work of art [TM 125]".

[37] On the Gadamerian conception of the festival, see J. Grondin, *Play, Festival and Ritual in Gadamer. On the Theme of the Immemorial in his Later Works*, in *Language and Linguisticality in Gadamer's Hermeneutics*, ed. by L.K. Schmidt, Lexington Books, Lanham 2001, pp. 43-50; N. Keane, *The Temporality of Artwork and Festival and the Temporality of the Cosmos: Gadamer's Reflections on Time and Eternity*, in "Continental Philosophy Review", 55, 2022, pp. 335-351, and I. Scheibler, *Art as Festival in Heidegger and Gadamer*, in "International Journal of Philosophical Studies", 9, 2, 2022, pp. 151-175.

[38] TM 115. See also TM 120.

[39] TM 126.

[40] TM 121.

event, the Storming of the Bastille in 1789, but every year the festival is differently repeated (as we experienced during the pandemic, when our way of celebrating dramatically changed).

On this basis, Gadamer claimed that the original essence of celebration is that "thus its own original essence is always to be something different (even when celebrated in exactly the same way)"[41]. With reference to the Aristotelian conception, he also emphasises that an entity which is continuously different from itself is temporal in the highest degree: "An entity that exists only by always being something different is temporal in a more radical sense than everything that belongs to history. It has its being only in becoming and return"[42]. This reading of the festival as an emblem of the work of art shows that the latter has its essence in movement and becoming, as opposed to a conception of the work as a static and definitively fixed product. This changing character, however, does not imply that the work of art is devoid of a unifying criterion and is open to any alteration whatsoever: "A festival exists only in being celebrated. This is not to say that it is of a subjective character and has its being only in the subjectivity of those celebrating it. Rather, the festival is celebrated because it is there"[43]. It is between these two extremes – fixity on the one hand and total openness on the other – that Gadamer's aesthetics moves, and finds a convincing solution: art is an iterability that refers to a form.

Gadamer's reference to the festival should not be understood in the sense of exceptionalism, but on the contrary as the conception of a phenomenon resting on social grounds, a collective event shared by the community that breaks with the merely isolationist reading of aesthetic experience. Certainly, the festival could be understood in relation to a sacred paradigm that breaks from ordinary life[44]. However, it is possible to leverage a different reading of the festival, based on the central role played by its continuity with the lives of the participants, as opposed to a paradigm of art based on the model of the creation by the artistic genius, "the aesthetic myth of freely creative imagination"[45], as Gadamer has frequently stressed. In this direction, the festival should be understood as an anti-exceptionalist conception, stressing the continuity and social value of art: "However much the tragic play performed solemnly in the theatre presents an exceptional situation in everyone's life, it is not an experience

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[41] TM 126.
[42] *Ibidem*.
[43] *Ibidem*.
[44] The sacred paradigm of the festival is partly present in the Gadamerian reading, which certainly has an ontological aim, as it emerges in the pages of *Truth and Method* dealing with the sacred image. See also an essay, strongly influenced by Heidegger, H.-G. Gadamer, *Über leere und erfüllte Zeit*, in GW IV, pp. 137-153.
[45] TM 134.

of an adventure producing a temporary intoxication from which one re-awakens to one's true being; instead, the elevation and strong emotion that seize the spectator in fact deepen his *continuity with himself*"[46].

The social and horizontal nature of the festival has been remarked by Gadamer, who stated that "a festival is an experience of community and represents community in its most perfect form. A festival is meant for everyone"[47], as well as by Shusterman whose early writings were also deeply influenced by Gadamerian philosophy[48]. In his review of the English translation of Gadamer's essays, *The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays*, Shusterman points out that for Gadamer there is a connection between hight arts and popular arts, thus exposing the social undercurrents of Gadamer's reflections, and defining Gadamer as "always a proponent of unity and continuity"[49] who, in the concepts of play, symbol and celebration, looks for a possible answer to the role of art. Shusterman identifies play as the anthropological component of Gadamer's philosophy, as well as the basis for the possibility of rethinking the relationship between the work of art and the public; the symbol stands for the impossibility to equate and reduce the work of art to the merely conceptual; the festival instead shows the collective and communitarian dimension of the work of art. Namely, "Gadamer does not try to show how art as commonly understood (i.e. the art of high culture) is meant for everyone, which it is obviously not. He instead challenges the view that 'our art is simply that of the ruling class' by treating mass media entertainment as art"[50].

Carsten Friberg too highlighted this element in order to show a mutual influence between hermeneutics and *Everyday Aesthetics*, regarded as two separate approaches to aesthetic phenomena. Though along a different route (he stresses the relevance of knowledge as a potential contribution of hermeneutics to *Everyday Aesthetics*), he also agrees that the reference to the festival is a social element: "To follow Gadamer, the artist now creates a community. While the religious festival intended a universal community, and some artistic ambitions of the avantgarde did likewise for a political community, this is also a characteristic we can apply in moderate forms, such as the props of a music festival and a subcultural community. Aesthetics is not about the content of the interpretation, but

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[46] TM 134.
[47] Gadamer, *The Relevance of the Beautiful*, p. 39.
[48] See R. Shusterman, *T.S. Eliot and the Philosophy of Criticism*, Columbia University Press, New York 1988. On the influence of Gadamer on Shusterman's philosophy, see A. Kremer, *Art as Experience: Gadamer and Pragmatist Aesthetics*, in *Aesthetics Experience and Somaesthetics*, ed. by R. Shusterman, Brill, Leiden-Boston 2018, pp. 43-55.
[49] *Review of "The Relevance of the Beautiful and Other Essays"*, in "History of European Ideas", 9, 6, 1988, pp. 751-752, p. 751.
[50] Ivi, p. 752.

about the means of it"[51]. On this basis, he can state that "hence, the exception to the everyday does not rule out aesthetic dimensions of ordinary artefacts and situations. However, the interest in the exceptional is emphasized when a visit to the art museum can be said to change our views"[52]. I claim that the fact that "the hermeneutic perspective does not exclude more trivial examples of the everyday, it just takes more interest in the significant moments"[53] could be highlighted by the mutual dynamics of repetition (on the basis of the festival) and occasion, as I will show.

On this basis, there is in Gadamer the attribution of a social character to the repetition of celebration and art in general that can also apply to the ordinary aesthetic experience. Repetition does not entail a "loss of aura"[54] or a weakening of the phenomenon's relevance; on the contrary, Gadamer's reflection manages to hold together the essence of the phenomenon in its dynamic of iterability and uniqueness. Repetition is a concept that can account for both artistic phenomena – such as the performance of a play, whose representation and thus repetition is identical and different each time – and everyday phenomena with aesthetic elements, such as drinking coffee every day at the same café, where, however, we can taste always new nuances of flavour, for example depending on our mood or on the atmosphere we feel around the other customers. It is obvious, however, that not every self-repeating phenomenon can be considered aesthetic, which is partly why we need to identify a normative criterion in *Everyday Aesthetics* to prevent phenomena that we would certainly regard as non-aesthetic from being included into it. The concept of occasion, little emphasized in the context of Gadamerian studies, can provide valuable help in this sense.

4. The Reappraisal of Decorative Arts and the Concept of Occasion

That being said, there is an anti-exceptionalist view of aesthetic phenomena at the core of the concept of repetition. However, what distinguishes repetition from mere meaningless routine, which is typical of actions that we would certainly not define as aesthetic, is precisely the *occasion*, a concept that Gadamer employs in *Truth and Method* to refer to the specific situation in which each work of art is placed. In particular,

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[51] C. Friberg, *Everyday Aesthetics and Philosophical Hermeneutics*, in "The Slovak Journal of Aesthetics", 10, 2, 2021, p. 106.
[52] Ivi, p. 107.
[53] *Ibidem*.
[54] On this point, the Gadamerian conception would agree with T. Leddy, *Experience of Awe: An Expansive Approach to Everyday Aesthetics*, "Contemporary Aesthetics", 13, 2015, https://digitalcommons.risd.edu/liberalarts_contempaesthetics/vol10/iss1/8/.

this reflection takes its cue from the reappraisal of the decorative arts and the so-called "occasional" arts, showing how the criterion of occasionality joins both the performing arts and figurative arts, as well as decoration and simple ornamentation[55]. Gadamer develops such argument as a critique of the aesthetic differentiation and musealisation of art, as well as the cult of the artistic genius: "If we begin with the fact that the work of art cannot be understood in terms of 'aesthetic consciousness', then many phenomena of *marginal importance* to modern aesthetics become less problematical and, indeed, even move into the centre of an 'aesthetic' questioning that is not artificially truncated"[56].

While Gadamer's reference in those pages of *Truth and Method* was limited to the sphere of art, such a conception has the potential to account for extra-artistic aesthetic phenomena as well. Far from being an extrinsic and totally accessory phenomenon, the occasion characterises aesthetic experience in its essence: the occasion is what constitutes its uniqueness. Occasionality is an expression of the situatedness of art in the sense of the specific spatio-temporal condition that characterises the essence of a phenomenon or work. It is important indeed to emphasise that the recovery of the decorative arts occurs as a critique to the aesthetics of *Erlebnis*, for which "the actual work of art is what is outside all space and all time, the object of an aesthetic experience"[57]. In fact, it is precisely in relation to the exceptionalist criterion that Great art is the art of genius, while other aesthetic manifestations such as decorations were considered secondary: "The antithesis of the decorative to a real work of art is obviously based on the idea that the latter originates in 'the inspiration of genius'. The argument was more or less that what is only decorative is not the art of genius but mere craftsmanship"[58]. For this reason, these elements were not considered to be eligible for the "uniqueness of the work of art"[59].

This is not to be understood as a merely historiographical reappraisal of the biographical circumstances that gave rise to that work, an aspect Gadamer attributed instead to the way historical consciousness proceeds[60]. He himself emphasised that, although blurred, the distinction

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[55] "An ornament, a decoration, a piece of sculpture set up in a chosen place are representative in the same sense that, say, the church where they are found is itself representative [TM 159]". In this context, one can also understand the reappraisal of the centrality of architecture, which combines the functional aspect with the artistic element.
[56] TM 144
[57] TM 158
[58] TM 158
[59] TM 158
[60] See H.-G. Gadamer, *Who Am I and Who Are You?*, in "*Who Am I and Who Are You?*" *and Other Essays*, ed. by R. Heinemann, B. Krajewski, SUNY Press, New York 1997, pp.

between these two attitudes is nevertheless fundamental: "The historian will seek out every element that can tell him something of the past, even if it counters the work's claim to meaning. He will examine works of art in order to discover the models: that is, the connections with their own age that are woven into them, even if they remained invisible to contemporary observers and are not important for the meaning of the whole. This is not occasionality in the sense intended here"[61].

In contrast, occasion indicates precisely the moment that enacts the work: "To be occasional is essential to it: the occasion of the performance makes it speak and brings out what is in it"[62]. From this point of view, the occasion enables the work of art to constitute itself as such, and must not therefore be viewed as something accessory, but, on the contrary, as the aspect that is at the source of the work of art and its presentation: "With respect to the element of occasionality, these phenomena represent particular cases of a general relationship that obtains for the being of the work of art: namely that it experiences a continued determination of its meaning from the 'occasion' of its coming-to-presentation"[63].

If, according to Gadamer, this aspect emerges especially for the reproductive arts, it actually underlies every work. This principle can therefore be extended to extra-artistic aesthetic phenomena, i.e. as "the director who stages the play displays his skill in being able to make use of the occasion"[64], and likewise in ordinary aesthetic experiences we must also seize the occasion that allows us to see an ordinary object or activity in an aesthetic light, as in the case of drinking our everyday coffee, that, in a certain circumstance, can become an aesthetic experience.

The occasion, however, does not represent the exceptionality reserved only for certain experiences, but rather the possibility of focusing attention on a phenomenon that would otherwise be mere routine: for example, setting the table, from a mere daily task, can become an aesthetic experience involving our senses and our emotions on a given convivial occasion. Moreover, the fact that we speak of occasion does not imply a relativistic perspective characterised by a set of merely subjective and disconnected experiences. It is precisely the occasion, which gives meaning to repetition, that shows the shareability of the aesthetic experience, as Gadamer affirmed in relation to occasional arts: "The uniqueness of an element occasional in this narrower sense is fulfilled in a work of art, but is fulfilled in such a way that through the being of the work this

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67-165: pp. 149-153.
[61] TM 146
[62] TM 147
[63] TM 147
[64] TM 147

uniqueness comes to participate in a universality that makes it capable of yet further fulfilment. Thus the work's unique relation to the occasion can never be finally determined, but though indeterminable this relation remains present and effective in the work itself"[65].

Thus, the occasion can also be considered to underlie the aesthetic phenomena, making a distinction between mere routine and our paying attention to a certain phenomenon. For example, as already mentioned, the act of setting the table can take on an aesthetic connotation on a given occasion and make us pay attention to details that we would not have noticed otherwise. As in the case of repetition, the occasion does not imply emphasising some exceptional aspect limited to Great art; but, on the contrary, it aims at reappraising the aesthetic aspects that have been overshadowed by the consideration of genius-based aesthetics. However, it also makes it possible to distinguish a mere repetition of non-aesthetic moments from moments characterised by the fact that an aesthetic experience is taking place, which can be participated in.

It is precisely the dynamic between repetition and occasion that reveals an anti-exceptionalist criterion that can account for the continuity between artistic and everyday aesthetic phenomena. Furthermore, it should be noted that the reference to repetition, mainly developed in the case of the festival, has a democratic bearing in Gadamer: the festival is for everyone, i.e. it does create participation and a horizontal relationship between individuals, who are brought together precisely by taking part in such an event. Likewise, *Everyday Aesthetics* certainly does not aim at upgrading the secondary aspects in a merely accessory sense, with the risk of falling back into an *art pour l'art* reading of the everyday phenomena, i.e. an aesthetisation of everyday life[66]. It is precisely the expansive approach of *Everyday Aesthetics* that seems to be capable of avoiding such risk, by leveraging the occasion as a moment that allows one to grasp the extraordinary in the ordinary, an extraordinary that is however also accessible to the masses, traditionally excluded from events of art in the contemporary world – a case in point is avant-garde, a phenomenon which is now increasingly limited to a few connoisseurs.

The mutual dynamic of repetition and occasion shows a movement that characterises aesthetic ordinary experiences that become extraordinary, such as tasting a food on a certain social occasion and grasping its aesthetic aspects. This does not imply a reduction to the subjective moment, i.e. solely to the experiencer's perception, but it is always a re-

[65] TM 148
[66] For a reflection on *Everyday Aesthetics* and aesthetisation, see G. Matteucci, *Everyday Aesthetics and Aestheticization. Reflectivity in Perception*, in "Studi di Estetica" 45, 1, 2017, pp. 207-227.

lational aspect, which imbues the experience between those taking part in it. As a promising direction for future research, Gadamer's aesthetic reflections could be fruitfully reassessed and contribute to *Everyday Aesthetics* towards a social and situated aesthetic experience.

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Between Repetition and Occasion.
A Gadamerian Contribution to Everyday Aesthetics

In this paper I aim to focus on a possible contribution of Gadamer's aesthetics in the line of inquiries of *Everyday Aesthetics*, stressing the continuistic and anti-exceptionalist perspective at the core of Gadamerian philosophy. I will show how it is possible to highlight the continuity between artistic experience and everyday life in the critique of "aesthetic differentiation", in order to explain how Gadamer could contribute to the so called "expansive" approach of *Everyday Aesthetics*. In particular, I will tackle the concepts of repetition and occasion. The former manifests the characteristic proper to every form of art, namely being iterable in a way that does not contradict its uniqueness. The concept of occasion draws attention on the specificity of every aesthetic experience, manifesting its "extraordinary" character within ordinary life.

KEYWORDS: Gadamer, Hermeneutics, Everyday Aesthetics, repetition, occasion.

Tadas Zaronskis
Experiences from the Ruins of Everyday Life

During the final years of the Second World War and its immediate aftermath, Theodor W. Adorno, then in exile in the United States, wrote his most *subjective* book, entitled *Minima Moralia: Reflections from damaged life.* As the author indicates, the book is written "from the standpoint of subjective experience"[1] and for each of its three parts the "starting-point is the narrowest private sphere, that of the intellectual in emigration"[2]. *Minima Moralia* is saturated with scenes from everyday life: Adorno discusses the manner in which one closes the door or keeps his front yard, the way one drives a powerful car, is received in a hotel or goes to cinema. In sharp contrast to the generality of the Heideggerian *das Man,* the "everyday life" experiences Adorno describes are irreducibly singular, and it is from this "subjective standpoint" of singularity that the socio-historical mediations are elaborated: even the ongoing war is firstly thematized through the experience of listening to the news on the radio from the comfort of one's home.

This enterprise is based on Adorno's paradoxical bet that at the time when the subject itself and "life", banished into the "sphere of private existence", have become no more than "an appendage of the process of material production" and thus are "historically destroyed"[3], individual subjective experience can offer something precious for the critical understanding of society. In other words, it is through the acute consciousness of its own nullity, of its being damaged and in ruins, that subjective experience of what seems to be the most immediate and most trivial becomes crucial for a critical theory of society.

In this article we will analyze the epistemological role that subjective everyday life experience plays in Adorno's text and the anti-methodological

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[1] T.W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* Band 4, ed. by R. Tiedmann, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1951; transl. by E. *Jephcott*, *Minima Moralia,* Verso, London 2005, p. 17.
[2] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 18.
[3] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 17.

grounds on which its centrality is based. It is far from evident that subjective everyday life experience could be understood as a valuable source for critical knowledge about society. In the field of sociology, a positivist apparatus of analysis treats empirical experience to extract knowledge from it, thus abolishing its subjective character. And the Marxism of the first part of the twentieth century is ruled by a principle succinctly expressed by Brecht: "An individual has two eyes / The Party has a thousand eyes"[4]; the triviality of the experience of an individual who "has two eyes" is superseded by the superior intelligence of the party. In this sense Adorno's gesture is paradoxical; the reader is confronted with the question – why write a book pertaining to critical theory of society "from the standpoint of subjective experience"?

We will answer this question by interrogating the very concept of subjective experience as it is thematized by Adorno. We will proceed by multiple *detours* which will permit us to clarify the conceptual elements surrounding Adorno's problematic concept of experience and conferring it methodological centrality. We will start by a preliminary remark about the relationship that *Minima Moralia* entertains with the methodology of Adorno's philosophical project.

Thinking as experience

In his last of the *Three studies on Hegel*, entitled *Skoteinos, or How to Read Hegel* (1963), Adorno writes:

> The task Hegel imposes is not that of an intellectual forced march; it is almost the opposite. The ideal is nonargumentative thought. His philosophy, which, as a philosophy of identity stretched to the breaking point, demands the most extreme efforts on the part of thought, is also dialectical in that it moves within the medium of a thought freed from tension.[5]

This quote synthesizes Adorno's lifelong preoccupation with the question of method. Adorno opposes the deductive or argumentative method, where each step of the chain of reasoning is grounded in the preceding one. This opposition itself relies on an elaborate theory of domination (*Herrschaft*), according to which the "forced march" of deductive and

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[4] B. Brecht, *Die Maßnahme. Lehrstück*, Wien, Leipzig 1931, p. 52.
[5] Adorno, *Drei Studien zu Hegel*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* Band 5, ed. by R. Tiedmann, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1970; transl. by S. Weber Nicholsen, *Hegel: Three studies*, MIT Press, Cambridge 1993, p. 141.

identifying thinking *dominates* rather than actually knows its object and has in itself a strong affinity with the exploitative capitalist structuring of society[6]. Already in his *lectio prima* at the University of Frankfurt, *Actuality of philosophy* (1931), Adorno notes that the idealistic thesis according to which the reason "was supposed to be capable of developing the concept of reality, and in fact all reality, from out of itself"[7], that is, from its internal procedures of deduction and argumentation, "has disintegrated"[8]. And at the very end of his career, in his magnum opus *Negative Dialectics* Adorno writes that "The procedure [of thinking, which is laid out in the *Negative Dialectics*] will be justified, not based on Reasons [*begründet*]"[9]. Hence, all through his career Adorno tries to develop a "nonargumentative thought" which would be "freed from tension" which characterizes the rigidity of the strict argumentation. This task is far from evident, given that Adorno is firmly opposed to any form of relativism[10]. Nevertheless, through his preoccupation with method Adorno develops two closely related themes which concern our inquiry: the question of style and the question of experience.

It is especially in his later texts that Adorno uses the concept of experience to thematize the transformed or emancipated thinking. In the *Negative Dialectics* he writes: "A changed philosophy […] would be nothing but full, unreduced experience in the medium of conceptual reflection"[11]; and in a very late text, entitled *On Subject and Object* he adds: "The key position of the subject in cognition is experience, not form"[12]. In this way Adorno transforms the very concept of what it means to think: in thinking we should not be satisfied with the formal aspect, that is – laying bare the logical relations which are supposed to define or constitute its objects, but instead "we literally seek to immerse ourselves in things that are heterogeneous to it"[13]. This transformed concept of cognition

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[6] Cfr. T.W. Adorno, M. Horkeimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* Band 3, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1969; transl. by E. Jephcott, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 2002, pp. XIV-XIX.
[7] T.W. Adorno, *Die Aktualität der Philosophie*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* Band 1, ed. by R. Tiedmann, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1973; transl. by E.B. Ashton, *The Actuality of Philosophy,* in "Telos", 31, Telos Press Publishing, New York 1977, pp. 120-133, p. 121.
[8] *Ibidem.*
[9] Adorno, *Hegel: Three studies*, p. XIX.
[10] Ivi, pp. 35-37.
[11] Ivi, p. 13.
[12] Adorno, *Zu Subjekt und Objekt*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* Band 10, ed. by R. Tiedmann, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1977; transl. by H.W. Pickford, *Subject and object,* in *Critical Models,* Columbia University Press, New York 2005, p. 254.
[13] Adorno, *Hegel: Three studies*, p. 13.

itself presupposes different procedural or methodological elements: if the purpose of cognition is not to determine the forms which define the phenomena and their relations but to *immerse* itself in it, it becomes clear how argumentation might not be the only or even the most essential procedure of thinking. The concept of *thinking as experience*, to which we will have to come back, is therefore also reflected in the manner in which Adorno conceives the construction of his texts. A text is no longer mere means to convey some formal content which lays, so to speak, behind it. The questions of presentation (*Darstellung*) and expression (*Ausdruck*) become essential, because, as Gillian Rose rightly notes, for Adorno "[t]he question of communicating his ideas becomes the question of what the reader should experience when confronting the text"[14]. For this reason, style, understood as the principle of the construction of text and the concrete ensemble of figures it takes, becomes of major methodological importance and can be said to partly replace, in Adorno's thought, the role normally played by argumentation in traditional philosophy.

If, as we have tried to outline, the concept of experience and the question of style are crucial for Adorno's philosophical methodology, then *Minima Moralia,* the text which is stylistically most developed and written "from the standpoint of subjective experience"[15], is itself essential in order to understand Adorno's philosophical project. These indications will lead us in interrogating the epistemological role the subjective everyday experience takes on in *Minima Moralia*.

Subject in historical hiatus

How can subjective everyday experience confer critical knowledge about society? The manner in which Adorno justifies his own way of proceeding is highly paradoxical. On the one hand, Adorno makes a very Hegelian assumption that "society is essentially the substance of the individual"[16], which grounds social analyst's interest in the individual and its experience. On the other hand, Adorno insists that the subject itself, that is – the very instance to which any experience is referred and on which it is based, is *historically destroyed*:

[C]onsiderations which start from the subject remain false to the same extent that life has become appearance. For since the overwhelming

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[14] G. Rose, *The Melancholy Science*, Macmillan Press, Hong Kong 1978, p. 12.
[15] (supra)
[16] Adorno, *Subject and object*, p. 18.

objectivity of historical movement in its present phase consists so far only in the dissolution of the subject, without yet giving rise to a new one, individual experience necessarily bases itself on the old subject, now historically condemned, which is still for-itself but no longer in-itself.[17]

Thus, Adorno inscribes the subject itself into a historical hiatus. The subject enters into contradiction with itself: it is, according to the critical thinker, historically and objectively destroyed or dissolved, deprived of its substance – "no longer in-itself". But, on the other hand, it stays subjectively assured of oneself, keeps its appearance – "still for-itself". In this sense the subject becomes a locus of contradiction. Nevertheless, this contradiction can be activated in different ways. If the subject relates to its own experience in a naive fashion, without taking into account the objectivity of the historical movement that affects it, it slumbers in "an ideology which conceals the fact that there is life no longer"[18]; therefore, according to the critical thinker, considerations which start from the subject and try to "speak immediately of the immediate"[19] are doomed to "remain false". On the other hand, this contradiction itself is something objective, pertaining to a socio-historical process in which the subject is caught. Approached in this way, subjective experience becomes a theater of objective forces and factors which intersect in it and therefore an object relevant to social analysis. So, the possibility of critical insight through subjective experience is neither blocked nor granted in advance; the subject is inscribed in a historical hiatus which can encapsulate subjective experience in ideology, but this risk isn't absolutely decisive. The bifurcation between ideology and critical insight seems to depend on the manner in which subject's relation to itself, that is – to its own experience, is constructed. If for Adorno subjective experience can be of importance for critical social considerations, it is because he elaborates a specific understanding of it, where it becomes something else than an immediate relationship to what is given, designated in Hegelian terminology as "for-itself". In order to continue interrogating this concept of experience and its role, it is necessary to firstly offer a few elucidations of what Adorno understands by the destruction of life, the dissolution of the subject or "the overwhelming objectivity of historical movement" in which the subject is inscribed.

[17] Ivi, p. 16.
[18] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 15.
[19] *Ibidem.*

Mutilation of life, dissolution of the subject

How does philosophy, which has for its ideal "nonargumentative thought", proceed? It ironizes and exaggerates. Gillian Rose notes that two essential stylistic operations characterize *Minima Moralia*: irony and auxesis or exaggeration[20]. A few ironic inversions articulate the thematic core of the book. Firstly, the title – *Minima Moralia* – is an allusion to *Magna Moralia,* a treatise of ethics usually attributed to Aristotle. Secondly, in the very first lines of the text Adorno qualify his work as "melancholy science" (*traurige Wissenschaft),* which is an ironic inversion of the title of one of Nietzsche's works – *The Gay Science* (*Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*). Both of these ironic inversions have far reached consequences in Adorno's text, for our purposes we will limit ourselves to the fact that they intersect on the theme of life. Adorno specifies that his melancholy science concerns the "teaching of the good life [*das richtige Leben*]"[21]. In other words, it pertains to the domain of ethics, as it was understood by Aristotle that living well (*eu zên*), a term for him almost equivalent to happiness (*eudaimonia*), was the object and the purpose of ethical investigations. Even though the "*Magna*" in Aristotle's title bears no conceptual content and pertains only to a historical contingency – it being written on two unusually long rolls of papyrus, the inversion Adorno operates suggests that ethics or the teaching of the good life has itself become something highly problematic, its very possibility being reduced to bare *minimum*. Correspondingly, the inversion of the gay or joyful science into its opposite – the melancholy or sad science – displaces Nietzsche's immoralist ethics of "saying yes to life" or "affirmation [*Behangung*] of life"[22]. Both of these ironic inversions rely on Adorno's observation which is also an exaggeration, namely – that "there is life no longer"[23]. It is reiterated in a more moderate form in the subtitle of the book, which reads "Reflections from damaged life", as well as in the epigraph to Part One, a quote by Ferdinand Kürnberger – "Life does not live"[24]. To write a book on the teaching of the good life at the time when there is life no longer – this is the ironic gesture that defines *Minima Moralia*.

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[20] Rose, *op. cit*., p. 17. As Rose specifies in a footnote, auxesis is "a form of hyperbole which intensifies as it proceeds" (ivi, p. 164).
[21] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 15.
[22] Cfr. "And all in all and on the whole: some day I wish to be only a yes-sayer." F. Nietzsche, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, in *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, Abt.5, Bd.2, De Gruyter, Berlin, New York 1973; transl. by W. Kaufmann, *The Gay Science*, Random House, New York 1974, p. 223.
[23] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 15.
[24] Ivi, p. 21.

But why is life damaged? What is it that damages life to the point of annihilating it? Adorno's response has a strong Marxist undertone: what was once known as life has become "an appendage of the process of material production, without autonomy or substance of its own", and "the relation between life and production, which in reality debases the former to an ephemeral appearance of the latter, is totally absurd. Means and end are inverted"[25]. If the process of social production is to be understood as means to satisfy the needs of those who live in a society, then in capitalist society this relationship is inverted: all productive process is a priori aimed at exchange, which serves the auto-reproduction of capital. In this sense the process of production is rendered autonomous, detached from the needs of the life of the individuals which serve it. The dialectics of ends and means runs deep in Marx's texts. Nevertheless, it is particularly in his *Economic and philosophic manuscripts of 1844* that Marx thematizes the mutilation that the capitalist mode of production inflicts on human life. Discussing the bourgeois political economy which describes and justifies the capitalist order, he states that "self-renunciation, the renunciation of life and of all human needs, is its principal thesis"[26]. In an ironic fashion, Marx claims that the bourgeois political economist manages to show "how the multiplication of needs and of the means of their satisfaction", that is – the increase in productive capabilities which capitalist society entails, "breeds the absence of needs and of means":

> (1) By reducing the worker's need to the barest and most miserable level of physical subsistence, and by reducing his activity to the most abstract mechanical movement. Hence, he says: Man has no other need either of activity or of enjoyment. For he calls *even* this life *human* life and existence. (2) By counting the lowest possible level of life (existence) as the standard, indeed as the general standard – general because it is applicable to the mass of men. He changes the worker into an insensible being lacking all needs.[27]

Hence, Marx shows how the capitalist mode of production redefines what *life* means by effectively reducing the life of the mass of workers to "the most miserable level of physical subsistence". Life itself is objectively damaged or, in Adorno's hyperbole – annihilated, in the sense that it is effectively made unbearable on a mass scale. Marx also notes that this process of mutilation under capitalism affects not only so to speak the *external* life, but the very interiority of the worker: it "changes the worker into an insensible being". Denying the worker the satisfaction

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[25] Ivi, p. 15.
[26] Marx K., *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*; transl. by Milligan, Prometheus Books, New York 1988, p. 116.
[27] Ivi, p. 118.

of his needs ends up damaging his sensibility itself and extinguishes the very capacity to have needs. Thus, the idea that capitalism produces its own damaged subjectivity is already present in the young Marx. Adorno articulates his hyperbole of the annihilation of life in Marxist terms – as a reflection on the violence that the capitalist primacy of production inflicts on human life; nevertheless, the social reality that Adorno reflects upon living in the United States during the years of the Second World War differs significantly from the one Marx analyses living in Paris one hundred years earlier. Marx draws upon the misery of the working and life conditions that the proletarians have to endure:

> Dwelling in the light, which Prometheus in Aeschylus designated as one of the greatest boons, by means of which he made the savage into a human being, ceases to exist for the worker. Light, air, etc. – simplest *animal* cleanliness ceases to be a need for man. Dirt – this stagnation and putrefaction of man – the sewage of civilization (speaking quite literally) – comes to be the element of life for him. Utter, unnatural neglect, putrefied nature, comes to be his life-element.[28]

The working and life conditions in the United States during the 40s were certainly significantly improved in comparison to the horrors that Marx was describing. In a text from 1942 entitled *Reflections on Class Theory* and published only posthumously, Adorno argues against Marxian idea of pauperization, that is – the hope that shared and ever increasing poverty of the proletariat will push them into revolt and revolution: "Against this argument all the statistics can be marshalled. The proletariat does have more to lose than its chains. Measured against conditions in England a century ago as they were evident to the authors of the *Communist Manifesto,* their standard of living has not deteriorated but improved"[29]. Even if it is well possible that some of the horrors Marx described in his various texts did persist on a smaller scale, the fact is that the material situation has fundamentally changed and it is not primarily this type of material misery that leads Adorno to his observations about the annihilation of life and the historical dissolution of the subject. Thus, the question arises – in what way are life and even more the subject damaged by their submission to the capitalist primacy of production, if it is not anymore in the form of direct misery of the life and working conditions?

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[28] Ivi, p. 117.
[29] Adorno, *Reflexionen zur Klassentheorie*, in Gesammelte Schriften Band 8, ed. by R. Tiedmann, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1972; *Reflections on Class Theory*, in *Can One Live After Auschwitz? A Philosophical Reader*, ed. by Rolf Tiedemann and trans. by R. Livingstone 2003, pp. 93-110, p. 103.

Domination

A brief answer can be given in terms of the concept of domination (*Herrschaft*). This concept is present, without ever becoming an object of direct thematic analysis, in the aphorisms of *Minima Moralia.* It is developed in and central to the *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* firstly published in 1947, which Adorno writes together with Horkheimer during almost the same period as the aphorisms of *Minima Moralia.* Reading the two texts together is even more relevant given that for Adorno *Minima Moralia* presents "aspects of our shared philosophy [i.e., shared with Horkheimer] from the standpoint of subjective experience"[30].

As many Adornian concepts, domination does not cover a particular phenomenon or identity – rather, it is in itself a conceptual constellation, containing many different and often divergent layers which are actualized or hidden according to the context in which it is discussed. Adorno and Horkheimer give themselves the task of explaining "why humanity, instead of entering a truly human state, is sinking into a new kind of barbarism"[31] and their answer is that it is the *ratio* itself, or the enlightenment thinking, understood as the general direction of the Western thought, which is at fault: "We believe we have perceived with equal clarity, however, that the very concept of that thinking [i.e., enlightenment thinking], no less than the concrete historical forms, the institutions of society with which it is intertwined, already contains the germ of the regression, which is taking place everywhere today"[32].

Let us unpack the different elements which are presented. The regression or barbarism which the authors evoke refers as much to "the antireason of totalitarian capitalism"[33] as to "the international threat of fascism"[34], and the authors draw a strong continuity between the two. Adorno and Horkheimer localize the "cause" of these regressions in a violent tendency which is immanent to the *ratio* itself: "[a] tendency toward self-destruction has been inherent in rationality from the first, not only in the present phase when it is emerging nakedly. Its "irrationalism" derives from the nature of the dominant reason and of the world corresponding to its image"[35]. More precisely, this tendency consists in "the subjugation of everything natural to the sovereign subject"[36]. Thus, the

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[30] Adorno, *Subject and object*, p. 18.
[31] Horkheimer and Adorno, *op. cit*., p. XIV.
[32] Ivi, p. XVI.
[33] Ivi, p. 43.
[34] Ivi, p. XVIII.
[35] Ivi, p. XIX.
[36] Ivi, p. XVIII.

authors conceptualize the reason itself – as it has emerged in the Western culture – as inherently violent and self-destructive, as domination. And their purpose is precisely to transform the rationality in a way which "liberates it from its entanglement in blind domination"[37].

This concept of *reason as domination* contains multiple strata which we will evoke in a very schematic way. Firstly, the rationality is expressed in various different forms and branches of knowledge which developed in the Western world: sociology, psychology, epistemology and others[38]. Secondly, as the authors specify in a very Hegelian fashion, the *ratio,* reason or enlightenment equally pertains to "the concrete historical forms, the institutions of society with which it is intertwined". Thus, it pertains not only to the to the so-called spiritual or mental phenomena, but to the material formations as well. Adorno and Horkheimer interrogate the entanglement of knowledge and technology, which renders knowledge itself inherently technological and thus the growing presence of technology in everyday life of the twentieth century embodies the domination principle[39]. Furthermore, the capitalist mode of production – the submission of all existing life to the rationalizing principle of production – is for Adorno nothing else than the material realization of the bourgeois *ratio*[40]. In this sense the Marxist distinction between base and superstructure is displaced: domination concerns as much the material conditions of life as thinking and cultural forms.

Thirdly, if these first two aspects can be qualified as *objective* because they pertain to exteriority, the dominant rationality equally concerns the subject itself. In the second chapter of the book, entitled *Excursus I: Odysseus or Myth and Enlightenment*, the authors present a prehistory of the modern bourgeois subject through a dramatization of the figure of Homer's Odysseus: "the hero of the adventures turns out to be the prototype of the bourgeois individual"[41]. Through a close reading of the text the authors insist that the subject's identity to itself – itself, ego, or the synthetic unity of the Kantian "I" which thinks, – emerges only through a violent confrontation with mythologized natural forces[42]. Thus, the synthetic unity of consciousness which idealist philosophy views as autonomous

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[37] *Ibidem*.
[38] Ivi, p. XIV.
[39] Ivi, 1-2.
[40] Cfr. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, in *Gesammelte Schriften* Band 6, ed. by R. Tiedmann, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1970; transl. *Negative Dialectics,* E. B. Ashton, Routledge, London, 1973, p. 23.
[41] Horkheimer and Adorno, op. cit., p. 35.
[42] Ivi, p. 38.

or fundamental is reinterpreted by Adorno and Horkheimer as derivative. It would derive from the natural interest of self-preservation, from a violent effort to master what is multiple, disparate, chaotic[43]. Therefore, the modern subject's autonomy is displaced, in a Freudian fashion its reason is understood in terms of adaptation and struggle for survival. Two important consequences follow from this prehistory of the subject. On the one hand, the subject itself, in regard to its categorial constitution and cognitive operations, has a deep affinity with "the regression, which is taking place everywhere today": the same violent tendency permeates the subject and the objective social-historical reality. On the other hand, the principle of domination, which constitutes the subject, pertains not only to the exteriority but affects its interiority itself. Analyzing the Book XX of Odyssey Adorno and Horkheimer note how the self (*autos*) of Odysseus emerges only through the repression of his impulses, of the affect[44]. Thus, the principle of domination – the constitution of synthetic unity through a violent repression of what is multiple, disparate – is that which at the same time establishes the subject as such and damages its inner nature, its sensibility.

These elements permit us to understand Adorno's hyperboles of the destruction of life and the historical dissolution of the subject. The historical hiatus that Adorno theorizes reflects the observation that "in the present phase" the violence contained in the rationality itself is "emerging nakedly"[45] and for this reason humanity "is sinking into a new kind of barbarism"[46]. The life itself is damaged in the sense that the dominant rationality, aimed at repressing the natural-living element, has, in the eyes of the critical thinker, overtaken the totality of the social institutions, economic as well as cultural; the subject is therefore pressured to conform to this objectivity which is imposed to it: "The countless agencies of mass production and its culture impress standardized behavior on the individual as the only natural, decent, and rational one. Individuals define themselves now only as things, statistical elements, successes or failures. Their criterion is self-preservation, successful or unsuccessful adaptation to the objectivity of their function and the schemata assigned to it"[47]. Thus, the subject's interiority is constrained by the exterior objectivity, its innermost modes of reaction to the outside world and to itself are forcibly modeled on the dominant rationality to which it is daily confronted.

[43] Cfr. ivi, p. 43.
[44] Ivi, p. 259, footnote 5 from p. 38.
[45] Ivi, p. XIX.
[46] Ivi, p. XIV.
[47] Ivi, p. 23.

Even though Adorno retains Marx's observation that the capitalist mode of production amounts to the mutilation of human life, the situation is fundamentally different: the reason for this is no longer the brute force of the working and life conditions but the totalization and intensification of the rationality which animates the capitalist mode of production.

There is nevertheless a second aspect of the dissolution of the subject. Adorno writes: "The subject still feels sure of its autonomy, but the nullity demonstrated to subject by the concentration camp is already overtaking the form of subjectivity itself"[48]. Since Adorno draws a strong continuity between the fascist regression and the categorial constitution of the subject, the concentration camp constitutes a historical break for the subjectivity itself. It renders effective to the highest degree the violent and self-destructive tendency contained in the dominant rationality. It is in this sense that the subject is caught in a historical hiatus: the established, existing or traditional form of subjectivity has been historically proved to lead to a catastrophe, to be based on an auto-destructive drive for self-preservation and thus not to possess the autonomy it was attributed; nevertheless, no *new* form of subjectivity has yet emerged and thus "individual experience necessarily bases itself on the old subject, now historically condemned"[49].

The concept of experience and its split

In Adorno's text this historical hiatus – the dissolution of the subject and the mutilation of life – constitutes what we could call the conditions of experience. Unlike in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason,* these conditions of experience do not determine the limits and the uniformity of all possible experience but, on the contrary, reveal a fundamental split. In the dedication of *Minima Moralia* Adorno writes: "He who wishes to experience [*erfahren*][50] the truth about life in its immediacy must scrutinize its estranged [*entfremdeter*] form, the objective powers that determine individual existence even in its most hidden recesses"[51]. Adorno indicates a fundamental rupture in the relationship to the immediacy of life – its truth cannot be captured anymore by simply relating to what is given, for

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[48] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 16.
[49] Ivi, p. 16.
[50] In this phrase Jephcott translates *erfahren* as "to know". This translation is correct but given the prominence of the theme of experience (*Erfahrung*) in these pages, we consider it more important to shine a light on the other semiotic aspect of this term.
[51] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 15, translation modified.

the given – the individual existence – is itself determined by estranged (or alienated – *entfremdeter)* form of life, namely by the dominant reason. In this sense experience itself becomes something problematic. For Adorno, if it consists in simple immediate relationship to what is given – and this is what is habitually understood by experience – it itself reverts to ideology and to the domain of appearance[52]. On the other hand, Adorno indicates that it is by taking into account the "objective powers" which structure it that something like a true, non-illusory experience of the immediacy of life is still possible.

This bifurcation pertaining to experience is touched upon in the aphorism 19 of *Minima Moralia* entitled *Do not knock*. In this aphorism Adorno reflects upon the effects of the overwhelming presence of technology in everyday life on the subject. The fragment is saturated with everyday life observations – that the doors "of cars and refrigerators have to be slammed", that "there are no more casement windows to open, but only sliding frames to shove"[53], or that the sheer power of the engine tempts the driver "to wipe out the vermin of the street, pedestrians, children and cyclists"[54]. Adorno uses these numerous everyday life experiences to ask: "[w]hat does it mean for the subject"[55]? In what way does it affect him "even in his most secret innervations"[56]? The brief and generalized answer, given before the question, is that technology is making men and their gestures "precise and brutal" while at the same time it "expels from movements all hesitation, deliberation, civility"[57]. A hyperbole permits Adorno to unfold the socio-historical mediations these fragmentary experiences enclose, and he does this by tracing the continuity between the inherent but hidden violence of the technological rationality and the most naked form of this violence manifested in fascism: "The movements machines demand of their users already have the violent, hard-hitting, unarresting jerkiness of Fascist maltreatment"[58]. As we can observe, Adorno uses his everyday life experiences as a basis on which an interrogation of the "objective powers" and their effects on the subject can unfold. Adorno identifies various modes of action and of sensibility which the "objective powers" – here the various everyday life technologies – force on the subject. Nevertheless, it is precisely because he himself, in his "most secret innervations", does not succumb to these domi-

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[52] *Ibidem.*
[53] Ivi, p. 43.
[54] Ivi, p. 44.
[55] Ivi, p. 43.
[56] *Ibidem.*
[57] *Ibidem.*
[58] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 44.

nant tendencies, that he is able to reflect upon it. Here we observe how the paradox that Adorno determines in the Dedication is developed: the simple immediate relationship to what is immediate – which corresponds to the habitual "naive" understanding of experience – is itself rendered problematic, because it would amount to *unconsciously* succumbing to the violent and auto-destructive tendency of dominant rationality. What in the dedication of *Minima Moralia* Adorno calls the "truth" about the immediacy of life, in other words – its true experience, is thus possible only through a certain reflective distance, but in this case the relationship entertained with the object ceases to be immediate. So that which is habitually understood as experience, Adorno equals it to ideological illusion. It is for this reason that he introduces a division into the concept of experience itself:

> Not least to blame for the withering [*Absterben*] of experience is the fact that things, under the law of pure functionality, assume a form that limits contact with them to mere operation, and tolerates no surplus [*Überschuß*], either in freedom of conduct or in autonomy of things, which would survive as the core of experience, because it is not consumed by the moment of action.[59]

The habitual experience of everyday, which is dominated by the technological rationality, is for Adorno equal to the withering or dying off (*Absterben*) of experience. In other words, for the critical thinker the everyday experience in its unexamined or naive form, taken at face value, would not count as experience at all, at least in the full sense of the word. This is because in a Hegelian fashion Adorno measures the thing – his effective subjective experience – with its own concept. For Adorno, the concept of experience designates a substantial contact with the object; in the Dedication of *Minima Moralia* he appeals to the Hegelian demand to "penetrate into the immanent content of the matter"[60], while in the *Negative Dialectics* he notes that thinking which would amount to experience would "immerse" itself in things[61]. Adorno implicitly opposes this immersive and immanent relationship with the object that the concept of experience demands to the dominant technological rationality which imposes a purely functional relationship of "mere operation". Thus, the immediate, unreflected way of relating to what is given and to oneself consists in succumbing to these merely operational and inherently violent modes of conduct which are objectively imposed. If Adorno insists, as

[59] Ivi, p. 44.
[60] Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind,* London, 1996, p. 112, quoted in Adorno 1951; eng. tr. 2005, p. 16.
[61] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 13.

we have discussed, that "life has become appearance"[62], it is because he considers that "the withering of experience" has become the norm rather than an exception: "Today [...] the enemy's power and control over the consciousness of the masses has been immeasurably strengthened"[63]. Therefore, the very expression "everyday life experience" is problematic in the Adornian context, to the extent that Adorno considers that experience itself has become scarce in the everyday life.

On the other hand, Adorno appeals to what he calls "surplus" (*Überschuß*), "which *would* survive as the core of experience". It is notable that this surplus does not amount to any positive phenomenon or mode of action, it is rather to be understood as a fracture in the chain of the dominant rationality, something which cannot be reduced to it but can't be fully liberated from it either. The access to these fragmentary elements which are not fully integrated into the dominant rationality seems to depend on the capacity to distance oneself both from the demands that the exterior world imposes on the subject and from its own compulsive mechanisms which correspond to it. It is this capacity that in the *Negative Dialectics* Adorno names *resistance* (*Widerstand*) and which is central to his idea of transformed or emancipated thinking: "Thought as such, before all particular contents, is an act of negation, of resistance to that which is forced upon it"[64]. We have discussed the fact that in his later thought, namely in *Negative Dialectics,* Adorno conceives the transformation of philosophy through the concept of *thinking as experience*. In *Minima Moralia,* written about 20 years earlier, we observe a similar but opposite relation: it is experience itself which seems to be conceived as a form of reflection. As we can observe, Adorno considers that relating immediately to the immediacy encapsulates the subject in the domain of appearance which cannot be called experience at all. Thus, paradoxically only a contemplative distance from the immediacy of life can still grant access to the fragmentary "core of experience", which resists the dominant rationality precisely because it is detached from any practical activity, "not consumed by the moment of action"[65]. In this sense, what Adorno calls subjective experience takes the form of critical reflection upon its own impossibility. The numerous observations from everyday life with which *Minima Moralia* is saturated furnish content to the critical consciousness not so much of the reasons of this impossibility but rather of the various forms it takes.

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[62] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 16.
[63] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 113.
[64] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 19.
[65] *Supra.*

To conclude, in this article we have taken numerous detours in order to approach an elusive conceptual problem – the epistemological role which subjective everyday life experience plays in Adorno's *Minima Moralia*. Adorno claims to write his text – pertaining to a critical theory of society – "from the standpoint of subjective experience", nevertheless the way in which subjective experience could confer critical knowledge about society is highly obscure. It is not rendered more evident by Adorno's claim that the subject itself, that on which experience is based, is dissolved or "historically condemned". We have interrogated various surrounding or related conceptual elements – the destruction of life, dissolution of the subject, objectivity of historical movement, domination – in order to shine a light on the conceptual problem of subjective experience. Approaching Adorno's concept of experience and its usage we have observed that it is marked by a fundamental split: in the society of late capitalism that Adorno describes, subjective everyday life experience either degrades into mere appearance, or consists in an immersive reflection of its own impossibility. In both cases, for the critical thinker it is precisely as being fundamentally *damaged* that subjective experience is valuable for a critical theory of society: because the reasons as much as the forms of its mutilation pertain to social objectivity.

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Experiences from the Ruins of Everyday Life

In this article we treat the question of the subjective everyday life experience in T. W. Adorno's philosophy. It is in no way evident how such experience can be central or even valuable for a critical knowledge of society, especially for Adorno, who tends to emphasize the illusory, ideological and damaged character of the "everyday life". Nevertheless, his *Minima Moralia* (1951) is famously written "from the standpoint of subjective experience". It is for this reason that *Minima Moralia* is in the center of our interrogations. In order to treat the epistemological problem pertaining to the role of subjective everyday life experience in Adorno's critical theory of society, we proceed by numerous detours which elucidate surrounding and relating concepts, such as dissolution of the subject, objectivity of historical movement, domination. We conclude that Adorno's concept of experience is itself marked by a fundamental split: an unstable and always fragile division between relapsing into ideology or becoming a reflection upon its own being damaged and virtually blocked. Subjective experience contributes to the objective knowledge of society by becoming consciousness of its own mutilation, and this because the reasons as much as the forms of this mutilation are objective, social.

KEYWORDS: Adorno, experience, subject, everyday life, domination.

Wolfgang Welsch
In Praise of Wind Turbines

Finally, they appear. I had been expecting them for a long time. The highway stretched along monotonously – no ups, no downs, no variety, just wasteland. Then they finally become apparent, filigree and in great numbers, like a colony of spurge: wind turbines as far as the eye can see. They glitter, dance, swirl, sweep away the boredom. High spirits, cheerfulness, merriment – at last.

Others, however, feel and talk quite differently. They speak of the landscape's transformation into asparagus, of greed for profit, of bird shredders, of disease-causing machines and of an aesthetically unbearable destruction of the environment. They speak of violence against nature, violence against animals, violence against people.

I want to discuss only one point in this conflict. Everybody knows that we urgently need wind energy in our present and future situation. But everyone also knows the fluctuation and storage problems of this form of energy. Environmental damage and the evocation of illness can be hotly debated or reasonably argued. Proponents and opponents bash each other's heads or approach the idea of the common good. None of that is at issue here. Rather, the only question is whether wind turbines are an aesthetic disaster or could represent aesthetic fortune. The question is eminently important. Because the rejection of wind power is based far and wide on aesthetic aversion.

Decades ago, when I first saw wind turbines in California, I thought: what a strange new species to enter our planet: huge, gravitational, sovereignly reaching out and powerfully spinning. Beings as if from another star, which now suddenly populate the earth. The impression has not faded in the meantime, but has intensified. I see the wind turbines like giant insects, or gigantic proud spiders, shining metallically and winking at us or blinding us. Is a new species, a new population taking over the earth – from the seas to the plains to the mountains? They have a differ-

ent measure of time, a different rhythm than we hectic humans. They are slow, powerful, and stable in themselves. What wonderful new beings, unexpectedly appeared and so beautiful in everything! Fascinating and admirable new figures – filigree and powerful at the same time.

In the twenties and thirties of the last century, Max Ernst painted pictures which one can see as representations of a new species that will populate the earth after the end of human civilization – mixed creatures with zoomorphic aspects. The windmills of today are similar and yet different. They, too, can appear like a new species spreading across the earth. But they are more technical than carnal. Yet they seem organic and animated. They may be stationary, but they turn, they can change direction, and they sometimes act faster, sometimes slower, or sometimes not at all. The impression of living beings is undeniable.

But what can one say to those contemporaries who only recognize matchstick crucifixes and asparagus monsters in wind turbines? Is this disparaging view not equally justified as the aestheticizing one?

Perceptions are historical products, and they can change. A particularly noteworthy example is the change in the aesthetic evaluation of mountains. For centuries, the mountains were considered to be terrible. In the late 18th century, however, they were ennobled by aesthetics (Kant) and shortly thereafter by art (C.D. Friedrich). The mountains became paradigmatic instances of the sublime. This brought them closer to people, so that in the 19th century they were soon no longer depicted and regarded as sublime, but as beautiful and pleasing. This led to modern mountain tourism. What a change! What once caused only fear and terror became the El Dorado of alpinists and a playground for tourists. – Shouldn't a similar change in perception also be possible with regard to wind turbines? Especially since they, similarly towering as the mountains, are much more filigree and organic and aesthetically more attractive and, compared to the massiveness of the mountains, seem almost intellectual.

One objection would be: mountains are nature, whereas wind turbines belong to technology. Therefore, they inevitably appear as troublemakers in nature. – Is that really so? Is it that simple? Is nature (and especially aesthetically pleasing nature) really just nature? When we walk along a country lane or a forest path, are we simply walking through nature? No. We walk through culture at least to the same extent. Our ancestors cleared these areas and created fields and paths through them; they cultivated the primeval forest – the woods we encounter today are forests. Field paths and forest paths are paths through cultivated land.

But this is not how they are generally understood; they are taken as paths through nature. One ignores the de facto cultural imprint of this nature and mistakenly takes it to be pure nature. And it is precisely this domesticated nature that appears to us as 'pleasant', 'lovely' or 'beautiful', while 'rough' nature is rather perceived as repulsive. The landscapes we cherish are lands long worked and altered by humans. When we enjoy the 'soft' image of a landscape, we refer to the harmonious relationship between forestation and cultivated land, the pleasing proportions of agrarian land that 'nestle' against the hills, or the seemingly natural, but in reality long since regulated course of a river that creates a harmony of landscape and settlement. We fade out the civilizational imprints and praise a distorted image of supposedly pure nature. Of course, the mistake is not to love and praise this nature, but to consider it as pure nature, i.e., to fade out and deny the civilization achievements inscribed in it. The nature we appreciate and praise is de facto not pure nature, but an *amalgam* of nature and culture.

Incidentally, already Karl Marx pointed out almost 200 years ago that nature is long since shaped by man; he rebuked Feuerbach's belief that we live in a nature unaffected by human history; such a nature, Marx declared, exists nowhere today. In the present at the latest, in the age of the Anthropocene, it should have become clear to everyone that nature is shaped by human activities right down to its foundations.

This then is the great illusion, the great misunderstanding: that nature, which we love and appreciate, is simply nature – in contrast to all that is attributed civilization and culture. No, this beautiful and lovely, this pleasant and restful nature has been shaped to a great extent by human civilization, is a common product of nature and civilization. To overlook this is one of the most widespread and biggest mistakes of the present time. And it has massive consequences: One does not feel responsible for a nature that one is not responsible for. It can be abused – and indeed is abused on a gigantic scale.

Against this illusion of a purely natural nature, wind turbines are a wonderful antidote. For with them, the technical character is unmistakable. A nature shaped by wind turbines can no longer be falsified as pure nature. The civilizing aspect is all too obvious here. One cannot look it away. Therefore, the wind farms disturb our idyllic image of nature. They do so even in a double sense. Firstly, on the level of appearance: the wind turbines disfigure the landscape, they are aesthetic disturbances – ugly, disgusting, an insult to God's creation and to Christian man. But secondly – and this is even more important – they disturb our image of

nature on the conceptual level. For they reveal the technical character of an environment that is everywhere shaped by human intervention. This, I believe, is what makes them really offensive: that they expose as a mistake our erroneous belief that nature, which we value so highly, is simply nature and not largely man-made. They torpedo our idyllic illusion of nature. They are disturbing because they are enlightening. They force us to revise our image of nature. They shatter one of our dearest illusions. That is why they are so unloved.

From there, let's take a final look at the megatopic of our time: climate change, energy supply, saving the environment. Aren't wind turbines both literal and metaphorical instances of a better future? Their energy supply, on which we depend, is by far not everything. Rather, the wind turbines show us that the old opposition of man against nature was an illusion – a dangerous, an almost fatally dangerous illusion. In contrast, what is needed is an interplay – of people and nature, of technology and environment. It will take technological sophistication to heal the wounds inflicted by a brutal technology. "The wound is only closed by the spear that struck it." Wind turbines could be pioneering pinpricks in the service of such healing.

In Praise of Wind Turbines

Are wind turbines an aesthetic disaster or could they represent aesthetic fortune? Couldn't we perceive them as a fascinating species newly populating our planet? Wind turbines make it clear that the idyllic nature we love is in fact not pure nature but deeply modified by civilization. Wind turbines are enlightening in revising our accustomed perception of nature.

Keywords: Wind turbines, aesthetics, entanglements of nature and culture.

Miscellanea

Marcello La Matina[1]
L'essere inesemplare. Per un umanismo non violento

0. Preludio

La guerra, che molti buoni propositi e alcune azioni concrete avevano tentato di scongiurare, è tornata alle porte dell'Europa. Si è anzi allocata sulla soglia stessa che congiunge l'Europa all'Asia, in quel crogiuolo di storie che più correttamente dovremmo chiamare Eurasia. La cerniera che univa due imperi e due mondi – un tempo paralleli e altro tempo contigui – si è ora rotta, il cursore si è sfilato. Ed emerge senza veli la violenza, reale e simbolica, come una domanda mai doma. Violenza che non è solo l'accidente di una regione, la crisi di un'epoca, ma un accadimento planetario sul quale indugiano ragioni politiche, religiose, mercantili e anche metafisiche. Questa violenza provoca a riflettere. Qual è, per esempio, il punto di insorgenza (*Entstehungspunkt*), per usare un'espressione cara a Nietzsche, di questa violenza? È quel che vogliamo chiederci in queste pagine, sollecitati anche da una curiosità che nasce dall'investigazione filosofica del legame tra linguaggio e violenza, tra furia tassonomica dei predicati e incertezza dei sostrati. Perché sempre vi è violenza nel linguaggio e nella ragione; e sempre la Ragione, nel venire a capo di sé, deve metter qualcosa da canto, come un resto che non entri nel computo; qualcosa che si urta alla sua esemplarità e che, non foss'altro che per questo, merita una attenzione speciale.

1. Una spirale inarrestabile?

Il terzo millennio è iniziato con l'abbattimento delle Torri gemelle; con un evento, perciò, in sé architettonico, tanto precisa ne fu la scansione e ben studiato il progetto. Architettare il crollo non richiede meno scienza che il costruire. Il colpo, quel volo di aerei che parve un volo rapace di falconi, fu architettato come una fortezza volante, perché già nel suo disegno architettonico apparisse visibile un sapiente impetuoso messaggio di violenza:[2] un ossimoro, a dirla tutta. Da allora, il reale e il simbolico sono sempre più finemente caratterizzati nella violenza contemporanea, anche in quella di cui normalmente non verremmo a conoscenza. In tal senso, l'*escalation* di violenza cui assistiamo anche in questi anni recenti potrebbe non significare una maggiore quantità o una maggiore portata degli atti violenti, ma una maggiore pervasività della violenza, una capacità di replicazione e di manifestazione che possiamo presumere siano propri di una 'società delle immagini', nel senso che Guy Debord dava a questa espressione. Secondo quest'ultimo, già l'origine dello spettacolo è connessa alla «perdita di unità del mondo»; talché, se è vero che lo spettacolo della violenza riesca ad unire il mondo, è ancor più vero che «lo spettacolo riunisce il separato, ma lo riunisce *in quanto separato*».[3] Inoltre, *questa* violenza illustrata è un fenomeno che appare oggi sempre più alienante; e ciò è anche dovuto al fatto che le relazioni sociali globali sono mediate da una quantità e da una qualità (nel senso di definizione o trama 'pixelare') prima mai vista di immagini: più lo spettatore della violenza contempla, dice Debord, e meno vivrà e comprenderà la propria esistenza e il proprio desiderio.

1.1

Una così lucida spirale di violenza va certo connessa alla velocizzazione dei processi di conoscenza[4] che la globalizzazione dell'informazione cerca di imporre dappertutto. Si trovano in giro molte spiegazioni di questo processo; di solito, però, esse investono gli aspetti pragmatici dei linguaggi, della comunicazione. Senza invalidare questi tentativi, noi percorreremo una diversa strada, cercando di mostrare come la violenza 'illustrata'

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[2] Cfr. Sul rapporto tra internet, informazione e violenza, specialmente nel mondo islamico e con riferimento al ruolo delle immagini, si veda il saggio di Roberto Calasso, *L'innominabile attuale*, Adelphi, Milano 2020.

[3] Cfr. Guy Debord, *La société du spectacle*, Buchet/Chastel, Paris 1967. Cito dalla ed. ital., p. 62

[4] Cfr. Luciano Floridi, *Infosfera. Filosofia e Etica dell'informazione*, Giappichelli, Torino, 2009.

sia legata a un paradigma insieme gnoseologico e ontologico. Giusto per cominciare, muoviamo da alcune semplici considerazioni. Conoscere – ci viene insegnato – significa padroneggiare, possedere la cosa conosciuta.[5] È così che i media globali diventano ogni giorno di più strumenti di potenza. Da un lato, essi accrescono i possibili oggetti di conoscenza; dall'altro, implementano la loro architettura vorace proprio offrendosi quali "sistemi di vita", cioè quali *habitat* in cui, tuttavia, l'essere si risolve nell'operare.[6] Come conseguenza di ciò, conoscere le cose e le persone (cioè conoscere la vita di certi individui di una qualche specie, naturale o no) non significa più passare del tempo con esse, ma equivale a classificarle qui e *ora*, proprio per non doverle incontrare *poi*. Talché, il reale di cui parliamo è spesso solo il prodotto di ripetute inferenze induttive, un castello di proiezioni e previsioni, che si regge su un 'apriori storico': la attuale scommessa – tipica di ogni proiezione induttiva – sull'uniformità del reale stesso.[7]

La furia tassonomica di cui è qui questione è gravida di conseguenze per l'ontologia dell'Occidente: tanto per quella, semplice e insieme multifaria, dell'uomo comune, quanto per le sofisticate ontologie (globali o regionali) che i filosofi amano disegnare come fondamento dei loro sistemi. Ebbene, diciamo subito che l'attuale spinta classificatoria in cui è presa l'attività della conoscenza ha come effetto principale e spesso non avvertito *la riduzione del singolare alla specie*. Nella vita di tutti i giorni, incontrare il tale o la talcosa è divenuta una fortunata infrazione alla regola; di solito, andando di fretta, si incontra il Tipo astratto. Ci si imbatte sempre più spesso in *un* uomo, *una* donna, *un* albero; quasi mai in quel dato individuo, quella tale donna, quel tale albero. E pensare che ci sono ancora oggi popoli che trattano gli alberi come persone,[8] che danno nomi

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[5] L'idea che nel mito della Ragione verrebbe in chiaro la volontà di potenza dell'Occidente è presente nel dibattito attuale in molti autori e in differenti ambiti. Un testo rigoroso e originale, dedicato alla Grecia antica ma utile al confronto dei nostri tempi è Andrea Cozzo, Tra comunità e violenza. Conoscenza, logos e razionalità nella Grecia antica, Carocci, Roma 2001. Una critica del modello conoscitivo espresso in termini di Soggetto/Oggetto è tematizzata nell'articolo di chi scrive "On subjects, objects, transitional fields and icons. The semiotics of a new paradigm in human studies" in *Christian Perspectives on Science and Technology*, New Series, Vol. 1 (2022), pp. 108 - 149.

[6] L'ecologia dei media può essere considerata il campo nato dalle indagini del sociologo Marshall McLuhan. È oggi un ambito piuttosto trafficato. Una introduzione è in: Lance Strate, *Media Ecology: An Approach to Understanding the Human Condition*, Peter Lang, Berlin – Wien 2017.

[7] Una critica al conformismo dell'induzione è in Giorgio Agamben *Che cos'è reale? La scomparsa di Majorana,* Neri Pozza, Vicenza 2016.

[8] Cfr la *lectio* di Emanuele Coccia, *L'io nella foresta*, Festival della Filosofia, Modena – Carpi – Sassuolo 2019 (https://www.festivalfilosofia.it/index.php?mod=c_video&id=850); consultato il 28 febbraio 2022.

alle singolarità non umane: essi mostrano così di avere una nozione di persona molto più ampia di quella del filosofo tradizionale.

1.2

Quale sia il punto di insorgenza – lo *Entstehungspunkt* nicciano – della violenza simbolica e tassonomica lo dicono bene le numerose aggressioni fisiche o sessuali che in questi anni sempre più spesso culminano nell'uccisione dell'altro. Vittime e altari di questa violenza sono le donne, i più deboli, coloro che non resultino facilmente inquadrabili in una griglia di categorie sociali. In molti casi la violenza viene scaricata sugli anziani, sugli stranieri: su individui che siano visti come «portatori di una diversità non riducibile al possesso di tratti comuni». Il mondo moderno va per le spicce, e identifica i possibili diversi, usando solo i colori primari; mentre il mondo antico – per quanto esprimesse anch'esso una violenza di origine logicista – sapeva coltivare una coraggiosa *pietas*: per esempio, assegnando agli anziani il ruolo di senatori, trattando gli stranieri come ospiti o circondando di una siepe di riserbo le donne e i portatori di una diversità incolmabile – come erano i sacerdoti, le sacerdotesse, o i portatori di certi morbi, per esempio.[9]

Gli antichi avevano elaborato regole di rispetto (αἰδώς, ξενία, φιλία per i Greci; *pietas*, *fides fas* e *sacer* per i Romani) non già per onorare la classe (o la specie) dei vecchi, degli stranieri, quasi volessero affermare il tipo astratto. Al contrario, Greci e Romani riconoscevano in ciascun *individuo non specifico* (cioè non riducibile alle proprietà genuine di una certa specie) il mistero di ciò che direi una possibile "presenza di persona".[10] Basti per ora un esempio, peraltro molto famoso, tratto dalla letteratura epica latina. Nel poema di Virgilio[11] il troiano Enea non abbandona la città distrutta, prima di aver preso su di sé il vecchio padre Anchise e il figlioletto Ascanio; come a significare che non v'è identità nella dimensione presente senza che la linea verticale degli ascendenti e dei discen-

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[9] Sulla diversità presso gli Antichi greci cfr. l'ormai classico volume di François Hartog, *Le Miroir d'Hérodote. Essai sur la représentation de l'autre*, Collection Bibliothèque des Histoires, Gallimard, Paris 1980.

[10] Questa tesi sembra avvalorata dalla diffusione della *xenìa*, la quale è sempre in Grecia una relazione interpersonale, e mai un vuoto ossequio alla "classe" o al "genere". Cfr. Andrea Cozzo, *Stranieri. Figure dell'altro nella Grecia antica*, Di Girolamo, Trapani 2014.

[11] Certo ricorda il lettore le concitate fasi dell'incendio di Troia la toccante preghiera di Anchise, che solo dinanzi a un prodigio divino si persuade a partire con il figlio e gli altri suoi: «Hic vero victus genitor se tollere ad auras / Adfaturque deos et sanctum sidus adorat: / Iam nulla mora est: sequor, et qua ducitis, adsum. / Di patrii, servate domum, servate nepotem». Verg. *Aeneis*, II, 699-702.

denti sia visibile. Questa dimensione della diacronia sembra oggi assente nell'Occidente opulento e malato, specie nell'Europa individualista del Nord.[12] Oggi si tende a vedere in un vecchio, in uno straniero e perfino in una donna solo i membri di una classe di cui non conosciamo più, né più avvertiamo, la carnalità: siamo ciechi rispetto alla carne vivente che abita in ciascun individuo. Così, *abbiamo trasformato gli incontri con le cose singolari in rapporti con gli esemplari* (*più o meno riusciti*, quindi) *di una qualche specie o tipo*.[13] E per tutelarci dalle diversità che non riusciamo più a tollerare, rinchiudiamo gli anziani negli ospizi, gli stranieri nei centri di raccolta, le donne in casa; e i diversi li sistemiamo in luoghi impersonali, spesso mentali e simbolici, che ci tengano al riparo dal confronto con quel che in loro non sappiamo classificare e dominare. Questa dislocazione spaziale è solo una traccia della separatezza ontologica che la violenza del linguaggio intende istituire. *Divide et impera*, dicevano i latini. Allo stesso modo, potremmo dire, il potere presuppone in qualche modo un sistema di pensiero di tipo platonista,[14] poiché quel che lo fa vivere e lo consolida nel suo essere altro non è che un procedimento retorico e dieretico.

1.3

Perché un vecchio, una donna, un malato, uno straniero (e così tutto quello che non è passibile di una classificazione) diventano oggetto di violenza? Che tipo di violenza è questa? La violenza è sempre il trionfo della specie: è un atto tassonomico, un tentativo di classificare, mettendosi *sopra* o sotto, anzi che semplicemente *accanto*. Ecco che un carattere della violenza simbolica e classificatoria consiste nella prevalenza dell'individuo che considera sé l'esemplare di una specie (il sano che prevale sul malato, il maschio sulla femmina, l'adulto sull'anziano). Nella logica della classificazione, la supposta debolezza equivale o alla mancanza di tratti culturali accettati, ovvero al possesso di tratti adiafori, cioè non opponibili ai tratti dell'esemplare che considera sé genuino. Si comprende allora in che

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[12] Il riferimento più pertinente, e a suo modo, sconcertante, è un film documentario girato in Svezia da un regista italiano: Erik Gandini, *La teoria svedese dell'amore* [*The Swedish Theory of Love*], Fasad AB, Stockholm, 2015 (tra i personaggi merita ricordare il filosofo Zygmunt Bauman, che interpreta sé stesso).

[13] Il discorso sottende una questione logica e semantica, legata alla dialettica tra individuo e classe. Per una critica dei sistemi filosofici platonisti, si veda Nelson Goodman, *The Structures of Appearance*, Springer (= Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science), Dordrecht 1977.

[14] Su platonismo e potere, è ancora utile leggere Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and its Enemies. Vol. 1 - The Spell of Plato*, Routledge, London 1945.

senso la violenza sia il trionfo della specie: la violenza è il trionfo non di una data specie su un'altra specie o su individui allomorfi. Nella violenza io vedo piuttosto il trionfo del meccanismo che produce l'esemplarità di qualsivoglia specie, consentendo a certi individui di automarcarsi[15] quali *esemplari-al-quadrato* a spese di altri conspecifici che vengono marcati come esemplari-*imperfetti* ovvero: *inesemplari*. Il violento non confligge con il diverso da sé, ma con il conspecifico, che avverte come portatore di una pericolosa omonimia all'interno della sua stessa specie. «Inesemplare» non è pertanto il campione non genuino (*unfair*) e nemmeno il campione vicario: non è il non-campione (che semplicemente nega o non possiede l'esemplarità) ma il *campione-di-non*, ossia il campione che addita, senza volerla o poterla soddisfare, la propria esemplarità.

Se è così, allora possiamo dire che *nella violenza è sempre la dimensione personale che viene sacrificata*. Nel vecchio non vedo la persona che potrei onorare, nella donna non vedo la persona che potrei amare, ma vedo solo le marche culturali che io non sono capace di assorbire o di differenziare. In tal senso, quando parliamo di "violenza personale", dovremmo intendere l'espressione non nel senso di "violenza compiuta da una persona o su una persona", ma nel senso di violenza che sacrifica la dimensione della persona alla prevalenza della specie, dell'individuo che meglio rappresenta l'integrità della specie. La violenza per me è fascista e hitlerista in questo senso: non perché, come ha sostenuto Levinas, essa radicalizzi l'Essere,[16] inchiodando l'uomo alla «voce misteriosa del sangue», ma, al contrario, perché la violenza ignora la domanda radicale e non estirpabile che proprio l'Essere rivolge all'uomo, quando lo reclama perché si apra alla verità. Proprio l'uomo, infatti, può assumere il compito di trasformare la propria *Geworfenheit* nella storicità di una esistenza libera (Heidegger, *Introduzione alla metafisica*, § IV).[17] Una vittoria definitiva della violenza sulla inesemplarità non segnerebbe il trionfo dell'individuo o di una specie, ma la fine della storia, perché la storia è precisamente il gesto di chi ogni volta si mostra irriducibile alla sola forma di vita della specie. In questo senso sono particolarmente profetiche le osservazioni di Alexandre Kojève a commento di Hegel.[18]

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[15] Del problema dell'automarcatura degli individui in un contesto socio-semiotico mi ero occupato nel volume, *Cronosensitività. Una teoria per lo studio filosofico dei linguaggi*, Carocci, Roma 2004.

[16] Si veda in proposito il denso scritto di Emmanuel Levinas, *Alcune riflessioni sulla filosofia dell'hitlerismo*, con una Introduzione di Giorgio Agamben e un saggio di Miguel Abensour; traduzioni di Andrea Cavalletti e Stefano Chiodi. Quodlibet, Macerata 1996.

[17] Sulle filosofie dell'essere e la violenza, vedi la discussa interpretazione di Donatella Di Cesare, *Heidegger e gli ebrei. I "Quaderni neri"*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 2014.

[18] Ci riferiamo a Alexandre Kojève, *Introduzione alla lettura di Hegel. Lezioni sulla «Fenomenologia dello Spirito» tenute dal 1933 al 1939 all'École Pratique des Hautes* Études

1.4

Odio e invidia, alfieri della violenza, diventano più potenti laddove impera il conformismo della specie. Il pensiero del discredito e della condanna della società sembrano non essere più sufficienti a fermare la mano dell'aggressore, perché? Negli anni Sessanta gli antropologi usavano parlare di "civiltà della vergogna", per indicare quelle culture nelle quali ciò che si teme massimamente è il giudizio di riprovazione del proprio simile: non si fa violenza, perché ci si vergognerebbe davanti agli altri. Diversamente, le "civiltà della colpa" sono quelle che hanno interiorizzato la norma e temono la sanzione divina o di una autorità distale, collocata in uno spazio superiore: Non Uccidere, per esempio, è uno dei *deka logoi* del Dio di Israele. Queste definizioni antropologiche sembrano non adattarsi più al complesso presente di cui parliamo. Chi commette violenza cerca, e spesso trova, l'approvazione sociale; d'altra parte, chi riconosce di aver commesso violenza, sempre più spesso al giorno d'oggi riconosce apertamente di non provare alcuna colpa, né alcun rimorso.

Trovo ancora sensata una bella definizione di Guy Debord, sebbene io preferisca ritoccarla facendo uso di un concetto di Roland Barthes.[19] Io direi che siamo membri di una *Società dell'Immagine-a-colori*; salvo che, questa immagine è quella della fotografia digitalizzata. Siamo per questo incapaci di leggere la *singolarità irripetibile* che la vecchia immagine in bianco e nero poteva rivelare a chi passava sufficiente tempo con essa. Siamo divenuti incapaci di lasciarci "pungere" dalle immagini, siamo insensibili al *punctum* che l'immagine fotografica in bianco e nero – quella studiata amorevolmente da Roland Barthes – possiede ed esemplifica per il semplice fatto di essere unica e irripetibile. La fotografia in bianco e nero, anche riprodotta più volte, non perde questa sua unicità, perché questa è dovuta ad una azione che la luce esercita sulla pellicola in virtù delle proprietà degli alogenuri di argento. La fotografia in bianco e nero in tal modo ottenuta è innanzi tutto un indice, cioè un indicatore della presenza: il *mathema* della fotografia non è in tal senso l'esserci, il *Da-sein*, o l'*Il-y-a*, ma il *C'è stato* singolare (il *Da-gewesen-sein*) unico e irripetibile che accade diversamente in ogni φωτισμός, e di cui la luce si fa garante con l'inamovibilità del suo essere – che si differenzia dall'ente come la luce dal colore.

Che, pertanto, l'ente che noi sempre siamo (l'Esserci dell'uomo in questo caso) sia diventato ottuso di fronte alla rivelazione ontologica operata dalla fotografia altro non sta a significare che una incapacità di cogliere il mondo come traccia di una possibile fotografia, cioè trascrizione di una

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raccolte e pubblicate da Raymond Queneau, Adelphi, Milano 1996.
[19] Cfr. Roland Barthes, *La chambre claire. Note sur la photographie*, Gallimard, Paris 1980.

"scrittura della luce". Una traccia, si badi, che non è il *denotatum* della fotografia, ma che è piuttosto – come oggi potrebbe dire Lacan – il Significante che sempre "significa un soggetto per un altro significante".[20] Dovremmo chiederci quanto costi questa cecità all'uomo, cioè a quell'ente per il quale – in quanto già sempre esposto alla scrittura della luce – «nel suo essere, ne va di questo essere stesso» (Heidegger, *Essere e tempo*, § 4)

1.5

La violenza che appare da questa lettura non è per niente un fenomeno sociale, ma un evento (forse, come scrisse René Girard, l'*Arci-evento* fondatore) della metafisica. È legittimo chiedersi quanto la cultura possa fare per contrastare la riproduzione e la diffusione della violenza; per dirla con Kant: si può concepire una rivoluzione o una inversione nello sviluppo della Ragione? Ho ricordato in precedenza l'eroe troiano Enea, che il poeta Virgilio scelse come padre della civiltà cui apparteneva. Enea ci ricorda che non vi è una fondazione che possa lasciare inoperoso il passato dalle cui membra usciamo. Qualsiasi rivoluzione culturale equivale alla fondazione di una città, alla ricerca di una città che sia il luogo per il futuro della comunità, e contemporaneamente il luogo dove il passato che conta possa rivivere (*antiquam exquirite matrem*, "cercate l'antica madre": così il padre Anchise ammoniva il figlio e i Troiani tutti).[21] Vorrei trarre spunto da un episodio dell'*Eneide*, per dare forma al mio pensiero. Nel terzo libro del poema si racconta dell'approdo di Enea in una terra straniera alla ricerca di legna e fogliame adatti alla celebrazione di un sacrificio. Enea si avvicina a un cespuglio di rovi e strappa un rametto. E subito (*horrendum et dictu video mirabile monstrum* – abbrividisce Enea) vede sgorgare del sangue da quegli sterpi; i quali subito si fanno voce: la voce di Polidoro, figlio di Priamo, che racconta come sia stato ucciso a tradimento e poi trasformato in questa pianta senza nome.   Virgilio ci mostra Enea mentre ritrova nella sterpaglia una presenza di persona. Egli è l'eroe che trasforma una confusa pluralità dell'ambiente naturale in un vincolo personale e identitario, che storicizza la natura e le conferisce un senso comunitario. Enea possiede e manifesta quella *Stimmung* che a mio avviso servirebbe per neutralizzare il mito della Ragione, della specie. La violenza specista, infatti, presuppone sempre una autoctonia che manca ad Enea. Egli è per antonomasia l'eroe profugo, destinato al βίος ξενικός, all'erranza che deve fare a meno dell'ontologia consueta.

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[20] Cfr., per questa definizione, Jacques Lacan, *Séminaire XI. Les quatre concepts fondamentaux de la psychanalyse*, Seuil, Paris 1973.
[21] Verg. *Aeneis*, III, 96.

Ricostruire a mezzo della memoria e della storia la "persona ambientale", facendo uscire le cose della mera materialità della specie e del genere, per conferir loro lo statuto simbolico che possa consegnarle alla memoria e al rispetto. Se, come s'è detto, la violenza è sempre la vittoria della specie e dell'individuo-esemplare a scapito della persona, allora fare una persona del moderno "sciame digitale", leggere la personalità latente nelle cose, può rivelarsi una strada promettente.

2. Individui genuini ed esemplarità imperfetta

Vorrei provare a sviluppare in una direzione semio-filosofica questa piccola teoria della violenza come scaturente dal conflitto tra individui diversamente qualificati rispetto alla specie. La violenza sarebbe causata da qualche individuo che ritiene minacciata la propria rappresentatività (= esemplarità) di campione genuino o esemplare (nel senso di Nelson Goodman) di una specie.[22] Questa esemplarità, comincio col dire, non si possiede sempre. In base all'uso comune, le cose, le persone, si "deteriorano", vanno incontro ad una perdita delle loro marche. Ciò accade in qualche caso come una pura accidentalità: è allora una consunzione che accade nel tempo o nello spazio. Altre volte, invece, la perdita di esemplarità può, in altro senso, essere una condizione durevole: in questi casi è il sistema che *de-figura* quegli individui che non riesce a classificare senza entrare in crisi. In ambo i casi, secondo la mia teoria, la violenza scaturisce come conseguenza di una difficoltà classificatoria.

Va da sé che gli individui che vengono considerati deteriori non lo sono in senso assoluto, ma soltanto agli occhi di altri individui che li ritengono debolmente esemplari. In molte culture, ad esempio, agli individui Donna, sono bensì ritenuti partecipi della specie Uomo; e tuttavia vengono considerati alla stregua di esseri inferiori ai maschi. Parimenti, avviene in molti contesti cosali che i portatori di uno stigma sociale vengano ritenuti degli *esemplari-imperfetti* da coloro che io qui chiamerei gli *esemplari-al-quadrato*. Va detto che tanto l'imperfetta quanto la piena esemplarità sono ovviamente frutto di supposizioni e contrapposizioni sociali. Questa premessa ci aiuta a rispondere alla domanda di partenza sulla violenza. La violenza è quel dispositivo ontico-ontologico che fa sì che un individuo che si ritiene massimamente esemplare prevarichi su ogni altro individuo che può con-

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[22] Cfr., specialmente, le teorie della proiezione e del "new riddle of induction" presentate da Nelson Goodman in *Facts, Fiction, and Forecast*, Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge (Ma) and London, UK 1954. Per una riflessione su questo ambito, vedi il mio contributo "Esemplificazione, Riferimento e Verità" in M. La Matina e E. Franzini (a cura di), *Nelson Goodman filosofo dei linguaggi*, Quodlibet, Macerata 2009.

siderare imperfetto o degradato (occasionalmente o no). Talché, l'esercizio della violenza ha come condizione necessaria, ancorché non sufficiente, quei contesti "amebeici"[23] in cui qualche individuo *supposé*-esemplare si trovi a interagire significativamente con un dato individuo *supposé*-degradato. Non è qui questione di contrapposizione tra classi o specie, ma di "intensità" o gradualità all'interno di una stessa specie. In altre parole, quel che appare scatenare la violenza non è la differenza specifica, ma l'indifferenza co-specifica, ossia data tra individui in qualche modo membri di una e sola specie. Se ciò è plausibile, occorre chiedersi ora: posto che il primo esemplifica la specie (ossia, pretende di essere un *fair sample* di questa), che cosa esemplificherà (di cosa sarà *sample*) il secondo? Cosa esemplifica "il vecchio", "la donna", "il malato" agli occhi di un uomo che si suppone massimamente esemplare di Uomo?

2.1

Secondo la nota definizione di "esemplare" (*sample*) data da Nelson Goodman, un campione, un *sample* è tale, *se e solo se è un esempio genuino (fair sample) delle proprietà che possiede* (letteralmente o no). Esemplificare (*sampling*) implica quindi il *possesso* di certi tratti e la possibilità per altri individui di fare *riferimento* a questi tratti nell'uso di un qualche linguaggio.[24] Conseguentemente, si dirà che il campione (*sample*) possiede una data proprietà, se ne è un esempio genuino agli occhi di chiunque usi un linguaggio per fare riferimento ad esso. Ciò chiarito, una risposta ragionevole al quesito: "cosa è esemplificato da un dato malato, da una data donna, da un dato vecchio?" può essere la seguente: *ognuno di questi individui è supposto non possedere ciò che* al tempo t_0 *esemplifica*: il vecchio non è ritenuto un uomo pieno e la donna neppure; quest'ultima ontologicamente, il vecchio onticamente. Sicché, l'individuo che esercita violenza contro il vecchio o la donna o il malato esercita la sua pressione in nome e per conto della specie che crede di rappresentare (e "difende-

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[23] Ho chiamato "amebeico" ogni contesto di interazione sensitiva, umana od etologicamente significativa, così come può essere trattata nel quadro della teoria esposta in *Cronosensitività*, cit. cap. 6.

[24] Cfr. Nelson Goodman, *Languages of Art. An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*, Bobbs-Merrill, Indianapolis (Ma) 1968. Questo volume applica alle arti e ai sistemi simbolici le concezioni espresse da Goodman in *Structures of Appearance*. Tuttavia, la letteratura critica ha sovente trascurato di notare l'impatto che una teoria nominalistica potrebbe avere oggi, per esempio, rinunciando a servirsi della coppia "type/tokens" o di nozioni come "codice" *et similia*. Goodman non sviluppa un calcolo degli individui in quest'opera, ma invita in una nota il suo lettore a produrlo da sé. Cosa che noi abbiam provato a fare in modo non formalizzato in alcuni lavori precedenti. Cfr. di chi scrive, *Il problema del significante*, Carocci, Roma 2001.

re" dalla indifferenziazione). Ora, su cosa viene esercitata la violenza del primo? Rispondo così: L'individuo che esercita violenza sulla donna o sul vecchio o sul malato lo fa in quanto ritiene ciascuno di essi un esemplare affetto da *faiblesse*, un campione debole, che non può e, perciò non deve – a giudizio del violento – esemplificare le proprietà che non possiede. La violenza pare sanzionare l'*inesemplarità*.

2.2

Tuttavia, che tipo di individuo è il campione inesemplare? Potrei rispondere così: in primo luogo, lo direi un individuo non in grado di esemplificare le proprietà della specie cui appartiene: il vecchio sta all'uomo come la donna sta all'uomo; ontico e ontologico appaiono al violento dei casi di degrado. (In un altro senso, si potrebbe dire che il campione debole sia l'individuo supposto sacrificabile. Può, in tal senso, la violenza essere considerata una forma degradata di sacertà? Questa domanda richiede una analisi apposita, che qui non faremo). In secondo luogo, il malato, il vecchio, la donna non li posso ascrivere a un genere o una specie. La donna non può essere inclusa in una specie a parte, perché essa è membro della specie Uomo senza essere un uomo (*la donna è già sempre umana, senza dover essere un uomo*; questo spiega la difficoltà per la filosofia di spiegare la differenza sessuale); il vecchio è anch'egli umano, membro della specie Uomo: ma per gli Antichi restava, se pur debole, un uomo.

Nella età postmoderna, il vecchio, ciascun vecchio, è ritenuto spesso un umano sacrificabile, perché non possiede quel che dovrebbe esemplificare. Egli non ha per così dire il diritto di rivendicare le proprietà di Uomo. E, se lo fa, se le esemplifica, si tratterà di un *camouflage*: la genuinità del campione è difesa allora contro il campione non genuino. Si comprende in questa luce la "somatolatria" che vediamo nelle vite di molti anziani, costretti dal paradigma specista a sembrare perennemente giovani. Una cartina di tornasole per questo procedimento è la pubblicità contemporanea, sempre ansiosa di presentare campioni (*samples*) enfatici, quasi caricaturali. E, poiché il campione pubblicitario non è la "cosa stessa" ma le assomiglia soltanto, questa credibilità può esser considerata un effetto retorico della veridizione prodotta dal discorso pubblicitario; un discorso spesso costruito grazie all'uso di testimonial – questi sì genuini – che vantino una credibilità indipendente. Comprendiamo così perché accada, ad esempio, che la pubblicità e i media sempre più spesso esibiscano fino all'ostentazione nell'uomo anziano i caratteri plastici dell'uomo greco policleteo, quell'uomo senza età che ancora diciamo "classico": esso viene assunto come un modello senza tempo, equidistan-

te così dal momento della nascita come da quello della morte. Il *Doriforo di Policleto* può così rivivere come riferimento occulto nel *trash* delle moderne pubblicità di farmaci per la prostata.

2.3

Tutto il mondo antico conobbe spirali di violenza sulle quali non possiamo qui soffermarci. Diciamo solo che l'antropologia moderna è ancora troppo astiosa per riconoscere il debito profondo che la civiltà ha accumulato nei confronti del pensiero giudaico-cristiano in materia di rivelazione dei meccanismi occulti della violenza. Il lavoro di un antropologo come René Girard è disgraziatamente troppo poco apprezzato e isolato. Comunque sia, molti studiosi sono concordi nel ritenere che il Cristianesimo, l'annuncio di Gesù Cristo e, insieme, la travagliata storia del popolo di Israele costituiscano una singolare virtuosa eccezione allo specismo generatore di violenza che era largamente diffuso nell'Antichità classica e nelle società basate sulla logica sacrificale. Il giudeo-cristianesimo, in un modo davvero imprevedibile, ha introdotto nelle culture umane il *sentore* secondo cui un individuo debole è bensì incapace di comunicare alla propria specie, ma proprio per questo esso *può* essere "guardato" nella sua *haecceitas*, nella individualità (non della specie, ma) della persona.

Il Samaritano della parabola evangelica *coglie il sentore di questa inesemplarità*, mentre *il sacerdote e il levita colgono solo la mancanza di esemplarità* dell'individuo-Uomo ridotto dai briganti 'mezzo morto' (ἡμιθανής). Inoltre, occorre presupporre che l'individuo personale – quello cioè che nasce dalla disaffiliazione del singolo dalla classe, cioè dell'individuo *faible* dalla specie – possa non essere soltanto umano. Un certo albero, un certo gatto, un dato fiore possono schiudere la persona dalla propria individualità, soprattutto nella rivelazione della loro *faiblesse*. Il fatto che non si sia spesso in grado di differenziare una quercia dall'altra o un elefante dal suo vicino non è un argomento contro il riconoscimento della loro personalità. Al contrario, quasi sempre una difficoltà nel classificare offre lo spunto per ripensare la dimensione personale del vivente uomo alla luce della οἰκειότης che il Creato possiede in quanto tale.

Se questo è plausibile, la riflessione sulla violenza ci avvicina a una diversa spiegazione della *debolezza*. Contrariamente a quanto sovente si crede, la debolezza *non è la causa*, *ma la conseguenza* della perdita di marche specifiche. Non si diventa deboli *perché* ci si ammala, ma si viene etichettati "malati" *quando* certi individui si ritengono minacciati dalla esemplarità imperfetta del sofferente che cercano di espellere dalla classe-Uomo. Parimenti, non si è deboli perché donne, o perché vecchi: si viene etichettati dispregiativamente "vecchi" o "donne" solo quando

l'individuo supposto esemplare si sente minacciato dalla coesistenza di individui che considera esemplari imperfetti della sua specie. Inoltre, se le cose stanno così, se la debolezza è il frutto di una opzione classificatoria interna a una specie, allora possiamo scorgere il carattere squilibrante della malattia, che può essere imputata non solo a chi è ritenuto perdere esemplarità, ma anche a chi ne acquisisce in eccesso. Lo dice molto bene Massimo il Confessore, quando scrive che «la malattia è chiaramente una carenza della salute, e un eccesso materialità: una condizione priva di misura e di ordine»: [25] si tratta di una inesemplarità che può assumere indifferentemente le forme della mancanza o quelle della sovrabbondanza di tratti caratterizzanti.

Che si tratti di una violenza sempre frutto di una opzione classificatoria e non di una conseguenza necessaria è facile capirlo da pochi esempi. La 'debolezza' di un vecchio può rivelare saggezza, quella di una donna può dischiudere una diversa visione della vita, e quella di un 'malato' può conferire senso alla relazione. Una rivelazione di questo senso è dischiusa nel Vangelo, dove si dice che il Figlio di Dio è venuto come medico per i malati, non per i sani. Ora, non esiste in senso logico una "classe dei malati". Il malato – ogni potenziale individuo malato – è tale in quanto si discosta dalla sanità della specie e non già perché costituisce un'altra specie. In senso logico, non esiste neppure una classe dei "medici": solo la relazione terapeutica istituisce e articola qualcosa come una malattia e qualcosa come una relazione terapeutica. Non sarà mai sottolineato abbastanza che la violenza scaturisce dalla paura del simile e non, come spesso si crede, dalla paura del diverso. La donna è "simile all'uomo" nel mistero della differenza sessuale: diremo che essa – proprio perché *sempre umana senza dover essere uomo* – mette *in crisi la nozione stessa di Uomo come specie*. Ed è per questo motivo che la differenza sessuale può difficilmente essere spiegata in termini di genere e specie e differenza. Da parte sua, Vecchio non è una classe diversa da Uomo, ma i suoi individui sono piuttosto segmenti temporali della classe Uomo, dal momento che non posseggono né esemplificano alcuna proprietà che non sia già di per sé una *Merkmal* posseduta ed esemplificata da altri individui della specie Uomo: il vecchio è tale per la sua temporanea imperfezione nell'esemplificare la pienezza di Uomo. Queste imperfezioni esistono soltanto nella ideologia degli individui che ritengono sé stessi degli *esemplari-al-quadrato* e non accettano che altri esemplari (che stessi ritengono *esemplari imperfetti*) siano etichettabili in modo omonimo.

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[25] «Ἡ νόσος, εὔδηλον, ὡς ἔλλειψίς ἐστιν ὑγιείας, καί ὑπερβολή σωμάτων ἐνύλων, οὔτε μέτρον, οὔτε τάξιν ἐχομένη» (Max. Conf. Ἐκ τοῦ ἁγίου Ἱεροθέου).

2.4

Si fa, pertanto, strada l'idea che i campioni (i *samples*, gli esemplari) possano essere suddivisi non solo – come ho fatto nei miei lavori precedenti[26] – in campioni *genuini* e campioni *vicari* (ad esempio, l'Icona bizantina non è la sostanza, la οὐσία del dio, ma è quel πρόσωπον che pone in esistenza una relazione vicariante tra il dio e l'orante), ma anche in *campioni imperfetti* o *inesemplari*. Fra i due estremi del campione genuino e del campione vicario va quindi posto il caso della *esemplarità imperfetta*, ossia la condizione che rende un individuo simile, in parte o meno, a un campione (*sample*) che altri individui ritengono non possegga esemplarmente (massimamente) le proprietà che dovrebbe esemplificare. Questa supposta imperfezione del campione, questa sua "inesemplarità" – ripeto – è sempre data agli occhi di qualcuno e può essere ontica, se concerne gli accidenti, o ontologica, se affetta invece differenze che sono *Merkmale*, cioè tratti, direbbe Wittgenstein, *grammaticali* della specie.

Ciò che fa nascere curiosità è il soggiacente meccanismo di individuazione: sembrerebbe infatti che il campione inesemplare sia fatto bersaglio della violenza non in quanto portatore di tratti specifici che si oppongano ad altri tratti, bensì *perché sprovvisto di tratti individuativi specifici*: cosa che lo colloca pertanto in una zona antropica adiafora o "nemica". La violenza – questa la nostra ipotesi – viene perciò esercitata non verso qualcuno che possiede (e in quanto possiede) certi tratti, ma *verso colui che esemplifica* – in un dato linguaggio e in una data circostanza che sono comuni al violento e alla vittima – *quei tratti che non possiede* o che possiede in modo supposto inesemplare. In altre parole, i tratti – se così ci tocca ragionare – ci sono, sia nell'esemplare-al-quadrato sia nell'individuo inesemplare: il conflitto violento non è però una contrapposizione di tratti, ma una contrapposizione tra supposti *doppi*, un conflitto tra individui non differenziabili che a mezzo di una presa di posizione violenta.

Infine, chi fa violenza a qualcuno non agisce per differenza di tratti ma perché i tratti non fanno differenza ai suoi occhi. Il violento agisce nella indistinzione dei tratti e fa sempre violenza a un certo qualcuno, poiché cerca di distruggere la sua esistenza qui e ora. Non ciò che è comune è qui preso di mira, bensì il non potersi accomunare o diversificare le singolarità adiafore. Chiediamoci allora in quale relazione possono stare l'individualità e la specificità nella condizione che per solito si dà quando

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[26] Mi permetto di citare il mio *L'accadere del suono* (Mimesis, Milano 2017), dove assumo come la relazione stessa con il suono da noi prodotto abbia una origine indessicale che non può essere eradicata; questa origine, questo grambo del suono, è la sua matrice e la sua madre, e lo custodisce sempre come un individuo unico e irripetibile.

qualcuno attiva il meccanismo della violenza. Cosa fa violenza a cosa? Quale ontologia può sussumere la relazione violenta?

2.5

Alcuni filosofi contemporanei[27] sostengono una teoria – già, peraltro, evidente nel pensiero di Simondon o Deleuze – secondo la quale una ontologia filosofica potrebbe fare a meno degli individui senza cadere nel platonismo: secondo questa corrente di pensiero, non c'è posto per individui unici e irripetibili. Tutto si spiegherebbe postulando l'esistenza di "tratti", suscettibili di concretizzarsi come tali: tratti singolari, e però comuni e ripetibili. Se pur bene argomentata, io trovo inaccettabile questa proposta, così come mi pare da respingere ogni tentativo di ricondurre la metafisica a un unico principio (o il solo l'individuo, o i soli universali, o i *Qualia*, i *Quanta*): l'errore è in tutti questi casi un atto di eccessiva fiducia nella Ragione, un atto di ὕβρις, che sacrifica la molteplicità della vita alla tassonomia della scienza o della filosofia. Insieme a Nelson Goodman, ritengo che fare a meno degli Individui – come concrezioni uniche e irripetibili – richieda il sacrificio non indifferente del senso comune e del buon senso. Oltretutto, questa metafisica senza individui si scontra con una intuizione che personalmente, e come uomo e come studioso, ritengo insopprimibile: il sentore che l'individuo, soprattutto quando de-figurato dal pregiudizio ideologico, sia sempre unico e irripetibile.

Se adesso chiamiamo 'persona' (πρόσωπον) questa unicità irripetibile data nel faccia-a-faccia, allora possiamo ammettere che l'Altro, ogni altro che non sia sempre esemplarmente l'individuo di una data specie, è per l'individuo il fenomeno molare che permette di cogliere la trascendenza come *rivelazione, non di qualcosa ma di qualcuno*. L'imperfetta esemplarità che cogliamo in una data persona rende possibile per l'individuo autotrascendersi e trascendere così i limiti della sua specie. Per questa via viene infatti scoperta la differenza assoluta tra me, individuo, e quel dato individuo che è insieme a me, qui e ora, la persona, il πρόσωπον, lette-

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[27] Alcuni di questi pensatori sono tra i miei preferiti, sia per rigore metodologico sia per originalità. Tuttavia, come a volte accade, non posso condividere le conclusioni cui essi pervengono. E sono quasi dispiaciuto che tra questi autori e me si debba dare un tale disaccordo. Per parte mia, ritengo irrinunciabile la nozione di individuo e quella, prossima ad essa, di πρόσωπον. Anzi, è forse perché non si dà scienza delle cose individuali (*individuum est ineffabile*) che la filosofia deve pensare oltre il limite della metafisica e della classificazione degli enti. Scriveva Vladimir Lossky che la "persona" non è definibile se non come «l'irriducibilità stessa dell'individuo alla propria natura». Un recente lutto mi ha privato di mia mamma. E sono certo di non aver con lei perduto solo dei *features* o dei *qualia*, ma una individualità (un *concretum*) irripetibile.

ralmente: *colui-che-mi-sta-faccia-a-faccia*. Il πρόσωπον non è un campione imperfetto della specie, ma il limite stesso della mia pretesa *vis* tassonomica. Colui che mi sta ora faccia-a-faccia è colui che mi fa assumere la mia condizione di soggetto come fosse una *positio debilis*. In questo si dà una evidente inversione di ruoli: la debolezza supposta di "colui che mi sta ora faccia-a-faccia" rivela la reale debolezza della mia pretesa di sciogliere mediante il calcolo induttivo o deduttivo la questione cruciale di ogni grammatica: la *ratio* che lega il tipo alle sue repliche, il *type* ai *tokens*, gli individui ad una specie.

3. Postludio

Occorre resistere alla tentazione di innalzare teoreticamente l'esemplare al suo presunto tipo. L'imperfezione del *token* smette di esistere non appena io rinuncio a riferirlo a un *type*. Facile, a questo punto, parafrasare la pensosità di Ludwig Wittgenstein, per tentare una conclusione più nostra. Io direi che *la supposta debolezza di un campione nell'esemplificare la sua specie significa la debolezza e i limiti della mia grammatica e, così, dello stesso mio mondo*. È solo quando abbiamo sentore di una presenza inamovibile e insupponibile (quella del πρόσωπον) che possiamo esser-*ci* davanti ad Altri come *ci*-siamo davanti al mistero, all'eros, alla morte – che diventa così 'sorella' morte. Il riconoscimento della persona (questa ἀναγνώρισις che non presuppone la riduzione del Qui e dell'Ora ad un luogo o evento passato o ad una precognizione spaziotemporale data) è riconoscimento del carattere *cronosensitivo* della conoscenza, che è sempre genuinamente erotica. La disposizione cronosensitiva annuncia l'ingresso dell'Altro nell'orizzonte cognitivo del soggetto mentre ne dissolve la grammatica. Nella sensitività all'altro che *ad-viene* può sciogliersi il perverso legame che lega le ragioni del linguaggio alle loro conseguenze violente. Liberati dall'ansia di classificare ogni nuova istanza, possiamo sottrarci alla cogenza dei predicati familiari e ascoltare, finalmente, quel che si rende manifesto nell'incertezza dei sostrati. E può accadere allora, nell'amore, come nella vita teoretica, che la potenza si riveli debolezza, e la stoltezza si riveli cosparsa – come voleva Benjamin – di schegge del tempo messianico.

L'essere inesemplare. Per un umanismo non violento

In this article I attempt to develop a small semiophilosophical theory of violence, moving from the hypothesis that the current spiral in which we are all enmeshed may be derived from a logical-semantic character, which is normally present as such in taxonomies of all kinds, but has developed anomalously in modern cultures. The exemplariness of individuals, so I hypothesize, would act as a divisive social marker, causing conflicts between individuals who are (or are supposed to be) differently qualified relative to the species to which they claim to belong. Violence toward some given conspecific individuals would be caused by those individuals who, from time to time, feel their representativeness qua "fair samples" (in the sense Nelson Goodman assigned to these expressions) to be threatened. Here then is where the unexemplary being – i.e., the being who renounces its claim to lawlikeness with respect to the species or to the characters of the hegemonic community – can become the pick to unlock a new ontology of the human and beyond.

KEYWORDS: Violenza, Individualità, Specismo, Campione genuino, Nelson Goodman

Stefano Marino
La "grande ragione del corpo".
Osservazioni sulla presenza di Nietzsche
nel neopragmatismo e nella somaestetica

> Leib bin ich ganz und gar, und Nichts ausserdem;
> und Seele ist nur ein Wort für ein Etwas am Leibe.
> F. W. Nietzsche, *Also sprach Zarathustra*.

1.

Com'è noto, "Friedrich W. Nietzsche muore il 25 agosto del 1900, al termine di una malattia che da circa undici anni ha reso improduttiva la sua mente. Nonostante la suggestione 'epocale' che questa data suscita, egli è, stando alla nuda evidenza dei numeri, un pensatore del [XIX] secolo"; ciononostante, Nietzsche è anche l'"autore che forse più d'ogni altro ha influenzato e caratterizzato il pensiero del Novecento", grazie alla "straordinaria capacità di anticipazione sul suo proprio tempo di cui il pensiero nietzschiano dà prova"[1]. L'eredità di Nietzsche si è dispiegata in maniera straordinariamente ampia nell'ambito della cultura contemporanea in tutte le sue dimensioni: filosofia, arte, scienze, letteratura, musica, cinema e altro ancora. Limitandoci al solo piano filosofico, si può facilmente notare come tale eredità si sia manifestata, oltre che in un infinito numero di contributi specialistici dedicati a ogni aspetto della sua biografia o all'approfondimento di singoli temi e momenti specifici del suo pensiero, anche in un'ampia serie di grandi letture e interpretazioni sviluppate direttamente da alcuni fra i massimi protagonisti della filosofia del Novecento. A testimonianza di ciò, è sufficiente ricordare solamente alcuni fra i protagonisti della filosofia novecentesca che hanno spesso trovato degli stimoli fecondi per l'elaborazione delle proprie autonome prospettive di pensiero proprio impegnandosi in un confronto critico con quella "vera svolta nel pensiero occidentale"[2] che è stato il pensiero di

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[1] C. Gentili, *A partire da Nietzsche*, Marietti, Genova 1998, p. 9.
[2] Th. W. Adorno, *Dialettica negativa*, trad. it. di P. Lauro, ed. it. a cura di S. Petrucciani, Einaudi, Torino 2004, p. 23.

Nietzsche: da Karl Löwith a Karl Jaspers, da Eugen Fink a Max Horkheimer, da Martin Heidegger a Theodor W. Adorno, da Jacques Derrida a Gilles Deleuze, da Michel Foucault a Paul Ricoeur, da Bernard Williams ad Arthur C. Danto, e molti altri ancora[3].

Nel presente contributo, intitolato *La "grande ragione del corpo". Osservazioni sulla presenza di Nietzsche nel neopragmatismo e nella somaestetica*, proverò appunto a confrontarmi con una piccola parte della ricezione e dell'eredità di Nietzsche nel XX e XXI secolo, focalizzando la mia attenzione sul movimento filosofico che è stato abitualmente definito come "neopragmatismo" (e, in particolare, sulla figura di Richard Rorty) e poi su un ulteriore sviluppo di tale movimento negli ultimi decenni che ha preso il nome di somaestetica e che si deve soprattutto al filosofo statunitense Richard Shusterman. Il senso e lo scopo di questo articolo, pertanto, non consisteranno tanto nel ricostruire determinati momenti del pensiero di Nietzsche in quanto tale, quanto piuttosto nel confrontare sinteticamente due diverse letture di Nietzsche che sono emerse nello stesso contesto (quello, cioè, della tradizione di pensiero del neopragmatismo) e nel tentare di sfruttare tale occasione per mettere in luce sia alcune caratteristiche del pensiero aperto, vasto, plurale e talvolta positivamente disorientante di Nietzsche, sia per mettere in luce alcuni rapporti di affinità e divergenza interni al neopragmatismo stesso. In altre parole, così come, per esempio, confrontare fra loro le letture di Nietzsche offerte da Heidegger e Gadamer può rivelarsi uno strumento utile sia per cogliere alcune sfumature del pensiero nietzschiano rivelate da tali interpretazioni, sia per notare certi rapporti di affinità e divergenza interni alla tradizione dell'ermeneutica novecentesca[4], in un modo non dissimile si può tentare di sfruttare lo stesso procedimento anche nel caso di tradizioni e dibattiti più recenti, come il neopragmatismo e la somaestetica.

2.

Che sia possibile, in generale, stabilire degli accostamenti fra alcune parti del pensiero frammentario, aforistico e volutamente non sistematico di Nietzsche e alcune dimensioni della tradizione di pensiero del pragmatismo, è abbastanza noto. Per esempio, a proposito delle riunioni del

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[3] Su ciò, cfr. ad esempio E. Behler, *Nietzsche in the Twentieth Century*, in B. Magnus e K.M. Higgins (a cura di), *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1996, pp. 281-322; M. Ferraris, *Nietzsche nella filosofia del Novecento*, Bompiani, Milano 2009.

[4] Su ciò, mi sia consentito di rimandare al mio saggio *L'ombra del nichilismo e il dramma di Zarathustra: Gadamer su Nietzsche*, in *Fusioni di orizzonti. Saggi su estetica e linguaggio in Hans-Georg Gadamer*. Aracne, Roma 2012, pp. 105-137.

Metaphysical Club da cui scaturì l'impulso iniziale alla fondazione della corrente di pensiero del pragmatismo – e a proposito della valorizzazione, da parte dei pragmatisti, del "concetto di credenza come 'ciò per cui l'uomo è pronto ad agire", come "[ciò che] ci guida nella ricerca [e] mira a definire le condizioni più adatte alla vita", cosicché "il pensiero trova la sua realizzazione nella credenza, la quale definisce un abito o una regola dell'azione" –, è stato notato come viga una certa prossimità fra "la semiosi illimitata di Peirce" e "l'infinità delle interpretazioni in Nietzsche"[5]. Oltre a ciò, com'è noto, sono numerosi gli studi sul rapporto fra il pensiero di Nietzsche e, ad esempio, il trascendentalismo proto-pragmatista di Ralph Waldo Emerson[6].

Un filosofo neopragmatista del secondo Novecento, Richard Rorty, ha insistito in modo particolarmente forte sulla possibilità di accostare il pensiero di Nietzsche alla tradizione del pragmatismo, o addirittura di leggere Nietzsche come un pragmatista – con riferimenti, nel caso di Rorty, non tanto all'anima peirceiana del pragmatismo, quanto piuttosto alla sua anima jamesiana e deweyana[7]. Prima di addentrarci in questo argomento, tuttavia, è bene fornire alcune indicazioni e coordinate minimali sul contesto generale di cui stiamo parlando, ovvero sul neopragmatismo. A proposito degli sviluppi forse più stimolanti del pensiero pragmatista dagli ultimi decenni del secolo scorso fino a oggi, si è soliti parlare infatti, in campo storiografico-filosofico, di "convergenza tra filosofia analitica e pragmatismo" (Quine, Sellars, Davidson), di rapporto fra "pragmatismo e teoria critica" (Apel, Habermas, Honneth), di "persistenza della tradizione" (Bernstein, Margolis) e, infine, di "neopragmatismo" propriamente detto, con i nomi di Putnam e Rorty, quanto all'origine del movimento, e con i nomi di Susan Haack, Cornel West, Robert Brandom e Richard Shusterman, quanto alle "tendenze odierne"[8]. Questa sequenza di nomi e approcci è anche significativa ai fini di una rapidissima ricostruzione del singolare itinerario intellettuale di Rorty, il quale pubblicò nel 1967 *The Linguistic Turn*, il suo primo libro (come curatore), raccogliendo diversi contributi importanti sul tema del linguaggio nella tradizione della filosofia analitica, ma il quale gradualmente prese le distanze dalla filosofia analitica (all'epoca predo-

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[5] M. Ferraris, *Etica e politica*, in Id. (a cura di), *Guida a Nietzsche*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 1999, pp. 61-62.

[6] Cfr., ad esempio, B. Zavatta, *Individuality and Beyond: Nietzsche Reads Emerson*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2019.

[7] Su ciò, cfr. ad esempio J.P. Murphy, *Il pragmatismo*, trad. it. di A. Pagnini, il Mulino, Bologna 1997, pp. 19-89; C. West, *La filosofia americana*, ed. it. a cura di F.R. Recchia Luciani, Editori Riuniti, Roma 199, pp. 55-90.

[8] Cfr. R.M. Calcaterra, G. Maddalena e G. Marchetti (a cura di), *Il pragmatismo. Dalle origini agli sviluppi contemporanei*, Carocci, Roma 2015, p. 191 ss.

minante negli Stati Uniti), si avvicinò all'ermeneutica, al decostruzionismo e soprattutto al pragmatismo, e infine delineò un'originale sintesi di queste influenze nei suoi lavori della maturità. Fra questi lavori, mi limito a citare qui le monografie *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (1979) e *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989), e poi le raccolte di saggi *Consequences of Pragmatism* (1982), *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth* (1991) ed *Essays on Heidegger and Others* (1991)[9].

Nonostante l'espressione "svolta linguistica" sia da associare, in senso stretto e rigoroso, al primo libro di Rorty – ancora saldamente collocato all'interno della cornice di quella filosofia analitica che invece, nel giro di pochi anni, diventerà il bersaglio principale della sua critica filosofica e anche della sua ironia corrosiva ma al contempo bonaria[10] –, probabilmente si può comunque dire che il *linguistic turn*, inteso in senso ampio, non abbia mai cessato di costituire il paradigma di riferimento anche per l'evoluzione successiva del pensiero di Rorty all'insegna dell'ermeneutica (seppure secondo un'accezione un po' *sui generis* del termine[11]) e del pragmatismo. Non è un caso, sotto questo punto di vista, che alla fine dell'Introduzione alla raccolta *Essays on Heidegger and Others* Rorty dichiari che "si dovrebbero leggere i [suoi] saggi come esempi di ciò che un gruppo di filosofi contemporanei ha chiamato 'pensiero debole'" (SF 2, p. 10), con un chiaro riferimento, in questo caso, alla celebre raccolta di saggi *Il pensiero debole* curata da Vattimo e Rovatti nel 1983. Tutto ciò, come vedremo, ha i suoi effetti significativi anche sul piano della particolare lettura di Nietzsche offerta da Rorty.

Come si legge al principio della raccolta *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, lo scopo dei saggi ivi raccolti è quello di esaminare "la relazione tra la tradizione post-nietzschiana del pensiero franco-tedesco […] e la tradizione pragmatista e anti-rappresentazionalista interna alla filosofia analitica"; più precisamente, "il contesto in cui i miei saggi intendono collocare la filosofia post-nietzschiana", scrive Rorty, "è il pragmatismo" (SF 2, pp. 3-4). A tal proposito, nell'Introduzione a *Essays on Heidegger and Others* Rorty fa riferimento a due brani di Nietzsche, tratti dai

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[9] In questo saggio, per brevità, i testi principali di Richard Rorty verranno citati con le seguenti sigle: CP (*Conseguenze del pragmatismo*, trad. it. di F. Elefante, Feltrinelli, Milano 1986); FDF (*La filosofia dopo la filosofia. Contingenza, ironia e solidarietà*, trad. it. di G. Boringhieri, Laterza, Roma-Bari 1989); FSN (*La filosofia e lo specchio della natura*, trad. it. di G. Millone e R. Salizzoni, Bompiani, Milano 1992); SF 1 (*Scritti filosofici 1*, trad. it. di M. Maraffa, ed. it. a cura di A.G. Gargani, Laterza, Roma-Bari 1994); SF 2 (*Scritti filosofici 2*, trad. it. di B. Agnese, ed. it. a cura di A.G. Gargani, Laterza, Roma-Bari 1993).

[10] Cfr. P. Tripodi, *Storia della filosofia analitica. Dalle origini ai giorni nostri*, Carocci, Roma 2015, pp. 259-264.

[11] Cfr. M. Ferraris, *Storia dell'ermeneutica*, Bompiani, Milano 1997, pp. 356-360.

Frammenti postumi 1885-1887 e *1888-1889*[12], sull'inammissibilità delle nozioni di "conoscenza in sé" e "cosa-in-sé" e sulla riconduzione delle cosiddette "categorie di ragione" a "una mera idiosincrasia di determinate specie animali"[13]; inoltre, nello stesso contesto Rorty fa anche riferimento al celebre testo di Nietzsche *Come il "mondo vero" finì per diventare favola*, incluso nel *Crepuscolo degli idoli*, e alla "famosa osservazione […] espressa nello scritto *Su verità e menzogna in senso extramorale* in merito alla verità come 'esercito mobile di metafore'" (SF 2, p. 5)[14]. Ora, ciò che Rorty chiama "la *versione nietzschiana di pragmatismo*" ha verosimilmente "poco a che fare con le speranze sociali caratteristiche di James e Dewey", e "il prospettivismo [di Nietzsche], il suo rifiuto di ammettere una concezione di verità slegata da interessi e bisogni", è legato piuttosto a una "aspirazione alla perfezione individuale" (anziché al "sentimento emersoniano-americano di un nuovo genere di libertà sociale"); ciononostante, Rorty non esita comunque ad affermare che "Nietzsche fu anticartesiano, anti-rappresentazionalista, anti-essenzialista almeno quanto Dewey", e che, per questo motivo, la lettura di Nietzsche risulta utile per "capire i pragmatisti più recenti e linguisticizzati – Quine, Putnam, Davidson – altrettanto quanto […] Dewey" (SF 2, p. 5).

Riguardo alla crescente importanza che Nietzsche (e, più in generale, il confronto con la filosofia tedesca e francese) assume nell'itinerario neopragmatista di Rorty, si tenga conto del fatto che in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, la prima grande monografia di Rorty, Nietzsche viene citato molto raramente. Qui, nel contesto della critica rortyana al fondazionalismo, rappresentazionalismo, coscienzialismo, corrispondentismo e soggettivismo/oggettivismo moderni, si legge ad esempio che nell'Ottocento e nel primo Novecento alcune "occasionali proteste contro [il]

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[12] Cfr. F. Nietzsche, *Frammenti postumi 1885-1887*, in *Opere*, ed. it. a cura di G. Colli e M. Montinari, vol. VIII, t. I, 5 [14], p. 179; Id., *Frammenti postumi 1888-1889*, in *Opere*, cit., vol. VIII, t. 3, 14 [152], p. 123.

[13] In un contesto argomentativo simile, nel saggio *Heidegger, contingenza e pragmatismo* (SF 2, p. 42) Rorty fa riferimento a un frammento nietzschiano sulle "categorie di ragione" come "mezzi per accomodare il mondo a fini utilitari" (F. Nietzsche, *Frammenti postumi 1888-1889*, cit., 14 [153], p. 125).

[14] "Che cos'è dunque la verità? Un mobile esercito di metafore, metonimie, antropomorfismi, in breve una somma di relazioni umane che sono state potenziate poeticamente e retoricamente, che sono state trasferite e abbellite, e che dopo un lungo uso sembrano a un popolo solide, canoniche e vincolanti: le verità sono illusioni di cui si è dimenticata la natura illusoria, sono metafore che si sono logorate e hanno perduto ogni forza sensibile" (F. Nietzsche, *Su verità e menzogna in senso extramorale*, in *Opere*, cit., vol. III, t. II, p. 361). Sulla tematica del rapporto tra verità, menzogna e linguaggio in Nietzsche (con un focus soprattutto sulla sua produzione giovanile), cfr. ad esempio M. Clark, *Language and Truth: Nietzsche's Early Denial of Truth*, e R. Pippin, *Truth and Lies in the Early Nietzsche*, entrambi in D.W. Conway (a cura di), *Nietzsche. Critical Assessments*, Routledge, London-New York 1998, vol. 2, pp. 19-43, 286-303.

modo di concepire la cultura come bisognosa di 'fondazione' e contro le pretese di una teoria della conoscenza che vuole soddisfare questo compito (ad esempio da parte di Nietzsche e James) passarono del tutto inosservate" (FSN, p. 8). Invece, nei saggi successivi raccolti nei volumi di *Philosophical Papers* e nella monografia *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (tradotta in italiano col titolo *La filosofia dopo la filosofia*) i riferimenti a Nietzsche si moltiplicano e il filosofo tedesco viene arruolato da Rorty fra coloro che, appartenendo a "una tradizione di filosofia ironica", avrebbero benemeritamente contribuito all'affermazione di "contestualismo e prospettivismo", ad "accantona[re] la distinzione realtà/apparenza", a "sdivinizza[re] la verità" e persino a "fare consapevolmente ciò che Hegel aveva fatto inconsapevolmente" (FDF, pp. 96, 101, 29, 54, 238n): cioè, secondo Rorty, far passare la filosofia dal paradigma della scienza rigorosa (o, anzi, della più rigorosa fra tutte le scienze, tanto da ambire a ergersi a garante della fondazione della scientificità in quanto tale) a un paradigma di incessante narrazione, ridescrizione e ricontestualizzazione. A tal proposito, si ricordi che uno degli scopi di *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* è proprio quello di promuovere "una svolta generale dalla teoria alla narratività", la quale per Rorty "rappresenterebbe la rinuncia a voler afferrare tutti i lati della nostra vita con un unico colpo d'occhio, a descriverli con un unico vocabolario", e la quale "sfocerebbe nel riconoscimento [della] 'contingenza del linguaggio' – il fatto che non c'è modo di uscire dagli svariati vocabolari che abbiamo impiegato per trovare un metavocabolario che in qualche modo tenga conto di *tutti i vocabolari possibili*" (FDF, p. 5).

Per Rorty, coniugando gli stimoli offerti, fra gli altri, da autori come Nietzsche, James e Dewey, diventa possibile passare da un'immagine del progresso conoscitivo e culturale "come corrispondenza sempre più accurata tra mente e mondo" a un'immagine di tale progresso "come crescente capacità di dar forma a strumenti necessari alle diverse specie per sopravvivere, moltiplicarsi e trasformarsi" (SF 2, pp. 5-6). Secondo Rorty, l'anti-rappresentazionalismo sarebbe la concezione "di Nietzsche e di Foucault nella stessa misura in cui è quella di Dewey o Davidson" (SF 1, p. 20); a suo giudizio, tanto in Nietzsche quanto in Dewey sarebbe possibile trovare "la tesi […] secondo cui il tentativo di distinguere la decisione pratica da una ricerca della verità impersonale e non prospettica (il tipo di ricerca di cui si ritiene che la scienza della natura costituisca il paradigma) è un tentativo di 'consolazione metafisica', il tipo di consolazione che veniva un tempo offerto dalla religione" (SF 1, p. 79). Più precisamente, secondo Rorty, cogliere "una convergenza tra la filosofia europea post-nietzschiana e la filosofia analitica post-positivista verso un'unica descrizione della ricerca in termini pragmatisti" come *re-contextualisation* aiuterebbe a liberarsi dalla "tendenza a considerare il

linguaggio [come] qualcosa di *più* che un semplice insieme di strumenti": cioè, aiuterebbe a vedere finalmente "il linguaggio [come] un insieme di strumenti più che [come] un insieme di rappresentazioni, vale a dire di strumenti che, a causa di ciò che Dewey chiamava 'il continuum mezzo-fine', producono cambiamenti su chi li usa e sui prodotti derivati dal loro uso" (SF 2, p. 6). A tal proposito, Rorty si spinge fino al punto di parlare di una "descrizione Nietzsche-Dewey del linguaggio" come "sequenze di segni e rumori usate da alcuni organismi per ottenere quello che voglio-no", pur aggiungendo subito dopo, però, che anche una tale descrizione "non è certo la verità autentica sul linguaggio" (data l'insistenza di Rorty sul bisogno di abbandonare *del tutto* la questione della verità), ma è "soltanto una verità utile in più sul linguaggio" – utile, ad esempio, per "abbandonare [il] 'rappresentazionalismo' [e] quindi la distinzione realtà/apparenza" (SF 2, p. 8). Secondo Rorty, "la proposta di abbandonare l'ideale di una conoscenza filosofica di tipo fondativo, astorico e universale" sarebbe "una proposta comune sia a Nietzsche che al pragmatismo" (SF 2, p. 16). Più precisamente, per Rorty, l'"elemento comune tra il prospettivismo di Nietzsche", "il 'pragmatismo concettuale' di C.I. Lewis" e le "ridefinizioni deweyane di termini come 'verità' e 'razionalità' in termini di contributo a 'soddisfazione' e 'crescita'" spingerebbe a intendere "le forme in cui noi pensiamo, le strutture delle nostre conoscenze [come] malleabili", cioè come categorie o paradigmi che noi modifichiamo "ogni volta che un simile cambiamento ci mette in condizione di soddisfare meglio i nostri desideri, rendendo le cose più facilmente manipolabili" (SF 2, p. 42).

In *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, forse il libro più originale di Rorty, si allude in molteplici occasioni alle affinità fra "un pragmatista come James e un prospettivista come Nietzsche", se non addirittura al "pragmatismo e prospettivismo nietzschiani", nonché alla "importanza cruciale" di Nietzsche nella storia della filosofia per via della sua sottolineatura che "qualunque descrizione, qualunque sia il suo oggetto, nasce dalle esigenze di una situazione storicamente determinata" (FDF, pp. 51, 44, 78, 126)[15]. D'altra parte, ciò non toglie che Rorty – il quale ammette di risentire molto dell'influenza dell'interpretazione di Nietzsche offerta da Alexander Nehamas[16] – muova anche delle critiche a Nietzsche, il quale, a suo giudizio, "non era soltanto un non-metafisico, ma anche un teorico anti-metafisico", persino "ossessionato" dalla metafisica (FDF, p. 120), e quindi incapace di limitarsi a trascurare le questioni metafisiche (come

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[15] Nel dire ciò, Rorty fa riferimento in particolare a F. Nietzsche, *Umano, troppo umano I*, in *Opere*, cit., vol. IV, t. II, §2, p. 16.
[16] Cfr. A. Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA) 1985.

farebbero i più sobri pragmatisti, perlomeno secondo la non indiscutibile lettura di Rorty), bensì bisognoso di rovesciare, sovvertire, oltrepassare, superare o decostruire la metafisica – così come, più tardi, anche Heidegger e Derrida. Secondo Rorty, "ogni qualvolta pretende di vedere non diversamente ma più in profondità, non di reagire ma di essere un uomo libero" – nel senso di assolutamente, supremamente, totalmente libero, come pura autocreazione o spontaneo autosuperamento, ad esempio nella figura dell'*Übermensch* (cfr. SF 2, p. 186; FDF, p. 130) –, Nietzsche tradirebbe "il suo stesso prospettivismo" (FDF, pp. 128-129). In questi casi, per Rorty, "Nietzsche il prospettivista vuole trovare una prospettiva da cui guardare indietro a quelle che ha ereditato", mostra di serbare ancora in sé il desiderio "di superare ogni singola prospettiva" (FDF, p. 130). Ciò, secondo Rorty, accomuna Nietzsche ad autori come Hegel o Heidegger, i quali nelle proprie opere *non* riuscirebbero a non cedere alla tentazione di inventare "un eroe più grande di loro, la cui strada [dia] significato alla propria" (lo Spirito, l'Essere), e i quali, per questo motivo, al pari di Nietzsche "non [sarebbero] ancora dei veri nominalisti, perché non si accontentano di riorganizzare tante piccole cose" ma "vogliono anche descrivere qualcosa di grande" (FDF, p. 122): qualcosa di grande ma inesistente, o meglio insensato e inutile, per un neopragmatista postmetafisico estremamente disincantato come Rorty.

Ora, a mio giudizio è possibile sostenere che l'originale *remix* operato da Rorty tra filosofia continentale, filosofia analitica e pragmatismo rappresenti un esperimento stimolante e anche utile in un'epoca, come gli anni Settanta-Ottanta del secolo scorso, in cui il dialogo fra queste tradizioni di pensiero era molto più faticoso rispetto a oggi[17]. Al contempo, però, è altrettanto indubbio che uno dei prezzi da pagare per un siffatto *remix* sia quello di una difficile sostenibilità e una scarsa affidabilità nel caso di molte interpretazioni rortyane. Ciò, naturalmente, vale anche per il caso specifico che qui ci interessa, ovvero il caso di Nietzsche, nella misura in cui l'immagine di Nietzsche che emerge dai testi di Rorty è piuttosto limitata e ristretta, come dimostrato per esempio dalla sua insistenza sui cosiddetti "brani 'pragmatisti' sparsi un po' ovunque nell'opera di Nietzsche" (SF 2, p. 10n) e dai suoi frequenti riferimenti, in concreto, a un solo passaggio di *Su verità e menzogna in senso extramorale* ai fini della

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[17] In questo modo, ad esempio, Rorty illustrava la situazione in un saggio del 1981: "I filosofi analitici, in quanto identificano la capacità filosofica con l'abilità argomentativa e osservano che non c'è niente che possano considerare un *discorso* nel fiume di parole di Heidegger e Foucault, ritengono che queste debbano essere persone che hanno tentato di essere filosofi senza riuscirvi, filosofi incompetenti. […] Inversamente, ho visto seguaci della filosofia 'continentale' essere molto acidi con lo 'spezzatino della logica', col quale i loro colleghi analitici fanno perdere tempo agli studenti disidratando le loro menti" (CP, p. 223).

propria delineazione di un neopragmatismo adeguato al clima filosofico generale del *linguistic turn* e della propria idea di una proliferazione generale e incontrollabile delle interpretazioni (FDF, p. 37; SF 1, p. 42; SF 2, p. 249). Tuttavia, quello che interessa qui, per gli scopi limitati del presente contributo, non è tanto esaminare l'adeguatezza o l'inadeguatezza di una tale interpretazione neopragmatista (e a tratti panlinguistica) di Nietzsche, quanto piuttosto utilizzare l'interpretazione offerta da Rorty come cartina di tornasole per una valutazione di alcuni cambiamenti interni al neopragmatismo stesso, attraverso il confronto critico con il ruolo svolto da Nietzsche nel contesto del pensiero di un altro autore ascrivibile al neopragmatismo, ovvero Richard Shusterman.

3.

Richard Shusterman è uno dei pensatori statunitensi più noti e più influenti nel panorama filosofico contemporaneo. Formatosi originariamente nel contesto della filosofia analitica, ma fortemente curioso e interessato anche ai dibattiti che venivano sviluppati in contesti diversi, riconducibili alla filosofia continentale (ermeneutica, teoria critica, decostruzione, postmodernismo), verso la fine degli anni Ottanta e l'inizio degli anni Novanta Shusterman decide di abbracciare con convinzione la tradizione del pragmatismo. In questo modo, egli si inserisce in modo molto originale in una tendenza alla riscoperta del pragmatismo e, in particolare, del pensiero di Dewey che era stata avviata, fra gli altri, da pensatori come Putnam e Rorty. Con opere come *Pragmatist Aesthetics* (1992[1]; 2000[2]), *Practicing Philosophy* (1997), *Performing Live* (2000), *Body Consciousness* (2008) e *Thinking through the Body* (2012), Shusterman si è affermato negli ultimi decenni come uno dei principali esponenti del neopragmatismo contemporaneo. A partire da *Von der Interpretation* (traduzione tedesca del 1996 di un suo testo originariamente apparso in francese), dall'articolo del 1997 *Somaesthetics and the Body/Media Issue* (poi ricompreso nel 2000 in *Performing Live*) e, soprattutto, dal saggio *Somaesthetics*: *A Disciplinary Proposal* (aggiunto alla seconda edizione ampliata di *Pragmatist Aesthetics* nel 2000), Shusterman ha ulteriormente specificato la propria concezione del pragmatismo in chiave estetica (e, reciprocamente, dell'estetica in chiave pragmatista) nella direzione di una filosofia incentrata sul "ruolo cruciale e complesso del corpo nell'esperienza estetica", ribattezzata "somaestetica"[18]. Com'è stato notato,

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[18] R. Shusterman, *Estetica pragmatista*, ed. it. a cura di G. Matteucci, Aesthetica Edizioni, Palermo 2010, p. 215 (d'ora in poi citato direttamente nel testo con la sigla EP).

addestrato tra le mura della filosofia analitica, [Shusterman] si è presto arruolato nei ranghi della teoria critica e ha stretto profonde alleanze con il pragmatismo. […] Shusterman ha sempre lavorato al confine tra diverse tradizioni e discipline, celebrando tale "promiscuità" come una delle virtù caratteristiche della svolta post-ideologica e neoromantica che vede nella professionalizzazione (o, piuttosto, nella sua asfittica deriva tecnicista) uno dei principali mali della cultura contemporanea. […] I suoi studi di estetica, il contributo alla *scholarship* pragmatista e l'ideazione della somaestetica rappresentano delle eccellenze nei rispettivi contesti e hanno generato un importante dibattito. Il pragmatismo, inteso da Shusterman come pratica filosofica e come modo di vita da mettere in pratica attraverso una peculiare disciplina del sé piuttosto che come una dottrina o un programma sistematico da applicare meccanicamente, è uno dei *trait d'union* di questo sfaccettato percorso, ricordando in più di un aspetto il migliore insegnamento rortiano di una filosofia aperta alla vita nelle sue più variegate potenzialità e manifestazioni.[19]

In estrema sintesi, la somaestetica è intesa da Shusterman come "lo studio critico, migliorativo dell'esperienza e dell'utilizzo del proprio corpo come sede di fruizione estetico-sensoriale (*aisthesis*) e di automodellazione creativa". La somaestetica, pertanto, "si occupa di conoscenza, discorsi, pratiche, e di discipline corporee che strutturano questa cura somatica e possono migliorarla". In quanto disciplina che, coerentemente con lo spirito del pragmatismo, "unisce teoria e pratica", la somaestetica si articola poi in "tre dimensioni fondamentali", analitica, pragmatica e pratica, con un'enfasi particolare su quest'ultima dimensione (EP, pp. 220, 224-233). Soprattutto negli ultimi dieci anni la somaestetica si è imposta come uno dei principali ambiti attuali del dibattito estetico, con numerose opere di Shusterman e di altri autori e altre autrici, con una collana di *Studies in Somaesthetics* presso l'editore Brill e con il "Journal of Somaesthetics", rivista specificamente dedicata allo sviluppo dell'indagine e della discussione in questo ambito.

Ad ogni modo, ciò che ci interessa qui non è tanto ricostruire in generale la genesi e lo sviluppo della somaestetica, quanto notare il rapporto sia di vicinanza e derivazione, sia al contempo di distanza e critica, che sussiste fra la variante linguistico-interpretativa del neopragmatismo offerta da Rorty e quella somatico-percettiva ed esperienziale proposta da Shusterman. In questo contesto, dato il tema specifico del presente contributo, si tratterà anche di sottolineare il ruolo che il confronto con il pensiero di Nietzsche ha giocato a tal proposito. Sono numerose, infatti, le tracce della presenza di Nietzsche nel progressivo sviluppo del pen-

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[19] S. Marchetti, *Tendenze odierne: Haack, West, Brandom e Shusterman*, in R.M. Calcaterra, G. Maddalena e G. Marchetti (a cura di), *Il pragmatismo. Dalle origini agli sviluppi contemporanei*, cit., p. 341.

siero di Shusterman, fino ad arrivare alle sue ultime opere, fra le quali
si possono segnalare la singolare combinazione di filosofia, fotografia e
performance art nel libro del 2016 *The Adventures of the Man in Gold*
oppure l'ampia monografia sistematica del 2021 *Ars Erotica*. Nel primo
caso, si può notare come Shusterman accenni allo stimolo ricevuto dal-
l'"attacco corrosivo di Nietzsche alla tradizione kantiana della contem-
plazione disinteressata", al fine di sviluppare una filosofia dell'arte non
"interamente dominata dal punto di vista dell'osservatore o dell'inter-
prete" ma "più completa, includendo anche l'esperienza dell'artista"[20].
Nel secondo caso, invece, si può osservare come Nietzsche, accanto a
Foucault e molti altri, sia uno degli autori citati da Shusterman nella sua
indagine sulla somaestetica della sessualità nelle "arti classiche dell'amo-
re (*classical arts of love*)"[21]. Del resto, già nel primo capitolo di *Pragmatist
Aesthetics* Shusterman non aveva esitato a suggerire un accostamento fra
"l'estetica di Dewey", con il "ruolo fondamentale dell'arte, dovuto al suo
giustificare l'esistenza conferendole un piacevole senso di forma e inte-
rezza", e la "concezione nietzschiana, secondo la quale questo mondo
può essere giustificato 'solo come fenomeno estetico'": per Shusterman,
"difendendo un estetico pienamente incarnato e rifiutando il disinteresse
kantiano, Dewey concorda pienamente con il riconoscimento nietzschia-
no della 'fisiologia dell'estetica' e della sua 'eccitazione […] dell'interes-
se'" (EP, p. 40)[22].

   Per gli scopi limitati del presente contributo è probabilmente oppor-
tuno concentrarsi soprattutto su *Pragmatist Aesthetics* e, in particolare,
sul suo sesto capitolo (nell'edizione italiana curata da Giovanni Matteuc-
ci che, in accordo con lo stesso Shusterman, presenta un'articolazione

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[20] R. Shusterman, *The Adventures of the Man in Gold. Paths Between Art and Life: A Philosophical Tale*, Hermann, Paris 2016, p. 10.
[21] Scrive infatti Shusterman alla fine di *Ars Erotica*: "Friedrich Nietzsche acknowledg-es [the] anti-erotic aesthetic tradition while opposing it by ridiculing its prudishness. When 'our aestheticians never tire of weighing in on Kant's side, saying that under the charm of beauty, even naked female statues can be looked at 'without interest', […] we are entitled to laugh a little at their expense: – the experiences of artists are 'more inter-esting' with regard to this tricky point and Pygmalion, at all events, was not necessarily an 'unaesthetic man'. However, while recognizing that erotic 'sensuality' belongs to the generative roots of the 'aesthetic condition', Nietzsche conforms to the anti-erotic aesthetic tradition by insisting that in genuine aesthetic experience this sensual moment must be 'transfigured and no longer enters the consciousness as a sexual stimulus'. This leads him to caution against lovemaking as a danger for artists rather than an aesthetic art of living in its own right" (R. Shusterman, *Ars Erotica: Sex and Somaesthetics in the Classical Arts of Love*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2021, p. 395). Le cita-zioni nietzschiane riportate da Shusterman sono tratte dalla *Genealogia della morale*, in *Opere*, cit., vol. VI, t. II, pp. 213-367.
[22] I passaggi nietzschiani riportati da Shusterman sono tratti da *La nascita della tragedia* (in *Opere*, cit., vol. III, t. I, pp. 3-163) e dalla *Genealogia della morale*, cit.

leggermente diversa rispetto all'edizione originale in inglese), intitolato *L'etica postmoderna e l'arte di vivere*. Qui, infatti, prendendo le mosse da una celebre proposizione del *Tractatus* di Wittgenstein secondo cui "etica ed estetica son uno"[23], e soffermandosi poi su autori classici in campo etico come Aristotele e Kant e su autori contemporanei come Bernard Williams e Michel Foucault, Shusterman esamina alcuni fra i vari modi in cui "la filosofia postmoderna" ha tentato di "estetizzare l'etico"; fra questi ultimi, Shusterman presta particolare attenzione proprio alla "difesa della 'vita estetica' come vita buona" da parte di Rorty e al suo "etico estetizzato della perfezione privata" (EP, pp. 191-192). A questo proposito, però, pur mostrando di apprezzare numerosi aspetti dell'originale variante rortyana del neopragmatismo e della sua "estetizzazione dell'etico" (EP, p. 192), Shusterman non esita a muovere anche alcune critiche piuttosto penetranti a Rorty. E, nel far ciò, egli utilizza anche Nietzsche, fra gli altri, come proprio "alleato" per quello che può essere descritto come un tentativo di spostare l'asse del neopragmatismo dal piano dell'interpretazione e del linguaggio a quello della percezione e dell'esperienza, con un conseguente recupero anche della dimensione della corporeità[24]. Scrive infatti Shusterman in *Pragmatist Aesthetics*:

> Nietzsche viene lodato [da Rorty] come uno di coloro che "descrivendosi nei propri termini hanno creato se stessi [...]. Creare la propria mente significa creare un proprio linguaggio". [...] Tali osservazioni [di Rorty] suggeriscono chiaramente che l'uomo è essenzialmente mente e che la mente è essenzialmente linguistica. Ma più problematico del loro apparente essenzialismo è il fatto che esse sostengono una concezione fondamentalmente mentalista della natura umana contro la stessa sottolineatura di Nietzsche del ruolo formativo e del valore del corpo anche nel plasmare la mente. Questo mentalismo linguistico e questa dimenticanza liquidatoria del corpo sono particolarmente controproducenti in una filosofia intenta a promuovere la vita estetica (EP, pp. 210-211).

Ecco, allora, che l'influenza di Nietzsche – il grande critico dei "dispregiatori del corpo", con la sua affermazione in *Così parlò Zarathu-*

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[23] "È chiaro che l'etica non può formularsi. L'etica è trascendentale. (Etica ed estetica sono tutt'uno)" (L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus e Quaderni 1914-1916*, ed. it. a cura di A.G. Conte, Einaudi, Torino 1998, 6.421, p. 106).

[24] Sul rapporto tra Shusterman e Rorty – un rapporto di debito teorico quanto all'appartenenza al neopragmatismo ma, al contempo, di distanza critica su diversi aspetti – si vedano i seguenti saggi dello stesso Shusterman: *Pragmatism and Cultural Politics: Variations on a Rortyan Theme*, in A. Gröschner, C. Koopman e M. Sandbothe (a cura di), *Richard Rorty: From Pragmatist Philosophy to Cultural Politics*, Bloomsbury, London-New York 2014, pp. 165-189; *Pragmatist Philosophy for Our Times: Reviewing Rorty's Legacy*, in "Society", 59, 2022, pp. 583-590.

stra secondo cui "anima non è altro che una parola per indicare qualcosa del corpo" e secondo cui "[i]l corpo è una grande ragione, una pluralità con un solo senso"[25] – non manca di farsi sentire anche nella variante shustermaniana del neopragmatismo. Una variante che, come ho già detto, a partire dall'inizio degli anni Duemila ha preso esplicitamente il nome di somaestetica. Così, ad esempio, nel capitolo conclusivo di *Pragmatist Aesthetics* dedicato proprio all'introduzione di questa nuova "proposta disciplinare", Shusterman sottolinea come "il corpo svolg[a] un ruolo cruciale nell'ontologia" (così come "[n]ei temi epistemologici, etici e socio-politici") e come "Nietzsche e Merleau-Ponty", fra gli altri, abbiano mostrato "la sua centralità ontologica come quel punto focale a partire dal quale viene costruttivamente progettato il nostro mondo e, per reciprocità, siamo costruttivamente progettati noi stessi" (EP, pp. 223-224). In un tale contesto, "la celebrazione del corpo da parte di Nietzsche, con il suo sostenere 'una sempre maggiore spiritualizzazione e moltiplicazione dei sensi' per realizzare il potenziale estetico del corpo a vantaggio del valore che intensifica la vita" (EP, p. 230)[26], risulta particolarmente congeniale per la progettazione e lo sviluppo di una disciplina filosofica interdisciplinare, sia teorica che pratica, come la somaestetica.

Così, se Rorty, come abbiamo visto, elogiava principalmente Nietzsche come un pensatore "molto brav[o] a criticare il concetto teologico o me-

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[25] F. Nietzsche, *Così parlò Zarathustra*, in *Opere*, cit., vol. VI, t. I, p. 34. Sulla concezione del corpo che emerge a partire da *Così parlò Zarathustra*, cfr. ad esempio A. Venturelli, *"Così parlò Zarathustra": un classico della filosofia? Alcune indicazioni di lettura*, in F. Cattaneo e S. Marino (a cura di), *I sentieri di Zarathustra*, Pendragon, Bologna 2009, pp. 19-32. Più in generale, sulla visione del corpo nel pensiero di Nietzsche, cfr. V. Caysa, *Leib/Körper*, in H. Ottmann (a cura di), *Nietzsche-Handbuch. Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, J.B. Metzler Verlag, Stuttgart-Weimar 2000, pp. 271-273.

[26] La citazione nietzschiana posta fra virgolette nel passaggio di Shusterman è tratta da F. Nietzsche, *La volontà di potenza*, ed. it. a cura di M. Ferraris e P. Kobau, Bompiani, Milano 2008, §820, p. 446 (d'ora in poi citato direttamente nel testo con la sigla VdP). Pur non essendo ovviamente *La volontà di potenza*, a rigore, un'opera di Nietzsche (non essendo mai stata pubblicata, con Nietzsche ancora in vita, alcuna opera dal titolo *La volontà di potenza* ed essendo piuttosto quest'ultima una raccolta di frammenti postumi nietzschiani ordinati da Peter Gast ed Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche ed editi poi con quel titolo), è comunque sull'edizione inglese di questo testo (*The Will to Power*, Vintage Books, New York 1968) che si basa spesso Shusterman per molte citazioni nietzschiane inserite nei suoi saggi. Per questo motivo, pur nella consapevolezza della problematicità del testo di *La volontà di potenza* a un livello di filologia nietzschiana, nel presente contributo si è deciso comunque di far ricorso all'edizione italiana dell'opera e di citare da essa i passi corrispondenti a quelli citati da Shusterman. Naturalmente, l'inesistenza di un'opera dal titolo *La volontà di potenza* pubblicata da Nietzsche in vita *non* toglie che lo stesso Nietzsche avesse pianificato e persino annunciato tale opera, pur non giungendo mai, per l'appunto, a completarla e pubblicarla (su ciò, cfr. ad esempio C. Gentili, *Nietzsche*, il Mulino, Bologna 2001, pp. 341-359).

tafisico dell'esistenza di un punto di riferimento esterno al linguaggio"[27], Shusterman tende piuttosto a includere Nietzsche (insieme a James, Merleau-Ponty, Foucault e altri) nell'elenco dei "filosofi somatici"[28]. Ad ogni modo, a proposito della lettura shustermaniana di Nietzsche bisogna aggiungere, in primo luogo, che anche nei saggi di Shusterman *non* sembra mancare affatto il riconoscimento (così decisivo per Rorty) dell'importanza della tematica linguistico-interpretativa in Nietzsche. Sotto questo punto di vista, la questione si pone semmai in termini di predilezione, da parte di Shusterman, per la componente più somatico-esperienziale del pensiero nietzschiano, anziché in termini di totale esclusione di una sua componente a completo vantaggio di un'altra. Interessanti, in tal senso, sono soprattutto le digressioni di Shusterman su Nietzsche in saggi come *Beneath Interpretation* e *Genius and the Paradox of Self-Styling*, entrambi poi compresi nella raccolta *Performing Live*[29]. In secondo luogo, è poi importante aggiungere che il riconoscimento dell'importanza del contributo di Nietzsche ai fini dello sviluppo di una nuova filosofia della corporeità (cioè la somaestetica) *non* implica, da parte di Shusterman, una totale adesione al pensiero nietzschiano, bensì comprende anche una serie di distinzioni e sfumature. Tali sfumature emergono in modo piuttosto chiaro, per esempio, da alcuni saggi raccolti in *Body Consciousness*, dove si legge:

> Nel campo della filosofia occidentale Maurice Merleau-Ponty è qualcosa come un santo patrono del corpo. Per quanto La Mettrie, Diderot, Nietzsche e Foucault abbiano appassionatamente patrocinato la dimensione corporea dell'esperienza umana, nessuno può competere con la massa di argomentazioni rigorose, sistematiche, consistenti che Merleau-Ponty fornisce per provare il primato del corpo nell'umana esperienza e pensiero (CC, p. 77).

O ancora:

> Se il pragmatismo può rivendicare Foucault come un parziale sebbene problematico alleato, esso trova i suoi migliori esemplari nel diciannovesimo secolo non in Baudelaire né in Nietzsche ma negli americani Emerson e Thoreau, passati profeti della somaestetica che io difendo (CC, p. 74).

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[27] R. Rorty, *Verità e libertà. Conversazioni con Richard Rorty*, trad. it. di B. Amali, Transeuropa, Massa 2008, p. 33.

[28] R. Shusterman, *Coscienza del corpo. La filosofia come arte di vivere e la somaestetica*, ed. it. a cura di S. Tedesco e V. Costanza D'Agata, Marinotti, Milano 2013, p. 131 (d'ora in poi citato direttamente nel testo con la sigla CC).

[29] Cfr. R. Shusterman, *Performing Live: Aesthetic Alternatives for the Ends of Art*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca (NY) 2000, pp. 115-136, 201-217 (d'ora in poi citato direttamente nel testo con la sigla PL).

Infine, con riferimento ancora più preciso a Nietzsche, leggiamo in *Body Consciousness*:

> Una strategia per difendere il corpo contro [gli] usuali attacchi della dominante tradizione platonica-cristiana-cartesiana è quella di sfidarla come fece Nietzsche. Invertendo radicalmente le valutazioni tradizionali della mente e del corpo, egli argomentò che noi possiamo conoscere i nostri corpi meglio delle nostre menti, che il corpo può essere più potente della mente, e che temprare il corpo può rendere più forte la mente. Concludendo questo ribaltamento logico, Nietzsche insistette che la mente è essenzialmente lo strumento del corpo, pure se questo spesso è abusato (specie dai filosofi) come l'ingannevole, torturante prigione del corpo. Benché accattivante nella sua ingegnosità, questa robusta strategia non convince la maggior parte di noi. Il problema non è solo che […] il rovesciamento sembra rinforzare il vecchio rigido dualismo di mente e corpo. La deficienza somatica è purtroppo una parte così pervasiva dell'esperienza che l'inversione nietzschiana della gerarchia mente/corpo assomiglia troppo a un mero auspicio. […] In contrasto con l'iperbolico somatismo di Nietzsche, l'argomentazione di Merleau-Ponty a favore della centralità e del valore filosofico del corpo è più astutamente cauta (CC, pp. 79-80).

Ora, se in *Body Consciousness* Shusterman non specifica chiaramente a quali aforismi o quali capitoli dei libri di Nietzsche egli faccia riferimento nel diagnosticare i problemi del supposto "iperbolico somatismo di Nietzsche", nel saggio *Somaesthetics and the Body/Media Issue* (incluso nella succitata raccolta *Performing Live*) egli cita invece in modo più esplicito e più preciso una serie di passaggi tratti dai frammenti di Nietzsche (cfr. PL, pp. 137-153). Si tratta di passi nietzschiani come quelli in cui si afferma che "[l]a credenza nel corpo è più fondamentale della fede nell'*anima*: quest'ultima è sorta in seguito all'osservazione antiscientifica delle aporie del corpo" (VdP, §491); oppure che il "[p]unto di partenza [è] dal *corpo* e dalla fisiologia" (VdP, §492); oppure che "è indicibilmente più importante [dell'anima] ciò che fu chiamato 'corpo' e 'carne': il resto è un piccolo accessorio" (VdP, §674); oppure che "in tutto lo sviluppo dello spirito ne va del *corpo*" (VdP, §676); oppure che è

> [i]l corpo umano in cui s'incarna e rivive il più remoto e il più vicino passato di tutto il divenire organico, attraverso il quale, sul quale e dal quale sembra fluire un prodigioso, inaudito vecchio fiume: il corpo è una nozione più sorprendente che la vecchia "anima". […] Basta: la fede nel corpo è pur sempre una fede più forte che quella nello spirito (VdP, §659).[30]

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[30] A tal riguardo, si confrontino anche i seguenti passi di Nietzsche (tenuti in considerazione e citati da Shusterman nei suoi lavori): "Ammettere *un soggetto* non è forse necessario; forse è altrettanto lecito supporre una molteplicità di soggetti […]. *Le mie ipotesi*: il

Passi nietzschiani come questi, secondo Shusterman, testimoniano il fatto che l'enfasi di Nietzsche sul bisogno di "una sempre maggiore spiritualizzazione e moltiplicazione dei sensi" (VdP, §820) rimane "decisamente troppo vaga" per gli scopi concreti e precisi della somaestetica (EP, p. 152), nonché il fatto che la riabilitazione e la difesa del corpo da parte di Nietzsche non riuscirebbe a evitare di cadere in un mero rovesciamento della tradizionale svalutazione platonico-cristiana del corpo. Un rovesciamento in cui, però, ciò che viene rovesciato e ciò che viene collocato al posto di quel che un tempo deteneva il primato (vale a dire, il corpo al posto dell'anima) non modificano realmente lo schema dicotomico di fondo, il quale rimane quindi, di per sé, immutato e non meno problematico che in precedenza. Così, secondo Shusterman, in definitiva per Nietzsche

> reality is identified as an interpretive construction and the body is privileged as the primary, basic constructor. […] Nietzsche advocates the body as "the starting point" because it provides not only one's basic, spatiotemporal perspective toward the world but also one's basic drives toward pleasure, power, and life enhancement, which underlie our derivative desire for knowledge. Inverting Plato, Nietzsche argues that the body, as the source of all value, should be master rather than servant. […] In this, if in nothing else, Nietzsche speaks for today's individual, whose surrounding world is mediatically reconstructed and deconstructed at ever increasing speed. While Plato could dismiss the body as too ephemeral to be real and valuable, today the body seems more stable, durable, and real than the rest of the world we experience. […] [At the same time], for all his privileging of the body as a constructive force, directive value, and basic ground, [Nietzsche] avoids erecting it into an entirely unconstructed and immediate foundation. Though grasped as the single, unified thing with which one so closely identifies, the body is in fact a construction from a vast multiplicity of different elements and "life processes" (PL, pp. 147-149).

A questo proposito, tuttavia, è molto interessante notare come una studiosa di Nietzsche e del neopragmatismo, Catherina Botha, in un suo

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soggetto come molteplicità" (VdP, §490). "È essenziale non ingannarsi sul ruolo della 'coscienza' […]. [I]l *controllo*, ovvero la vigilanza e la previdenza rispetto al gioco complessivo delle funzioni corporee, *non* accede alla coscienza" (VdP, §524). "Dove c'è un insieme con una certa unità, si è sempre posto lo *spirito* come causa di questa coordinazione: ma non c'è alcun motivo per farlo. […] [N]on c'è alcun motivo per ascrivere allo spirito la proprietà di organizzare e di sistematizzare. Il sistema nervoso ha un dominio molto più esteso: il mondo della coscienza è un'aggiunta. Nel processo complessivo di adattamento e sistematizzazione la coscienza non ha alcun ruolo" (VdP, §526). "Storia psicologica del concetto di 'soggetto'. Il corpo, la cosa, il 'tutto' costruito dall'occhio genera la distinzione fra un'azione e un agente; l'agente, la causa dell'azione, compreso in modo sempre più sottile, finì per lasciare come residuo il 'soggetto'" (VdP, §547).

saggio del 2018 intitolato *Nietzsche on Embodiment: A Proto-Somaesthetics?* abbia obiettato allo stesso Shusterman che nelle opere di Nietzsche, in realtà, sarebbe possibile rinvenire una concezione dei sensi e del corpo molto più ampia, ricca, sfumata e complessa di quanto non appaia per l'appunto a Shusterman[31]. Ciò, secondo Botha, riguarderebbe sia il rapporto tra corpo e anima, sia l'uso nietzschiano del termine *Geist* e dei termini *Körper* e *Leib*, sia la concezione del soggetto, e sia infine la relazione fra la dimensione della corporeità e, in generale, la vita (colta nel suo divenire, nella sua innocenza, nella sua danza e nel suo anelito alla "fanciullezza"). Facendo riferimento a passaggi importanti di opere fondamentali di Nietzsche quali *Umano, troppo umano*, *La gaia scienza*, *Così parlò Zarathustra*, *Al di là del bene e del male*, *Genealogia della morale* ed *Ecce homo* – e, inoltre, basandosi su una ricca bibliografia secondaria che comprende, fra gli altri, i lavori di Eric Blondel, Kirsten Brown, Christine Daigle, Claudia Rosciglione e André Van der Braak[32] –, Botha argomenta che, per Shusterman, "Nietzsche's 'hyperbolic somaticism' not only serves to reinforce the 'old rigid dualism' of mind and body, but also […] constitutes a mere inversion of the mind-body hierarchy that seems like 'wishful thinking'"[33]. Tuttavia, secondo Botha, un esame più accurato dei testi nietzschiani evidenzierebbe come "Nietzsche's position on the self is able to avoid falling into the 'logic of reversal' that Shusterman diagnoses in his thinking" e come, in ultima analisi, "Nietzsche's writings on the singing, dancing body can be seen as an example of a (proto-) phenomenology as well as a (proto-)somaesthetics at work"[34]. Così, in conclusione, come si legge nel saggio di Botha *Nietzsche on Embodiment: A Proto-Somaesthetics?*,

> the body that Nietzsche describes is oftentimes a singing and dancing body – a body of lightness and playfulness. […] [P]layfulness, for Nietzsche, is not to be understood as a self-indulgent hedonism. Rather it is to be understood as the rich, cheerful, and open enthusiasm of a child. […] Although Nietzsche valorizes the body, and proclaims his desire to "translate man back into nature", Nietzsche is not positing the body as a "ground" for the mind. […]

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[31] C. Botha, *Nietzsche on Embodiment: A Proto-Somaesthetics?*, in R. Shusterman (a cura di), *Aesthetic Experience and Somaesthetics*, Brill, Leiden 2018, pp. 17-33.
[32] Cfr. E. Blondel, *Nietzsche: The Body and Culture*, Stanford University Press, Stanford (CA) 1991; K. Brown, *Nietzsche and Embodiment: Discerning Bodies and Non-dualism*, SUNY Press, New York 2006; C. Daigle, *Nietzsche's Notion of Embodied Self: Proto-Phenomenology at Work?*, in "Nietzsche-Studien", 40, 2011, pp. 226-243; C. Rosciglione, *A Non-Reductionist Physiologism: Nietzsche on Body, Mind and Consciousness*, in "Prolegomena", 12, 1, 2013, pp. 43-60; A. Van der Braak, *Nietzsche and Zen: Overcoming Without a Self*, Lexington Books, Plymouth 2011.
[33] C. Botha, *Nietzsche on Embodiment: A Proto-Somaesthetics?*, cit., p. 17.
[34] Ibid.

Rather, the body is a "philological labyrinth of plurality". […] Further, […] when Nietzsche uses the word *Körper*, he is usually referring to what he calls the "false opposition" between mind and body that he explicitly rejects, while his use of the word *Leib* is reserved for his characterization of the "whole human being". In my reading, Nietzsche characterizes the human being *as* a body, with that body conceived of as being a multiplicity of changing desires, instincts and sensations. His conception of the human being – as a body, and as a multiplicity – is expressed in a number of instances. […] So it is the playful body that for Nietzsche constitutes our intelligence, and, as such, our reason is not something separate from that body. […] By characterizing mind with physiological terms and physiology with terms associated with mind, Nietzsche is able to blur the line between the mental and the physical, and so […] his position can be characterized as a non-reductionist physiologism. […] Nietzsche aims to "de-substantialise" the mind, but not at the expense of privileging the body, and not by means of a crude reductionism. […] [I]t seems that hiw views on the mind-body could certainly be seen as showing an affinity to Shusterman's characterization of somaesthetics.[35]

A mio avviso, le conclusioni parzialmente critiche di Botha riguardo alla lettura shustermaniana del pensiero di Nietzsche *non* vanno intese come miranti a denunciare una presunta povertà dell'approccio di Shusterman alla filosofia di Nietzsche; semmai, infatti, ciò che mettono in luce gli esiti della lettura di Botha è proprio la ricchezza del pensiero nietzschiano stesso, cioè il suo profilarsi come un campo aperto a molteplici interpretazioni e reinterpretazioni. Data quella che possiamo chiamare un po' liberamente la proficua e affascinante inafferrabilità di un pensatore come Nietzsche – vale a dire, la difficoltà di stabilire una volta per tutte quale sia il "vero" Nietzsche, quale sia la lettura più "vera" o più fedele del suo pensiero costitutivamente aperto, mobile, non sistematico e, dunque, in una certa misura sfuggente –, il saggio di Botha sembra suggerire che anche quella di Shusterman (al pari di quella di Rorty, su cui mi sono soffermato in precedenza) sia *un'*immagine di Nietzsche. Sotto questo punto di vista, l'esistenza di un Nietzsche come filosofo della "grande ragione del corpo" *non* esclude di per sé l'esistenza di un Nietzsche come filosofo dell'accesso interpretativamente e linguisticamente mediato alla realtà. Naturalmente, ciò non toglie che, comunque, il fatto di ridurre l'interezza del pensiero di Nietzsche *solo* a quest'ultima dimensione (come sembra fare Rorty) sia indubbiamente problematico, laddove a caratterizzare l'interpretazione neopragmatista/somaestetica di Nietzsche offerta da Shusterman è sicuramente una maggiore ampiezza, accuratezza e pluralità.

[35] Ivi, pp. 20-21, 23-24, 26-27, 30-31.

La "grande ragione del corpo".
Osservazioni sulla presenza di Nietzsche nel neopragmatismo
e nella somaestetica

In this article I offer a reconstruction and interpretation of the reception of Friedrich W. Nietzsche's thinking in the context of contemporary neopragmatism. In particular, in my reconstruction and interpretation I focus on two leading figures of contemporary neopragmatist philosophy, Richard Rorty and Richard Shusterman. As is well-known, the latter has eventually developed neopragmatism in a particular aesthetic direction in the last twenty years, namely in the direction of a new disciplinary proposal called somaesthetics. The first section of my article deals, in general, with the great role played by the reception of Nietzsche's thinking in 20th-century philosophy and culture. The second section of my article is specifically dedicated to Rorty's unique neopragmatist interpretation of Nietzsche, characterized by a particular focus on the role of a linguistically mediated interpretive access to the real. The third and final section of my article shifts my attention from Rorty to Shusterman, first offering a brief explanation of some differences between Rorty's and Shusterman's versions of neopragmatism, and then focusing my attention on Shusterman's particular interpretation of Nietzsche: an interpretation that, in comparison to Rorty's, is mostly centred on the role of the body in the human experience of the world, rather than on the supposedly "absolute" and exclusive role of language and interpretation.

Keywords: Friedrich W. Nietzsche; Richard Rorty; Richard Shusterman; Neopragmatism; Somaesthetics.

Giovanni Mugnaini
Somaesthetics and Sport

1. Introduction: Philosophy of Sport

Not only knowledge and virtue, not only the true, the good and the beautiful, but sport, too, can be included in the list of phenomena that have been the object of philosophical investigation. Although it can be traced back to ancient phases of human civilization, sport did not emerge as an autonomous field of philosophical investigation until the 1970s. Among the founders of this branch of philosophy worthy of mention here are Paul Weiss and Robert G. Osterhoudt, the first editors of the "Journal of the Philosophy of Sport". Their work inspired the development and consolidation of the philosophy of sport as an autonomous branch of philosophy. There are numerous ongoing debates in this area, but the foremost and fundamental one still remains the basic question: "What is sport?".

The various answers that have been proposed can be divided in two main groups[1]. Those known as Normative Theories can be grouped together on the basis of their attempt to assess "How Sport Should Be", from which the externalist position stems, focusing on the import of external forces or actors – namely, social and economic forces – in defining the features of sport. The internalist position, on the other hand, assumes the existence of core internal features that distinguish sport from other human activities. The second group, known as Descriptive Theories, attempt to describe the core elements of sport. Springing from this general and fundamental debate, we can then identify other debates mainly concerning ethical questions and issues arising from sporting situations. For example, the issue of sportsmanship and its opposite – cheating and doping – are frequent topics in philosophical debates on sport. In addi-

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[1] I have borrowed many information for this introductory first section from the useful entry "Philosophy of Sport" of *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2020 Edition), authored by J.W. Devine and F.J. Lopez Frias (available at: https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/sport; last accessed on November 4, 2022).

tion, some sport scholars have devoted their research to assessing how the features and dynamics that characterize sport change depending on the agent, as well as issues of gender, sex and race, and the topic of disability and sport.

Another relevant debate in the philosophy of sport in its broadest sense concerns the aesthetics of sport, focused in particular on answering the question: "Can sport actions/performances be conceived as art?" – or, in more contemporary terms, "Does sport activate the same mechanisms of experiential organization that are activated when we experience a work of art?" As a field of inquiry, the philosophy of sport is also characterized by a recurring paradigmatic division between analytic and continental approaches. The main differences, in this context, seem to be that, on the continental side, attention is largely focused on the experienced and perceived features of sport (post-phenomenological approaches), while on the analytic side, the focus is mainly oriented towards the proper identification of the features that define a sport as such, i.e., as separate and different from other human activities.

Among the notable thinkers of our time who have explored and analyzed sport as a philosophical phenomenon, or at least as a phenomenon worthy of serious philosophical attention, I will limit myself to mentioning the German philosopher Wolfgang Welsch. According to Welsch, sport can *surely* be viewed as a form of aesthetic experience and activity, and it is also *possible* to investigate considering it as a form of art[2]. In fact, as Welsch writes in his notable contribution, *Sport Viewed Aesthetically, and Even as Art?*, "[s]port as well as theater take place in particular spaces, separate from the everyday world. […] Art as well as sport are, compared to life, symbolic activities in terms of their structure"[3]. In defining the art-like features of sport, and to justify the juxtaposition of these two topics, Welsch turns to the notion of aestheticization and the consequent widening of the perimeter of the aesthetic, beyond the traditional association between art and the aesthetic dimension. As Welsch writes:

> The increasing insecurity about the borders of art leads to […] the revaluation of popular art. The distinction between high and low is increasingly being rejected – […] This opening of the concept of art toward the popular clears a further path for the inclusion of sport, this highly popular aesthetic phenomenon, among the arts. […] When, for something to be art, its aesthetic

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[2] W. Welsch, *Sport Viewed Aesthetically, and Even as Art?*, in A. Light and J.M. Smith (eds.), *The Aesthetics of Everyday Life*, Columbia University Press, New York 2005, pp. 135-155.
[3] Ibid., pp. 142-144.

character is more important than a specifically artistic one; when art itself strives for transformation into phenomena of the everyday; when art tends to blur its borders; when, finally, the popular is increasingly being recognized as art – then sport becomes a good new candidate for being viewed as art.[4]

Following these new "theoretical coordinates", Welsch tries to reorient the aesthetic reflection via the notion of performance. The latter idea in fact allows us to bridge the gap between sport and the other "performing arts"; in thinking about sport, there is no *oeuvre*, yet there are subjects that produce a performance. Art history and aesthetic reflections necessarily comprised the performative arts as perfectly legitimate instances of art, and Welsch adds that:

> Of course, in painting, works are produced that have an independent existence after the act of painting. Not so, however, in theater, dance or music – in the performing arts. […] Yet there is a different type of work implied in those artistic as well as in sporting performances: the performance itself. […] This even makes them comparable to those activities which, ever since Aristotle, have been considered to be our highest ones, precisely for the reason that their proper work is imminent to the process and not something achieved at the end and remaining as a result, an outcome, a product, a work-entity. […] Sport, just as the performing arts, is of this type. The sporting performance has, above all, its end in itself. In principle it does not serve outer purposes.[5]

To sum up, in Welsch's view, sport, if considered a performance, shares those features that appeal to the spectator "aesthetically". But whether it can be considered artistic is a more difficult question, and depends on which conception of art one utilizes. In the following sections of this article I will focus on a specific philosophical investigation of sport that has been developed in recent times, namely somaesthetic inquiry, as testified by the recent volume *Somaesthetics and Sport*, edited by Andrew Edgar and published by Brill as the fifth volume in the series "Studies in Somaesthetics"[6]. Before immediately focusing attention on this book, however, it may be useful to offer some introductory observations on somaesthetics as a philosophical discipline or, as Richard Shusterman originally defined it, as a "disciplinary proposal"[7].

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[4] Ibid., p. 141.
[5] Ibid., pp. 142-144.
[6] See A. Edgar (ed.), *Somaesthetics and Sport*, Brill, Leiden 2022 (henceforth cited in the text as *SS*, followed by the page numbers).
[7] See R. Shusterman, *Pragmatist Aesthetics: Living Beauty, Rethinking Art* (2nd edition), Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham-Boulder-New York-Oxford 2000.

2. Somaesthetics: A Disciplinary Proposal

The philosophical discipline of somaesthetics, twenty-three years after the publication of Richard Shusterman's article "Somaesthetics: A Disciplinary Proposal", can no longer be considered entirely new or absolutely groundbreaking. When Shusterman first outlined this philosophical discipline, his pragmatist aesthetics had already earned a great deal of academic attention and had sparked various paths of inquiry, inspired publications and occasioned the organization of meetings and conferences. Albeit not immune from critiques – generally from more traditional areas of philosophy – somaesthetics, and the scholars inspired by it, has sought to foster a renewed interest in the lived body reinterpreted as *Soma*. The term refers not only to the *Körper* – the mere material aspect of the body, its objectual side, so to speak – nor only to the *Leib* – the lived body, as we perceive it in our lived experience –, as they have been traditionally distinguished in phenomenological works before the appearance of Shusterman's work, but rather to a holistic conception of the body as a unit that simultaneously includes those different levels, as both object and subject[8].

Somaesthetics, as a discipline, is divided into three main branches (Analytic, Pragmatic and Practical) concerned with the same "object" – namely, the lived body – as it is perceived by others and by the being that inhabits it, and as it is used performatively, in the broadest possible sense of the word. The main concerns of somaesthtetics are thus not strictly limited to the disciplinary field of aesthetics in the traditional sense. "Modernist Aesthetics", largely derived from the thoughts and works of Baumgarten and especially Kant and Hegel, had tried to confine aesthetic inquiries to the field of the so-called highbrow arts or high fine arts[9].

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[8] As Shusterman claims in his article *Thinking Through the Body, Educating for the Humanities: A Plea for Somaesthetics* (in "Journal of Aesthetic Education", 40, 1, 2006, pp. 3, 9, 16), "[f]or continued progress to be made in somaesthetics, resistance to somatic study and cultivation in the humanities must be overcome. […] To be recognized as humanity's primal and indispensable tool should constitute an unequivocal argument for humanistic cultivation of the body. But, unfortunately, the very notion of instrumentality retains in humanistic culture strong connotations of inferiority, as noble ends are contrasted to the mechanical means that serve them. […] The case for the humanistic study and cultivation of the body as our primordial, indispensable instrument [can be] adequately made. But we should not forget, in closing, that the body, as purposeful subjectivity, is also the user of the tool it is". As Shusterman further explains, it is "[t]he living body – a sensing, sentient soma rather than a mere mechanical corpse", that lies at the heart of the research project of somaesthetics (ibid., p. 3).

[9] See E. Di Stefano, *Iperestetica. Arte, Natura, vita quotidiana e nuove tecnologie*, Aesthetica, Palermo 2012 (Aesthetica Preprint, n. 95), p. 8; G. Matteucci (ed.), *Elementi per un'estetica del contemporaneo*, Bononia University Press, Bologna 2018, p. 10. See also W. Welsch, *Sport Viewed Aesthetically, and Even as Art?*, cit., pp. 139-140.

However, aesthetics – narrowly conceived of in this way – was outsmarted by the artists themselves: consider the conceptual gulf between Leonardo da Vinci's "Monna Lisa" and Piero Manzoni's "Merda d'Artista", or, in the same vein, Salvador Dalì's "L.H.O.O.Q." In this context, it is of great interest to examine the ways in which artists (firstly) and philosophers (secondly) unwrapped the ideological structures underlying the notion of Art itself – and, more importantly for our purposes here, the ways in which they stressed the need to move away from the idea that the appreciation of a work of art was a purely intellectual endeavor.

Art has been banished from the ivory tower that had been built to keep it safe and separate from the lowly things of the world; not only have its products become incomprehensibly different from those that were supposed to serve as *exempla*, its boundaries have also been extended in unprecedented ways. Although the traditional conception of Art – with a capital A – lost most of its power and ambition during the last century (as well as its idealistic halo and its metaphysical aspirations), we might say that the void left by the old metaphysics of art has been filled by new theories that often stem from psychology and neuroscience, with results that sometimes appear too obsessed with "pinpointing" or too stubbornly reductionist.

Meanwhile, what happened to Art? We might say that it attained a sort of ubiquity. Nowadays Art – or better, a repurposed form of art, in blatant opposition to its alleged purposelessness and disinterestedness – can be found everywhere; the process of "aestheticization" is both a symptom and a consequence of these processes. But let us leave Art aside for a moment and return now to the philosophical perspective that we set out from. From a certain point of view, Shusterman's dissatisfaction with the purely cognitive model of traditional Aesthetics and its narrow philosophical conception of Art had a dual outcome: firstly, the above-mentioned reconceptualization of the *soma* and the need for a reconsideration of the bodily dimension in the various arts; secondly, and more importantly for our specific purposes, the broadening of the domain of what can be considered of potential interest for aesthetic investigations. A part of the philosophical endeavor of somaesthetics has involved the granular reconsideration of the differences between the arts (with regard to both artistic products and our experiences with them). In this context, Shusterman's famous advocacy of popular art still holds true in terms of the need to include in the field of aesthetics practices that have long been called "lowbrow arts". Moreover, in anticipation of something I will discuss later, the renewed framework of somaesthetics made certain physical/spiritual practices whose origins can be traced back to both Western and non-Western cultures eligible as a subject of study. By considering the three dimensions of Analytical, Pragmatic and Practical somaesthet-

ics – as well as the representational dimension dealing with bodies' exter-
nal appearance, the experiential dimension investigating how the body
is perceived from the inside, and the performative dimension concerned
with the effectiveness of bodily tasks –, many practices once deemed un-
worthy of aesthetic interest have finally found a field of study in which
they can be properly analyzed and conceptualized. In fact, somaesthetics
has generated numerous essays on, and inquiries into, practices that are
sometimes of disparate and even incomparable origin. Based on what we
have said up to this point, the reader will certainly realize that it was only
a matter of time before someone proposed and published a book on the
somaesthetics of sport – namely, the essay collection *Somaesthetics and
Sport*, edited by Andrew Edgar, which I will analyze in the next section
of this article.

3. Somaesthetics and Sports: A Forgotten Liaison or a Rejected One?

In the book's Introduction, Edgar writes: "the neglect of somaesthet-
ics within the philosophy of sport [is] surprising, as it would appear
to offer to the philosophy of sport important resources for thinking
through core issues" (SS, p. 16). As noted in the previous section, som-
aesthetics is an already established, albeit multidisciplinary, philosophi-
cal discipline that seems naturally linked to sport-related issues, so it
would be odd were it not to deal with sport itself. As Edgar writes
in the Introduction, the main focus of the philosophy of sport (as a
subdiscipline of philosophy that encompasses different areas of the
traditional philosophical sphere: ethics, ontology, epistemology, etc.)
is the "clever body": the study and analysis of how a well-educated,
well-trained body is able to meet sport-related challenges in a variety
of ways, via an incorporated and "pre-conscious" knowledge of action.
The clever body, which is the main subject of the philosophy of sport,
is clearly very similar to the clever "mind-body" (as Edgar names it), re-
calling precisely the reconfiguration of corporeality and of the "whole"
that is the *soma*. In calling for the extension of somaesthetic interest
to the world of sport, Edgar repurposes the ancient caveat about the
inevitability of philosophy: all philosophers of sport who were not fa-
miliar with *somaesthetics* as a project (Graham Mcfee's essay is highly
contentious not only with regard to a somaesthetics of sport, but with
somaesthetics in general) were inadvertently already doing somaesthet-
ics. The book begins with a short Introduction by the editor, in which
he briefly lists the contents and the general structure of the book; what
we learn here is that the book contains ten essays that deal generally
with sport and themes common to both spheres.

The first two essays are dedicated to what we might call the foundational question of the "somaesthetics of sport"; where the initial essay is highly favourable towards, and the second strongly against, the extension of somaesthetics to sport issues (and in fact against somaesthetics itself). The second pair of essays focus on the aesthetic components of sport: Morgan's essay looks at the aesthetic nature of a sport spectator's experience, while Brand-Weiser's deals with the question of athletic bodies and their perceived beauty. The third pair revolves around the term "discipline", which fits nicely into a somaeshtetics context, due to the conceptual debt Shusterman owes to the work of Michel Foucault. In first essay in this section, Balakrishnan discusses the practice and representation of Indian cricket player Sachin's physical body discipline, while Stahl's essay is dedicated to the policing of the emission of vocal sounds during tennis tournaments from a feminist perspective. Solomon's essay assesses the impact that physical exercise can have when we are going through difficult times in life, while Toner and Montero's essay deals with the theme of self-awareness in highly trained and skilled sportspersons. The last two essays, perhaps the most notable in the book, focus on the issue of pain, the uninvited yet ever-present guest at the sport party: Tainio's and Edgar's essays openly confront the question of how much pain is involved in sporting activities. Following this general presentation of the book, I will next offer a brief analysis and comment on each essay in *Somaesthetics and Sport*. I will examine and discuss the book backwards, so to speak, starting with the final essays, to provide material for an evaluation of the two opposite claims in the initial essays.

3.1. Pain and sport

In his essay "Difficult Activities – Difficult Experiences," Matti Tainio aims to redefine the kind of aesthetic enacted by extreme physical activities; considered in this way, it becomes clear that there are different levels of aesthetic experience in this context. The author's focus is on a new type of extreme race, running events characterized by longer distances and often adverse weather conditions. This new type of extreme marathon is a kind of sporting endeavor that implies a different strain on the athlete's body, which brings forth a duality of positive and negative aesthetic experiences present in these kinds of activities. As mentioned earlier, the aim of somaesthetics is usually conceived as "[a]n ameliorative discipline of both theory and practice, [which] seeks to enrich not only our discursive knowledge of the body but also our lived somatic experience and performance", but Tainio's essay goes in a different direction in considering the painful side of sport. One of the main tenets of Tainio's essay is the fact that "the somatic experience is not something one has to undergo

as a passive receiver" (SS, p. 217). In reconsidering the possibility of an active re-orientation of one's own aesthetic perception toward the exterior, Tainio discerns the opportunity for life-changing experiences. In a broader sense, Tainio's discussion of the topic adds to the possible elements that contribute to determining the aesthetic nature of a given experience. In fact, while the sheer amount of pain involved in these kinds of activities (and what we are talking about here are marathons that cover more than the traditional 42 km, ranging from 70 km up to 160 km run over more than one day) takes its toll on the aesthetic structure of the athlete in terms of a "disconnection with the environment", it is also true that these extreme conditions generate opportunities to experience the sublime. The strain and physical toll on the athlete is a catalyst for experiences of a potency unmatched by traditional aesthetic activities. If we consider that the traditional conception of the sublime (as put forward by Kant and Burke) implies different kinds of feelings of the sublime, and if we think of the above-mentioned expansion of the boundaries of traditional aesthetics and the end of the once-exclusive identification of aesthetics with "embellishment or cognitive pleasure deriving from the sight of a work of art", Tainio's essay offers valuable new insights, as well as an interesting interpretation of Somaesthetics. Reconsidered within Tainio's framework, difficult sport activities and pain come together to engender a new opportunity to experience the sublime in a world in which everyday life is often too domesticated or too far removed from connection with the environment to elicit it.

Like Tainio's essay, Andrew Edgar's contribution, "Sport and Pain," deals with the theme of pain, but in a different manner. The main focus of Edgar's essay is a reconsideration of the idea of pain as an active agent, involved in World-making and also part of a sort of hermeneutic circle. Although sport – especially in the context of the philosophy of sport – is widely considered a pleasurable experience, it is also true that sport is always accompanied by pleasure's counterpart, as we saw in Tainio's text. Sport is usually conceived as a playful activity, guided by a prelusive goal and provided with strict rules that effectively pose challenges to athletes. For example, if the prelusive goal of golf is "to put a ball in a hole", then the lusory means and the accompanying set of rules forbid the athlete to use his/her hands to put the ball in the hole. This is effectively why sport has often been described as socially relevant, as a source of distinction and merit: because it draws heavily on the intrinsic vulnerabilities of the human body. The ability to overcome all of the challenges posed by the activity is what suggests the dynamics of World-making, the Heideggerian concept used by Edgar here to highlight the fact that overcoming or falling short of a challenge are both substantial components of sport and physical activities. When the athlete succeeds in his/her challenge, the

world itself gains a particular "coloration"; when the challenge posed to the athlete's body – be it physical or environmental – is too hard to be overcome, the whole world may seem to be alienated from the athlete. However, in Edgar's interpretation, it is not the mere factual overcoming of the challenge that makes the athlete; in fact, "success" as a social construct is totally irrelevant in the process of getting better at a certain sport, while pain as an incommunicable aspect of sport and everyday life is what generates effective growth for the athlete. While that is obviously one aspect of the problem – which, as I said earlier, could be labeled as "the social aspect of the positive overcoming of the challenge" –, it is not its entirety. As Edgar argues, pain is in fact what constitutes the athlete's realization. Inasmuch as it is constantly present in processes and activities related to sport, pain is the true indicator, and the one most actively felt in the athlete's striving for success. Pain is omnipresent in the life of an athlete: it may be the pain of strenuous training, or pain undergone while recovering from an injury, but it can also simply be pain endured in the course of the activity itself, which, once performed successfully, becomes the lived and embodied indicator of success, with an unexpected *katabasis*, a shift from an exclusively negative aspect to one that contributes to pleasure. Both essays, I think, emphasize the need to reconsider pain as a fundamental and inextricable element that describes and at the same time supports our aesthetic activities, in the broader sense outlined by somaesthetics. Not only is pain considered an undeniable aspect of physical activities and a core constituent of the value of sport itself, but it is also thought of as a fundamental aspect to be analyzed by inquiries that strive to go beyond the traditional bounds of aesthetics.

3.2. Body Awareness and Performance

The nature of the text by Claire Solomon, "Yoga as world literature, Somaesthetic ekphrasis and Mis-translation," is not "orthodox"; it is not actually an academic essay like those discussed above. In fact, Solomon's contribution has formal and methodological characteristics more similar to an autobiographical ethnography than a philosophical essay. Apart from this necessary distinction, the text presents itself as an autobiographical diary of the author's journey through life challenges, and focuses on the help that yoga, as a discipline, gave her. The philosophical tool the author uses is *ekphrasis*; she tries to reconstruct the coping mechanisms that proper somatic awareness and the discipline of yoga and exercise can impart, coupled with an "online" description of events.

As I briefly mentioned in the Introduction, John Toner and Barbara Gail Montero's essay, "Somatic Reflection During Skilled Action," debates the different impacts that conscious somatic awareness and uncon-

scious spontaneous acts have on the quality of a performance, be it a sporting performance or a training session. The authors dispute the traditional assumption of sport psychology that assigns a negative effect to the conscious act of thinking about what one is doing in the moment it is being done. In fact, as they note, there is a large body of research – with topics ranging from Olympic sportpersons trying to regain their prowess and full physical ability, to jet pilots and their struggle with "habit lag" – that indicates the importance of unconscious and embodied responses in determining the quality and "smoothness" of an action. Relying on this body of research, Toner and Montero propose a new kind of learning curve related to bodily tasks. Traditional learning theory held the model of a unidirectional learning process as fact. This theory posits that, as one begins to train him- or herself (or, to put it in more general terms, to discipline him- or herself in any performative way), the process will go from the early stages of learning, where a large amount of cognitive elaboration is required of the body (in order to memorize and internalize new movements, positions, and feelings for the performance) to the stage in which the performance tasks are fully embodied, so that no cognitive attention and no focus on oneself is required; at this latter stage, excessive cognitive attention and focus on oneself can spoil the smoothness of the performance itself. Toner and Montero agree with the cyclical theory of learning, also proposed by Shusterman, asserting that there are phases in a learning process that alternate between focusing on somatic awareness and unconscious performance. But this essay also attests that there are many different viable ways of learning, and intermediate situations that require different levels and kinds of somatic awareness in different contexts. For example, Toner and Montero relate the case of ballet dancers taught to think in terms of *loci;* when they have to perform a particularly difficult ballet move, they shift their bodily focus from the whole of their body to specific parts that are in some way particularly engaged in the action to be performed. This sort of shifted attention is fundamental in order to perform the action in the smoothest way possible, and it is a component of somatic awareness, an aspect that had not been considered in the traditional learning paradigm.

3.3. Discipline

The varying levels of influence that conscious control of one's own body can have during a sport performance are the main focus of Anita Stahl's essay "The Somaesthetics of the Grunt". Stahl draws on Michel Foucault's concept of the Panopticon, bringing it into the context of tennis to evaluate the gender-biased treatment of grunting in the case of female tennis players. Stahl recalls the famous cases of Maria Sharapova

and Michelle Larcher De Brito, both held culpable by the biased media of hindering their opponents' focus and flow by grunting too loudly. The main line of argumentation is related to Toner and Montero's, holding that, in the midst of performing a difficult action, even total body awareness is not enough to keep in check all of the involuntary responses stimulated by the fatigue and strain on the athlete's body. In fact, as De Brito used to tell the media, "the grunt comes through my intensity […] I mean, you play, and the grunt goes by itself" (SS, p. 154). Stahl's essay, however, is not limited to this matter, but positions itself at the crossroad between somaesthetics, feminism and studies on discipline via the usage of Foucalt's concept of Panopticon, albeit in an inverted sense. Stahl considers the "specious" nature and imponderable legality of the hindrance represented by grunting as an offshoot of the desire to force women to fit the stereotypical image of weak, docile and submissive beings; by contrast, the proud, strong and affirmative nature of the grunt is a supposed expression of a subversive, wild and rebellious type of woman. In Foucault's view, the main characteristics of the Panopticon are the ability to dehumanize, to take away one's subjectivity, while at the same time individualizing; in addition, the Panopticon's main strength is the ability to control the largest possible population of inmates with the smallest possible expenditure of resources. In this sense, the Panopticon is a useful device for considering power relations and topics such as the process of subjectification and individualization. Stahl tries to repurpose an inverted Panopticon and apply it to the situation of a tennis stadium. In fact, the condition of hypervisibility in which tennis players perform resembles the condition of inmates in the Panopticon. The anonymity of the spectators who booed Sharapova recalls another tenet of the Panopticon, namely that of the invisibility and anonymity of the power that keeps watch over the subjects. The media's reaction to the young Sharapova's grunting is punctuated by the use of sexual images likening the grunting to sexual vocalizations or to animality; this reveals the power relations in play, and the clear will to domesticate a subversive individual via objectification and sexualization. In any case, no matter how metaphorical the image of an inverted Panopticon may be, I do not find it particularly effective, due to the fact that it requires numerous semantic inversions. Although I agree in general with Stahl's argument, I think that it would have been equally striking, and perhaps clearer, if set forth without this reference to the Panopticon.

Vinod Balakrishnan's essay, "The Sachin Mandala, Somaesthetic construction of a cricket legend," is in my view one of the most difficult to summarize in the entire collection, for two reasons; firstly, my admitted lack of familiarity with the sport and the "hero" at the center of this essay, namely Sachin Tendulkar, whose fame and glory in India apparently can-

not be overstated; and secondly, the complex framework Balakrishnan guides us through and his numerous references from outside the realm of philosophy. Sachin is depicted as a personality whose importance can be read and measured on several levels: as a national hero, as an example of self-discipline, and as an aesthetic subject. Balakrishnan helps us to read Sachin's journey in sport as both an aesthetic object, due to the mythological interpretation in India of his sporting achievements (Balakrishnan makes a classical Biblical allusion with Sachin as David and Goliath representing all of the many challenges Sachin faced), and at the same time a *soma* and the ways of fashioning it. Sachin is described via references to his autobiography and to numerous biographies that have been written about him emphasizing the brutal, endless training sessions of training he went through. Balakrishnan concentrates on the Indian batsman's ability to continuously modify his style of play, and his ability to shift between consolidated habits acquired via harsh training and the need to respond quickly at any given moment, the "spontaneous body of the moment" factor (SS, p. 121). The author relies on Shusterman's re-reading of Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology when he debates the lack of a mediation between acquired bodily habits and the needs of the moment; Shusterman argues that, in order to make the two levels communicate (the body's unconscious habits and the body in time), one must theorize a third element, that of active somatic awareness.

3.4. Athletes' Bodies and Perception

Peg Brand Weiser's essay, "Changing Perceptions of Beautiful Bodies, The Athletic Agency Model," explores the representational dimension of somaesthetics. Her inquiry is focused on the shifting canon of beauty related to athletic bodies; as Brand Weiser shows, this canon has changed over the course of the last decade, allowing for a new sort of appreciation not exclusively linked to standardized *topoi* of female beauty. In fact, Brand Weiser's contribution deals with the different kinds of appreciation reserved for male athletic bodies and female ones: as far as male bodies are concerned, no problem of legitimacy arises, whereas in a patriarchal framework, female bodies always appear problematic. Brand Weiser recalls the work of several photographers (likewise Helmut Newton, Joe McNally and Annie Leibovitz) whose works fostered the slow process of creating representational legitimacy for the female body, conceived as something other than just an object of desire. She deploys the "athletic agency paradigm", a new visual paradigm in which the sporting female body is appreciated not only for its physical characteristics and corporeal qualities, but also in terms of the athlete's accomplishment as an individual. The paradigm is intended to "educate" the audience and

provide a new way of looking at female bodies without falling into the objectification/sexualization trap – an ever-present risk. Stemming from Gombrich's conception of the gaze, which is never "innocent" and is always imbued with histories and ideologies, Brand Weiser calls for a profound reconsideration of the standards of beauty, affirming the intrinsic aesthetic value of a trained athletic body.

Reconsideration of the kind of aesthetics implied in all sorts of sports is the focus of Williams J. Morgan's essay, "Sport and The Body, An Aesthetic Inquiry". As Morgan argues, the canonical division of sports into purposive and non-purposive categories, rooted in the works of David Best, is a differentiation that does not hold value in the face of in-depth analysis. Morgan argues that the distinction between aesthetic sports (whose goal is the action itself, for example, acrobatics, ice skating or dancing) and purposive or non-aesthetic ones (such as soccer or tennis, that is, disciplines where there is no need for an action to be "aesthetic" to be successful) is a distinction that must be reconsidered. In all sports, according to Morgan, there is more than the eye can see: it is not the mere action itself, in isolation, that elicits the aesthetic experience, but rather the situation and social level of the action. In fact, as spectators watching a game, or observing an exemplary player (and here Balakrishnan's essay comes to mind), we assign qualities and features to sport players' bodies similar to those assigned to players in a drama. As Morgan argues, the intrinsic type of agency that sport allows is the same that Nietzsche asserted pertains to the work of art.

3.5. Somaesthetics and Sports

Last but not least, let us focus our attention on the pair of essays that opens the book. As I said in the Introduction, I have chosen to look at these opening essays last so as to glean several elements from later essays with which to evaluate their contending arguments. While Jesùs Ilundàin-Agurruza's essay "A Dove in Flight, Metaphysical Shackles, Transformative Soaring, and Sportive Somaesthetics" is encouraging towards the concept of a somaesthetics of sport, Graham McFee's piece, "Somaesthetics of Sport?," seems to challenge the legitimacy of somaesthetics in general.

Ilundain-Aguruzza argues that somaesthetics definitely offers some insights to deepen our understanding of the aesthetic aspects of sport and help us to evaluate various aspects of the nominal object that is sport. Almost as if in response, McFee's essays opens with three questions: "What can a somaesthetic inquiry into sport offer? […] Why should its claims as a 'disciplinary proposal' or otherwise, be taken seriously? […] How (if at all) can it bear on the study of sport?" (SS, p.

47). McFee's main line of argumentation is that somaesthetics in itself, as a self-nominated "discipline", lacks the kind of clarity and preciseness required of any philosophical discipline. His second contention is that, given the unnecessariness of somaesthetics, it is hard to see how a spurious version of it (namely, the somaesthetics of sport) can be helpful at all. As the author claims, there is a risk here of pointless doubling, which is something that philosophy should fear rather than encourage. If the philosophy of sport is concerned with the moving human body while it is at work in a lusory context, then it should only focus on sport itself: what could input from other areas add to the inquiry? McFee's supports his argument by noting that that the meticulous level of detail that somaesthetic analyses concern themselves with is already offered and well thought out by physiologists, so nothing philosophers could say will add anything new, much less anything useful. Ilundain-Agurruza's essay, on the other hand, is very optimistic in arguing for the possibilities that a somaesthetic approach to sport could offer the community of researchers and scholars, and conveys a cheerful enthusiasm about this new theoretical enterprise transpires.

Comparing these two theses, I admit that some of McFee's concerns about the "lack of a problem to be solved" are understandable and convincing. As I said, the multiple levels of reading required by the structure of somaesthetics imply a multiplicity and heterogeneity of possible subjects that do not necessarily share a common background, in terms of cultural provenance or in nominal terms. It is effectively difficult to propose a somaesthetics of sport when the concept of sport itself is blurry and its boundaries are not clear. In any case, as we learn from the Introduction to the book, these essays are meant precisely to present two opposite positions in terms of legitimacy. In the formal construction of Ilundain-Agurruza's essay there are no direct answers to McFee's perplexities, which may have helped to clarify the reader's position in this debate. Yet, I must also admit that Ilundain-Agurruza's reflection on the disinterested nature of somaesthetics in a "proficiency and profit-oriented world", configuring it as a wellbeing-oriented discipline that aims to nurture the mind/body whole that we as human beings are, is a compelling one, especially given the current *Zeitgeist*.

In conclusion, Elgar's edited volume *Somaesthetics and Sport* may appear to be an easy book at first glance, but given its structure and the varied nature of the essayists' subjects, it is in fact a complex one, and a coherent synopsis is consequently hard to provide. The contrasting arguments as to the legitimacy or illegitimacy of a somaesthetics of sport cannot and will not be further discussed here, for several reasons. First of all, this book represents the first attempt to assemble a collective work on the somaesthetics of sport, so I partially share Illunda-Agurruza's ex-

citement about the possibility of new interdisciplinary exploration that can shed new light on old subjects or reveal interesting new perspectives from which to look at the current state of sports and somaesthetic inquiry (even though the latter may not contribute to discovering new topics; I agree with McFee on this). At the same time, though, I share some of McFee's doubts, for example the point he makes about "confusion". When trying to open new lines of investigation in any field or subject, it is the task of every researcher to be very clear in terms of which questions his/her investigation will try answer, and perhaps the similarity between the philosophy of sport and a possible somaesthetics of sport may justify the risk of an overlapping of disciplines. As an overall evaluation of the book, I would suggest that *Somaesthetics and Sport* offers a viable contribution to the extent that it is not meant to encroach on the already established field of the philosophy of sport, and to the extent that it is clear that a somaesthetics of sport is a new subject of study in the field of somaesthetics, which has a broad theoretical reach. In my opinion, however, it is fundamental that the somaesthetics of sport be conceived as a theoretical inroad and not as an entirely new discipline.

Somaesthetics and Sport

This article deals with Somaesthetics, in general, as a branch of contemporary aesthetics, and with its application to Sport related topics, in particular. These topics have been recently investigated as in the book "Somaesthetics and Sport" (2022), edited by Andrew Edgar. In the first section of my article I sketch a brief history of the Philosophy of Sport. The second section is dedicated to a brief overview of Somaesthtetics as a discipline and a preliminary evaluation of its possible applications to Sport issues. The third section (articulated, in turn, in various subsections) is dedicated to a detailed review of the various essays included in the book "Somaesthetics and Sport". My aim is to highlight the intimate variety of topics that Somaesthetics as a platform can welcome and its disciplinary versatility. The last subsection provides an overall assesment of the books' aims and their realization, bearing in mind the exploratory nature of the book itself.

KEYWORDS: Somaesthetics; Contemporary Aesthetics; Philosophy of Sport; Pain; Discipline.

Vittoria Sisca

Il *politically correct* è una forzatura? Una riflessione a partire da *L'utilità del senso comune* di Anna Maria Lorusso

Il 4 luglio del 2019, in concomitanza con la diffusione della scelta della protagonista della *La Sirenetta*, *live action* tratta dall'omonima favola Disney, l'*hashtag* "Ariel" si classificò al primo posto fra le tendenze Twitter italiane, raggiungendo un picco di 1.1 milioni di Tweet intorno alle 14:00. In quell'occasione, così com'è avvenuto con la recente pubblicazione del *trailer* della produzione Disney, il dibattito che s'innescò finì per focalizzarsi su un'unica questione: se fosse o meno legittimo affidare un ruolo da protagonista – il ruolo di Ariel, appunto – a una cantante afroamericana.

Com'era prevedibile, in entrambi i casi l'opinione pubblica si divise in due schieramenti contrapposti. Il primo giudicava inappropriata o comunque discutibile la decisione di far interpretare questo ruolo a un'attrice esteticamente non conforme alla rappresentazione originale della sua controparte animata. Per molti utenti, in sostanza, essa appariva come un'inutile forzatura o, ancora meglio, come un eccesso di *politically correct*. Il secondo, al contrario, accoglieva positivamente la scelta del regista della *live action*, giudicando in alcuni casi come razziste o poco inclusive, in altri come semplicemente ridicole le pretese di ricostruzione filologica del personaggio avanzate dalla controparte.

Si tratta certamente di un episodio poco significativo, se ci limitiamo a considerare i contenuti del dibatto. Allo stesso tempo, però, esso mostra bene con quanta facilità argomenti legati alla *politically correctness* siano oggi in grado d'infiammare gli animi di quel tessuto vario e articolato che è l'opinione pubblica. Dimostra cioè quanto, nonostante essi costituiscano dei *topic* popolarissimi fin dagli anni Ottanta, rappresentino ancora motivo di frequenti disaccordi persino quando coinvolgono questioni poco rilevanti come la scelta della protagonista di una produzione Disney.

Certo, non si può negare che, un po' come nei casi di rinnovato successo di quei vecchi tormentoni che tornano periodicamente alla ribalta grazie ai balletti di TikTok, quello del dibattito che ruota intorno alla correttezza politica non sia in alcun modo collegato alla particolare natura dei "luoghi" nei quali più o meno frequentemente si ripropone: i *social*

network. Del resto, pur nascendo con l'intento di contribuire – per dirla con lo stesso Zuckerberg – alla "creazione di un mondo di amici", è noto che *social* come Facebook o Twitter siano spesso teatri di polemiche in grado di generare inimicizie e tensioni sociali.

A prescindere dall'incidenza dei nuovi media, contesti nei quali i dibattiti intorno alla *politically correctness* spesso sorgono e tramontano, rimane il fatto che al loro centro c'è quasi sempre uno scontro relativo alla legittimità d'istanze di riforma o di cancellazione di simboli o forme espressive esistenti in favore o in nome di linguaggi o valori maggiormente inclusivi. Per comprenderlo, di fatto, basterebbe anche soltanto menzionare alcuni degli episodi che, in tempi recenti, sono finiti al centro dell'agenda mediatica nazionale: la vernice rosa sulla statua di Indro Montanelli, il ritiro temporaneo di *Via col vento* dal catalogo HBO o il dibattito generato a partire dalla petizione contro lo *schwa* promossa dal linguista Massimiliano Arcangeli[1].

Senza entrare nel dettaglio dei singoli episodi, è interessante evidenziare come tutti questi casi abbiano innescato, sul terreno dell'opinione pubblica, dibattiti animati da polarizzazioni così rigide e ricorrenti da aver assunto nel loro stesso immaginario dei caratteri quasi stereotipati. Da un lato, una fazione che difende il *politically correct* in nome di una maggiore inclusività. Una parte di opinione pubblica che giudica positivamente le istanze di riforma veicolate dai sostenitori del politicamente corretto e reputa infondate, in quanto effettivamente spesso fondate su vere e proprie *fake news*, le accuse di censura spesso avanzate dalla controparte. Dall'altro, uno schieramento più "conservatore", pronto a evocare il pericolo della censura e a difendere i linguaggi tradizionali da ogni sospetto abbozzo di riforma. Talvolta anche con esiti piuttosto bizzarri, come quando l'attuale Presidente del consiglio Giorgia Meloni, notoriamente restia ad accogliere positivamente l'utilizzo di linguaggi *gender inclusive*, pur rivendicando da sempre la propria identità di *donna*, madre e cristiana, ha richiesto di rivolgersi a lei utilizzando l'espressione maschile "*il* Presidente".

Ora, rispetto al presunto ricorso strumentale a *fake news* per mostrare la fondatezza delle tesi più critiche nei confronti delle condotte censorie connesse al *politically correct*, va certamente riconosciuto che, negli ultimi tempi, non è mancata la presenza di dibattiti fondati sulla diffu-

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[1] Stando ai dati reperibili su getdaytrends, l'*hashtag* "Montanelli" ha raggiunto la quarta posizione fra le tendenze di Twitter l'11 giugno 2020, in occasione della vernice rosa versata sulla statua del giornalista, presente a Milano, da parte del collettivo *Non una di meno*. La parola "schwa" raggiunse invece il picco più alto su Twitter 9 febbraio 2022, in concomitanza alla notizia della petizione contro lo *schwa* lanciata dal linguista Massimo Arcangeli. Infine, l'*hashtag* "Via col vento" finì in tendenza su Twitter il 10 giugno del 2020, in occasione del ritiro temporaneo del film premio oscar dal catalogo HBO.

sione di notizie parziali o addirittura costruite ad arte. Basti pensare alla polemica sulla "notizia" dell'esclusione di Mozart dal programma musicale dell'Università di Oxford, diffusa in Italia anche da testate come "Il Corriere della Sera" (cfr. Grammellini 2021), "Il Fatto Quotidiano" (cfr. Conti 2021,), "Il Secolo d'Italia" (cfr. Sirocchi 2021) e "Il Foglio" (cfr. Crippa 2021) e poi smentita dalla stessa Università attraverso un documento ufficiale.

A questo proposito, Jennifer Guerra (2022) ha giustamente evidenziato come la tendenza a ricalcare il carattere censorio e moralizzante del politicamente corretto, pur costituendo storicamente un *frame* di destra, sia ormai un motivo ricorrente anche in relazione ad articoli pubblicati dalle testate più moderate o da quelle dichiaratamente progressiste, con contenuti *clickbait* fondati su notizie gonfiate, mal interpretate e – in alcuni casi – inventate di sana pianta. Nel caso specifico della polemica su Mozart, ad esempio, l'intenzione dell'Università di Oxford non era affatto, come annunciarono le varie testate italiane, quella di censurare i programmi d'insegnamento che includevano l'opera del compositore austriaco, bensì soltanto quella di ampliare l'offerta formativa, valutando eventualmente l'inserimento di ulteriori insegnamenti che contemplassero anche lo studio di arti non bianche.

Il discorso cambia, però, se prendiamo in considerazione uno studio pubblicato di recente da Anna Maria Lorusso, *L'utilità del senso comune* (Il Mulino, Bologna 2022). Al suo interno, infatti, l'autrice ha saputo evidenziare alcuni limiti legati alle condotte veicolate dalla *politically correctness* e dalla *cancel culture* senza scadere in considerazione ideologiche, semplicemente limitandosi a situare i due fenomeni all'interno di un'articolata analisi del terreno nel quale si collocano: quella del senso comune.

Come si evince già dalla prima parte del testo, nella quale Lorusso si propone di tracciare "una *storia dell'idea* di senso comune, in ambito filosofico, semiotico socioantropologico" (p. 17), quella del senso comune è una dimensione che potrebbe essere descritta, in prima istanza, attraverso tre aggettivi. È irriflessa, in quanto è costituita da conoscenze e valori che sono, come direbbe Pierce, *uncriticized*, ovvero semplicemente assunti come tali. È mediatrice, in quanto influenza il nostro comportamento senza che noi ce ne accorgiamo, fissando i limiti del nostro agire e rendendoci in grado di giudicare se una condotta sia o meno adeguata al contesto sociale in cui prende corpo. È dinamica, in quanto le credenze e le classificazioni che compaginano il senso comune si sviluppano in noi, come evidenzia Alfred Schütz, su base sociale, ossia a partire da una dimensione comune che è continuamente soggetta a mutamenti.

Prendere in considerazione quest'ultimo aspetto, apparentemente così ovvio, potrebbe essere una chiave interessante per iniziare a inquadrare il primo degli elementi problematici che Lorusso individua in relazione

al *politically correct*. Riprendendo Pierce, infatti, Lorusso riconosce che l'idea che ogni comunità sia sempre stata disposta a rivedere le proprie credenze renda, in parte, plausibile il fatto che le rivendicazioni avanzate del *politcally correct* possano radicarsi all'interno del senso comune. D'altra parte, però, l'autrice evidenzia anche la necessità di tener presente il fatto che le credenze che lo compaginano evolvano spesso in maniera lenta, richiedendo talvolta processi di negoziazione piuttosto lunghi rispetto alle perentorie richieste di riforma esse rivendicano.

Questo vale, a maggior ragione, quando si parla del mezzo per eccellenza attraverso il quale senso comune di ogni comunità si esprime, assumendo – come direbbe Wittgenstein – una natura pubblica: il linguaggio. Come osserva Lorusso, il progetto della *politically correctness* presenta una vocazione sanzionatoria legata al linguaggio fin dagli anni Ottanta, quando l'espressione fece la sua prima comparsa nei campus universitari americani, andando a rivendicare "il dovere di avere un linguaggio appropriato, in certe aree sensibili (legate a sesso, razza, scelte religiose…)", ecc. (p. 85).

A tal proposito, va segnalato che la ricerca di un linguaggio attento a non ledere la dignità delle minoranze presenti costituì all'epoca una risposta concreta all'esigenza di introdurre delle nuove regole di convivenza all'interno di un ambiente universitario non più composto soltanto da *white men*. Un ambiente via via sempre più multiculturale e, di conseguenza, anche sempre più incline a valorizzare la sua rinnovata identità promuovendo, ad esempio, insegnamenti che includessero anche altre prospettive oltre a quelle provenienti dalla cultura occidentale. In questo senso, l'origine del dibattito intorno al *politically correct* sembra confermare la tesi saussouriana in base alla quale il linguaggio "cambia in funzione delle forze sociali, oltre che del tempo" (pp. 92-93). È per questo, del resto, che i cambiamenti linguistici richiedono talvolta dei tempi di negoziazione lunghissimi prima di stabilizzarsi: perché essi presuppongono non solo che i dati sociali mutino, ma che a mutare sia anche la valorizzazione di quegli stessi dati all'interno del senso comune.

Giungiamo quindi al nucleo problemi fondamentali che Lorusso individua nelle attuali rivendicazioni avanzate dal *politically* correct, quantomeno nei loro eccessi. Per quanto utili al fine di promuovere nuovi valori ed esprimere una rinnovata sensibilità sociale, alcune richieste di revisione linguistica avanzate dai promotori del *politically correct* – secondo Lorusso – non sarebbero in grado di tenere conto proprio di questo scarto. Vittime "dell'idea un po' magica" (p. 95) in base alla quale cambiando la realtà sia possibile cambiare, di colpo, anche il nostro abituale modo di designarla, i suoi sostenitori sembrerebbero tradire, in breve, una certa difficoltà a realizzare che, sebbene

la realtà cambi, "il senso comune, cioè la valorizzazione condivisa di quella realtà, cambia più lentamente" (p. 95).

L'esempio utilizzato dall'autrice per rilevare questa tendenza è il dibattito attorno all'utilizzo dello *schwa*: simbolo il cui utilizzo viene promosso da diversi sostenitori per via del suo suono neutro, che sfugge al binarismo femminile/maschile. Come ha evidenziato Lorusso, riprendendo un'espressione di Cristiana De Santis, la promozione dell'utilizzo dello *schwa* rappresenta senz'altro un fenomeno interessante se lo leggiamo un *logo linguistico.* In quest'ottica – spiega l'autrice – lo *schwa* costituisce "qualcosa di promozionale, nel senso migliore del termine" (p. 96): qualcosa in grado di promuovere una sensibilità sociale in evoluzione. Un conto, però, è utilizzare questo simbolo per promuovere nuovi valori. Un altro è invece pretendere che, in nome di questi stessi valori, sia più *corretto* introdurre effettivamente, all'interno di una lingua come quella italiana, l'utilizzo di questo simbolo in sostituzione delle desinenze maschili e femminili.

Tale assunto, infatti, comporterebbe anche la legittimazione di una modifica significativa dei connotati della nostra lingua parlata, la quale porterebbe il senso comune a considerare lo *schwa* come "un'innovazione imposta e programmatica" (p. 92). Naturalmente, con ciò Lorusso non intende negare a priori la possibilità che l'invito all'uso dello *schwa*

> si stabilizzi sempre di più, fino ad essere condiviso dalla comunità sociale. Ma questo presuppone una condivisione sul piano del sentire comune, del senso comune; il passaggio dall'atto alla norma presuppone che prima di farsi regola, qualcosa si faccia anzitutto accettato e normale. Presuppone che si stabilizzi un livello sovraindividuale ma non formale: concreto e diffuso (p. 93).

Come anticipato in precedenza, all'interno del suo testo, Lorusso individua una problematica degna di riflessione anche in relazione alla *cancel culture*, ossia a "quell'insieme di movimenti sociali che promuovono la cancellazione delle tracce (monumenti e iscrizioni di vario tipo) di memorie scomode, traumatiche, ormai collettivamente riconosciute come legate a soggetti ed eventi che hanno violato i diritti umani" (p. 100). I casi di *cancel culture* citati dall'autrice sono diversi. Si va dall'abbattimento delle statue confederative in Virginia, promosso dal movimento *Black lives matter*, alle già citate aggressioni alla statua di Montanelli presenti a Milano fino ad arrivare alla rimozione della grande statua di Cecil Rohdes, a Città del Capo, in seguito alle proteste organizzate dal movimento Rhodes Must Fall.

Come si evince da questi esempi, le condotte legate alla *cancel culture* hanno di mira sempre una storia colpevole. Di che cosa – ci si può legittimamente chiedere – potrà mai essere colpevole un oggetto privo di

coscienza come un monumento? Di star lì – rispondono i suoi sostenitori – a simboleggiare dei valori che vanno contro a un senso comune ormai consolidato. Di star lì a rappresentare esperienze di un passato che va rinnegato: lo schiavismo, "che è condannato in qualsiasi paese civile"; il fascismo, "che è stato un *vulnus* della vita democratica italiana"; il colonialismo, "che ha mancato di rispetto a qualsiasi minoranza" (p. 105).

Ora, il fatto che – al pari dell'utilizzo dello *schwa* – anche l'abbattimento o la rimozione di monumenti che rimandano a un passato colpevole possa rappresentare una forzatura agli occhi di una parte dell'opinione pubblica, non è necessariamente da collegare al fatto che esistano ancora degli individui che sostengono, più o meno velatamente, il ritorno a capitoli del nostro passato senz'altro condannabili. Come evidenzia Lorusso, infatti, la *cancel culture* pone delle problematiche di gran lunga più complesse.

La prima è quella di stabilire la legittimità di chi si fa portatore, quand'anche in nome di nobili valori, d'istanze d'interventi di cancellazione della cultura: in nome di chi? A che titolo – chiede Lorusso – si è legittimati a intervenire materialmente con un atto di distruzione che risponde alle rivendicazioni di un gruppo? "Anche assumendo l'effettiva esistenza, nel senso comune, di una sensibilità acquisita circa, ad esempio, l'orrore della schiavitù" (p. 103) è davvero legittimo cancellare o revisionare memorie del passato solo perché non conformi alla fisionomia – anche valoriale – della contemporaneità?

In secondo luogo, si tratterebbe di capire fin dove possa mai continuare il regresso nell'applicazione dei nostri criteri assiologici a eventi del passato. Se Thomas Jefferson – chiede provocatoriamente l'autrice – "(tra i padri fondatori degli Stati Uniti) ci indigna perché aveva molti schiavi; Giulio Cesare (il cui ruolo per la storia di Roma non ci sono dubbi) dovrebbe procurarci lo stesso sdegno?" (p. 101).

Infine, si tratterebbe di stabilire se davvero la distruzione o la rimozione di una statua, così come la cancellazione di un testo, possano costituire degli interventi efficaci al fine di rimuovere dei nuclei di significato da una cultura. Si tratta di un problema rilevante, soprattutto se prendiamo atto del fatto che in realtà, come osserva Lorusso, talvolta tali dinamiche finiscono per generare un effetto contrario rispetto all'auspicata rimozione di alcuni nuclei di significato. Talvolta – scrive l'autrice – "anche cancellando, abbattendo o coprendo" le tracce di una storia che si vorrebbe rimuovere dal presente, si finisce – quand'anche inconsapevolmente – "col produrre nuovi segni e nuovi discorsi, in un meccanismo che sfiora l'amplificazione, anziché la tacitazione" (p. 106).

Anche in questo caso, dunque, il rischio potrebbe essere quello di generare meccanismo controproducente e impacciato che, nel tentativo di silenziare alcuni nuclei di significato, finisce invece per porli al centro di

un dibattito che ne amplifica la diffusione, "in una catena semiotica che non fa silenzio: fa rumore" (p. 106). Per questo, in ultima analisi, il *senso comune* costituisce un oggetto di studi fondamentale: perché analizzarlo non significa semplicemente trattare un argomento poco sondato, contribuendo magari all'ampliamento degli studi di settore. Guardare a questo terreno significa soprattutto guadagnare una chiave di lettura in grado di porci in condizione di misurare l'efficacia di pratiche che, normalmente, si limitano a far confliggere tifosi e detrattori, individuandone criticamente tanto le potenzialità quanto i limiti pragmatici.

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Il politically correct è una forzatura?
Una riflessione a partire da *L'utilità del senso comune* di Anna Maria Lorusso

The debate around political correctness is currently one of the predominant topics within the public discourse. More precisely, given that the conduct to which this term refers to has been a cause of social dispute since the 1980s, it would be more accurate to say that political correctness is an issue that has been inflaming the minds of the diverse and articulate fabric that is public opinion for about half a century. The aim of this review article is to sketch out a possible key to interpret this phenomenon, presenting the reader with the point of view expressed by the Italian semiologist Anna Maria Lorusso in her last book *L'utilità del senso comune* (2022).

KEYWORDS: Politically correct, Common sense, Cancel culture, Semiotics, Aesthetics of mass media.

**Post-phenomenology and the Ethics
of Artificial Intelligence**

edited by Floriana Ferro, Luca Possati, and Luca Taddio

Floriana Ferro, Luca Possati, and Luca Taddio
Introduction

This issue of *Scenari* takes inspiration from the rapid growing of AI-based technology in the most diverse fields and from our need to explore and understand what impact it has and will have on society. The great pervasiveness of Artificial Intelligence raises many questions, coming not only from philosophers and experts in the development of AI, but also from policymakers, opinion leaders, and the general public. In this respect, the ethical domain is particularly involved, especially for what concerns the possibility to distinguish between the actions of humans and AI systems, the responsibility and accountability for the behavior of AI systems, the possibility for the robot to learn and stimulate the development of social skills in sensitive situations (schools, healthcare, elderly care, etc.) or, on the contrary, its negative effects. Phenomenology, on the basis of its relational perspective, offers an interesting background to address these issues, especially in its post-phenomenological version, which is also particularly involved with the problems of new technologies. This issue of *Scenari* opens a new debate on the ethics of Artificial Intelligence, by adopting a post-phenomenological point of view and integrating it with the suggestions of classical phenomenology and other philosophical perspectives.

Roberto Redaelli's "Composite Intentionality and Responsibility for an Ethics of Artificial Intelligence" tries to offer a general overview on this topic, by focusing especially on the concepts of intentionality and responsibility. The author is particularly inspired by Peter-Paul Verbeek's version of post-phenomenology and his idea of "composite intentionality". Redaelli well thematizes this notion and applies it to the contemporary issue of the relation between humans and AI-machines. The mediation that technology offers between our bodies and the world, which is a key issue in post-phenomenology, assumes moral significance in Verbeek's thought, so that the concept of composite intentionality may be also applied to the notion of responsibility, thus giving rise to "composite responsibility".

Claudio Carvalho's paper, entitled "Ethical challenges of AI-based psychotherapy: The case of explainability" focuses on how traditional ethical issues reemerge with the use of chatbots in psychotherapy. Carvalho argues that an adequate model of explainability needs to overcome the mere algorithmic accessing and retrieving of personal information. Post-phenomenology, which shares a relational view, particularly focuses on the role of technological mediation in understanding the "in between" of therapeutic communication. Chatbots have a great potential in psychotherapy, but, in order to be efficient, they do not need to resist the contingency of the inputs given by the user, but they shall rely on it, in order to help the user with a more personalized approach. Through the sketching of five vectors of explainability, Carvalho shows how the introduction of AI-based ethical agents face the traditional ethical problems of psychotherapy.

Alistair Macaulay's contribution, "Composing Improvisors: Habit and Agential Responsibility", deals with the topic of an AI-machine of music improvisation, called *Voyager* and developed during the 1980's. The realization of a machine reproducing an activity which is usually associated with human freedom shows that, as the author of the paper argues, improvisation is enabled by intense preparation, based on the habituated skills of the performer. *Voyager* is able to pass the Turing test, since it adapts to the performance environment and is indistinguishable from human improvisors. This raises a discussion about the difference between human and AI in the domain of improvisation and in which sense an agent may be defined as an improvisor. Macaulay faces this issue through concepts mainly developed by post-phenomenology and Deleuze and Guattari.

Floriana Ferro's paper, entitled "Meeting the Gaze of the Robot: A Phenomenological Analysis on Human-Robot Empathy", focuses on the development of AI technology in humanoid robots and raises the question of human-robot empathy. The author's analysis shows that humans feel a certain kind of empathy towards robots, since they recognize them as *alter egos*. Ferro takes inspiration from both classical phenomenology (especially Husserl, Stein, and Merleau-Ponty) and post-phenomenology (Ihde and Verbeek), in order to explain how the empathic relationship between humans and robots takes place. Meeting the gaze of the robot means meeting its face and its body, which is not identical to a human face and body, but shows important similarities with them. Ferro finds a *transcorporeal analogy* between two ways of being embodied, which becomes evident through the effects that the robot gaze has on humans and which is brought out by contemporary studies in robotics.

Luca Possati's paper "The Paradox of Quantum Information and Its Ethical Consequences" explores the impact of the measurement problem

in quantum mechanics on quantum information theory. It intends to see whether Floridi's theory of information can be appropriately extended or adapted to the quantum domain. The claim is that it doesn't seem possible for Floridi's theory to be applied to quantum systems because it requires a process of validation whose requirements are incompatible with quantum mechanics. The paper shows how in the quantum field the veridicality thesis, that is, the core of Floridi's approach, fails.

Roberto Redaelli

Composite Intentionality and Responsibility for an Ethics of Artificial Intelligence

> *Morality is neither to be found in the objects themselves, nor in autonomous subjects. It only comes in relations between subjects and objects, where objects have moral significance and subjects are engaged in mediated relations with the world*
>
> (Verbeek 2014, p. 87).

1. Some preliminary remarks

In recent years there has been an exponential growth in the use of machines equipped with artificial intelligence: from the progressive automation of vehicles to the increasingly widespread use of robotics in the medical-healthcare field, to the voice assistants with which our personal devices are designed, these technologies are bringing radical change to our lifestyles. While there is no doubt that these innovations are beneficial to our lives, the pervasiveness of these technologies must not be underestimated and raises increasingly urgent ethical and legal issues. For these reasons, the spread of intelligent systems into the most disparate areas of our lives renders necessary, alongside a re-modelling of our habits, a radical process of re-semantisation of some notions traditionally ascribed to human beings, such as those of intentionality and responsibility (see Doorn & van de Poel 2012). This paper addresses the process of redefining these notions in order to examine the increasingly close relationship between humans and AI. To this end, we propose to apply in the specific field of artificial intelligence the idea of composite intentionality developed by P.P. Verbeek, with the aim to clarify hybrid forms of a) *intentionality* and b) *responsibility*, and take positive steps towards an *extended agency theory* (see, for example, Hanson 2009; Gunkel 2020).

2. Verbeek and the moralisation of technologies

A large part of Verbeek's efforts (Kroes & Verbeek 2014; Verbeek 2011; 2005a) is aimed at accounting for the mediating role played by technologies in our habits and then ascribing to them a clear moral significance. Distancing himself from both the reflections on technology of Heidegger in his later period and Jaspers (see Verbeek 2005a), as well as from any purely instrumental or alienating view of technology, Verbeek elaborates, in an original way, upon many of the fruitful insights found in Latour (see, e.g., Latour 1993; 1994; 2002) and Ihde (see, e.g., 1979; 1990; 1993) in order to highlight the mediation function that technologies perform in our everyday lives.

In fact, Verbeek credits Latour with not reducing technologies to the product of networks of social interactions, as is the case with the social constructivist conception of technology, and rather with highlighting the ways in which "technologies themselves coshape the interactions" (Verbeek 2005a, p. 103), that is, their active role. Despite this merit, Latour's approach, according to Verbeek, fails to adequately bring to the foreground the ways in which technology "coshapes the access human beings have to reality" (Verbeek 2005a, p. 104). In other words, Latour, from an outside perspective[1], reduces the connections between entities to the mere terms of associations (Verbeek 2005a, p. 165), whereas Ihde's postphenomenological approach offers a more nuanced look at these connections, analysing them in terms of experience and behaviour, based on an internal point of view. However, this difference in viewpoints does not lead, according to Verbeek, to a conflict between the two perspectives; rather, they are compatible: both aim, though in different ways, to overcome the subject-object dichotomy. This conviction is the starting point for Verbeek's attempt at "forging from these two approaches a fruitful way to analyze technological mediation" (Verbeek 2005a, p. 168) through a translation of Latour's vocabulary in a postphenomenological perspective.

More precisely, by virtue of this admixture of the two perspectives, ethics has the task of extending its field of inquiry beyond the human sphere, overcoming the modernist subject-object dichotomy in the direction of an "amodern" worldview, inaugurated first by Latour. In fact, Verbeek,

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[1] Verbeek defines the perspective taken by Latour as a perspective 'from the outside' in these terms: "Latour argues not from the standpoint of human beings who are concretely situated in the world, but from the standpoint of an analyst who describes configurations equally from the perspective of humans and non-humans. […] What postphenomenology contributes to actor-network theory is the situated perspective, the perspective 'from inside out'" (Verbeek 2005a, p. 168).

who credits Latour more generally with focusing on "nonhuman forms of agency" (Verbeek 2011, p. 17), proposes an ethical reflection that reconsiders the original fusion of humans and technology, as a consequence of which humans themselves become "technological beings" (Verbeek 2011, p. 4) or cyborgs (Verbeek 2008; see also Stiegler 1998). To this end, he uses – as just mentioned – what is commonly called a post-phenomenological approach, which was inaugurated and developed by Don Ihde (see, e.g., 1993)[2]. This approach, which has no foundational claim (see Verbeek 2011, p. 15), is presented in Verbeek's words as a "philosophical analysis of the structure of the relations between human beings and their lifeworld" (Verbeek 2011, p. 7). Within this type of analysis, which takes the form of experimental phenomenology (see Ihde 1977), emerges the idea of a philosophy of mediation. For Verbeek, this philosophy must take into account the by-no-means-ethically-neutral role played by technologies in the relationship between humans and the world. In fact, technological devices help us shape our experiences, influence our moral decisions, and have important repercussions on what we do and think: they co-shape practices of living and knowing. In this sense, we humans have a mediated, so to speak, hybrid experience of reality, as our action is so often mediated by technological devices. Therefore, although artifacts cannot be defined as *human-like* moral agents[3], they help humankind to make decisions, raise ethical dilemmas and offer tools for resolving them: they are bearers of moral demands, and, according to the philosopher, they possess a clear moral significance.

In order to explain this significance, Verbeek's proposal hinges, among other things, on an original notion of intentionality, which allows us to rethink the relationship between humans and reality, and, as we will try to show, to better understand the notion of responsibility in our digital era.

3. The concept of technological intentionality

As a starting point for the development of a non-humanist approach to ethics, Verbeek addresses the problem of the intentionality of artifacts. From both deontological and consequentialist perspectives, technological objects are excluded from ethics because they lack intentionality and freedom. Nevertheless, the moral role of these technologies in our society has become increasingly evident in recent years. As

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[2] An accurate introduction to post-phenomenology can be found in Rosenberger & Verbeek 2015.
[3] On the moral agency of technological artifacts see, for instance, the different positions of Floridi & Sanders 2004; Johnson 2006; Sullins 2006; Wallach & Allen 2009.

proof of this role, numerous studies have demonstrated how intelligent systems, in addition to being able to perform the function of artificial moral advisor (Giubilini & Savulescu 2018), possess the ability to embody values and biases (Flanagan, Howe, & Nissenbaum 2008; van de Poel 2020). In fact, these devices demonstrate a tendency to convey values (and disvalues) reflecting opinions, idiosyncrasies, and evaluations of the various social actors involved in the development and use of AI systems. In order to avoid such transmission to the algorithm of discrimination and prejudices, as well as to discourage bad practices related to AI (see Floridi 2022), it was decided, on the one hand, to adopt ethical codes with which these technologies must be aligned during the programming processes (see Gabriel 2020), while on the other hand there was an attempt to disseminate among users some rules of conduct aimed at respecting the other parties in digital relationships.

However, beyond these solutions, which do not constitute a definitive answer to the axiological question, the paradox remains that artificial intelligence is a bearer of moral values, even though it is not recognized as having any intentionality. For the deontological approach, in fact, the morality of an action depends on the fact that an agent *intends to act* according to certain rational criteria and is *free* to do so. The artifacts seem to be devoid of this intention to act and this freedom. From the consequentialist perspective, however, what matters is the result of the action, the value of the outcomes. But although technology can achieve morally significant results, the moral responsibility for these results lies, according to this perspective, only with the human being who uses technology as an instrument for the realization of goals. In this way, both approaches exclude artifacts from the realm of ethics, assigning them a causal responsibility and a merely instrumental character[4].

In contrast to these two ethical approaches, Verbeek presents a third that takes into account the active role of technological mediation, whereby "things can be seen as part of the moral community in the sense that they help to shape morality" (Verbeek 2011, p. 42). According to this view, it is not legitimate to exclude technological objects from the ethical world, but rather it is appropriate to extend the notion of agency to include technology. To this end, Verbeek, first of all, observes – as Winner's (1986) pioneering work indicated – that artifacts embody human intentions *in a material way* and at the same time present emergent properties, which seem to assign them a certain degree of freedom. In this sense, one could observe that moral agency is distributed between humans and

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[4] In Verbeek's eyes, even Ihde's reflection that recognizes several relationships human beings can have with technological artifacts (embodiment, hermeneutic, alterity, background relation) seems to lack a careful analysis of some forms of intentionality (see Verbeek 2008).

nonhumans; therefore, moral actions and decisions are the product of human-technological associations.

Given this premise, Verbeek reworks in human-nonhuman relational terms both the concept of intentionality and that of freedom, traditionally ascribed to the human agent. In the field of intentionality, two concepts must first be distinguished: the ability to form intentions typical of ethical theory and the phenomenological concept of the "directedness of human beings toward reality" (Verbeek 2011, p. 55). For Verbeek, the first type of intentionality is based on the second, because the ability to form intentions to act cannot exist without "being directed at reality and interpreting it in order to act in it" (Verbeek 2011, p. 55). Starting from Ihde's reflections, but going beyond them, the author then emphasizes how intentionality in the post-phenomenological sense is mediated by technological devices, or in his terminology, is *composite*, whereby "when this 'directedness' of technological devices is added to human intentionality, a *composite intentionality* comes about: a form of intentionality that results from adding technological intentionality to human intentionality" (Verbeek 2011, p. 145, see also Verbeek 2008).

From eyeglasses to thermometers, from air conditioning to artificial intelligence systems, technologies shape in ever new ways our experience of the world, and grant access to it. And it is on the basis of the idea of composite intentionality, to which Verbeek assigns both a representative and a constructive function (Verbeek 2011, p. 145), that it is possible to attribute to technologies a certain intentionality, or rather, recognize that the same intentionality is distributed between human and nonhuman subjects. In fact, technologies can change our behaviour, our perception of the world, and therefore have intentionality in the sense of the *directing role of human action* (Verbeek 2011, p. 57). In this sense, their intentionality is reducible neither to that of the designers nor to that of the users, but rather takes on a character that is, so to speak, emergent with respect to the first two; a character to which, according to Verbeek, a certain notion of freedom is linked. The effects of technologies are not completely predictable, or controllable by humans. They are characterized by "emergent forms of mediation" (Verbeek 2011, p. 127) and "feedback effects" that affect both us and the world we live in (see Di Martino 2017; Tenner 1996).

These traits of composite intentionality now allow us to understand how moral decisions are not merely a human product, but that the technological apparatuses with which humans access the world are already involved therein. Therefore, it does not appear unjustified to state that "moral decision making is a joint effort of human beings and technological artifacts" (Verbeek 2011, p. 58). Humans never decide or act in a vacuum, but rather do so in a technologically shaped world, within

which their choices are *directed* by technology, which opens up new possibilities for action, redefining the scope of reality and forming our habits.

In regard to the directive nature of technologies (Verbeek 2011, p. 57), linked to the notion of intentionality, the case study offered by the use of certain medical devices such as those used in prenatal diagnosis is particularly interesting. A useful example is made of obstetric ultrasound technology, to which Verbeek (2008a; 2011) cannot attribute a merely instrumental role in making the fetus visible inside the uterine cavity. The use of ultrasound tech, which makes it possible to predict many congenital defects before birth, involves a significant redefinition both of the ontological status of the unborn child, who becomes a possible patient, and of the parents, who can make extreme decisions on the basis of this diagnosis. In this case, the human-machine association conveys composite intentionality and the role played by technology in offering humans new directions of action is evident, which raises far-reaching ethical dilemmas (see, e.g., Mitchell 2001 for the ethical consequences of the use of these technologies).

Starting from this notion of composite intentionality, exemplified by the case study mentioned above, the application of Verbeek's post-phenomenological perspective, according to our working hypothesis, allows us to better understand the moral status of artificial intelligence. Indeed, compared to, so to speak, traditional technologies, artificial intelligence makes autonomous decisions, adapting its behaviour to the conditions in which it operates. In this capacity composite intentionality is revealed as a result, not merely a summation, of the human-machine association. Clarifying this type of intentionality and applying it to ethical problems[5] has become an increasingly urgent task, given the pervasiveness with which intelligent machines, capable of autonomy, adaptability and interaction (Floridi & Sanders 2004), are influencing our lives.

With respect to the position of Floridi and Sanders (2004) it can be observed that the notion of composite intentionality proposed by Verbeek has the merit of avoiding those positions defined by the authors as anthropocentric, whereby moral philosophy remains "unduly constrained by its anthropocentric conception of agenthood" (Floridi and Sanders 2004, p. 350), without, however, making use of the method of abstraction about whose tenability several objections have arisen (see Gunkel

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[5] For instance, the problem of the 'contamination of the algorithm', that is, the transmission to the AI of the prejudices of programmers and users, can be clarified, if understood as a result of the addition of human intentionality to that of artificial intelligence. Therefore, a resolution of this problem can be elaborated from the recognition of this composite agency to which the notion of composite intentionality corresponds.

2017 p. 73; Johnson and Miller 2008). In fact, Verbeek's posthumanist position brings the human-machine relationship back within the notion of extended agenthood, attributing to it a composite intentionality, which can account for human-AI entanglement without reducing the latter's technological intentionality to that of humans. In this sense, the idea of composite intentionality developed by Verbeek seems to be particularly suitable for explaining the intentionality present in systems with artificial intelligence. Such systems, in fact, present a technological intentionality understood as a directedness (Verbeek 2008, p. 392) that guides our action and thinking, a form of intentionality that, as we have seen, is indeed connected to the man who designs the machine and uses it, but which, at the same time, presents an emergent property with respect to human intentionality.

Therefore, in such intelligent systems, the human-machine compositionality highlighted by Verbeek is manifested to the highest degree, whereby human intentionality is directed at the technological intentionality of the machine, which represents and constitutes the real not as a mere extension of the human, but by virtue of its own relevance (Verbeek 2011, p. 146). Technology, in this case, is developed in order "to reveal a reality that can be experienced only by technologies" (Verbeek 2011, p. 146).

4. Composite responsibility for rethinking the human-technology relationship

The question of the intentionality of artificial intelligence is linked to the second topic of our investigation, namely that of the moral and legal responsibility of these technologies. The use of artificial intelligence in the legal field as an aid to a judge's decision, as well as the use of technologies in the medical field for diagnostic purposes, raise the problem of the attribution of moral and legal responsibility for the indirect effects deriving from their use (for the legal field, see Funke 2022; for the moral field, Coleman 2004). In fact, if machines equipped with artificial intelligence make it possible in some areas to achieve results that are far more reliable than human ones, this does not free these technologies from error. These systems, used for example in the legal field to predict the risk of recidivism (for the Compas case, see Brennan et al. 2009), may favor discrimination, since their decisions are based on previous resolutions, according to a bottom-up statistical approach (for the limits of this approach, see Di Giulio 2020). This approach is based, in fact, on the ability of intelligent systems to learn, from the data available, how to acquire new knowledge and make decisions. Therefore, where the data set used

for learning is somewhat misleading (incomplete or unrepresentative), there may be unforeseen consequences produced by the algorithms. Because of this limitation, it is becoming increasingly urgent to identify an exact criterion for attributing responsibility for these consequences. To reach this goal, different proposals have been put forward, ranging from increasing human control over artificial intelligence (with the consequent attribution of responsibility to designers, producers and users) to the recognition of some moral or legal responsibility of the artificial agents themselves. In the latter case, it has even been proposed to assign to technologies equipped with artificial intelligence an "electronic personality", with its own legal subjectivity (in this regard, see Pacileo 2020).

Faced with these various proposed solutions, we aim to elaborate a post-phenomenological notion of responsibility, in line with that of intentionality, which reflects the composite character of human-artificial intelligence associations. This does not mean assigning a moral responsibility to artificial intelligence, but rather *recognizing a precise role in the process of forming the moral responsibility of the human agent* (Verbeek 2008, 2009; Hanson 2009; Gunkel 2020) both in the case of *backward-looking responsibility* and in the case of *forward-looking responsibility* (see de Poel 2011). In this way, this notion can contribute to the resolution of the so-called "responsibility gap" (Matthias 2004), whereby more complex and autonomous technologies involve less human intervention, so that it is less easy to assign responsibility to humans for the behavior of such machines.

In order to offer such a contribution, it is useful to demonstrate how the advent of intelligent systems makes the human-nonhuman association even more complex and inextricable. If Selinger and Engström (2007), following Ihde (2002), observed that the human subject modifies itself when using technological tools, the advent of technologies with operational autonomy entails a radical extension of agency with significant repercussions on the attribution of responsibility. Depending on how this redistribution is understood, two different approaches to the question can be recognized: some scholars identify a certain degree of moral responsibility in technological artifacts, assigning to them, in some cases, attributes similar to those of the human moral agent; others recognize intelligent systems as a "quasi-responsibility," that is, a conductive character of moral action (Verbeek 2011), for which the responsibility falls on the extended agent, understood as a human-machine association as a whole (Gunkel 2020; Hanson 2009).

This second hypothesis, which appears to be the most suitable to address the problem of responsibility at today's level of AI-enhanced technologies (see Gunkel 2020), can perhaps be improved by defining the notion of responsibility to better account for the complexity of the

human-*artificial intelligence* connection. Indeed, while it is sometimes possible to make an immediate distinction in the human-technology relationship between the causal responsibility of technology and the moral responsibility of the human agent, it is not so easy to make such a distinction in situations in which artificial intelligence is involved. Repurposing an example from Hanson (2009), we can observe that if no problem is created when we assign a mere causal responsibility to the rope used by rescuers to save a child who has fallen into a well, it is more difficult to establish responsibility when there are machines in action with operational autonomy, that is, capable of carrying out tasks, deciding and acting by changing their behavior in the face of unforeseen situations. In these cases, in order to properly allocate responsibility, it is necessary to take into account the various social actors involved (e.g. manufacturers, programmers, users and machines) and redistribute responsibility between them. However, achieving a fair redistribution is far from easy in cases where the artificial agent makes decisions in ethically relevant contexts (Wallach & Allen 2009), as in the case of unavoidable collisions of self-driving vehicles. In fact, the plurality of agents involved in these cases, from programmers to car manufacturers, as well as the regulators who allowed the circulation of such vehicles, raises the so-called "many hands" problem (see Nissenbaum 1994; van de Poel et al. 2015), so evidently the contribution of a multiplicity of agents to the action makes it difficult to clearly identify those responsible. To address this difficulty, it has been proposed in recent years to introduce *meaningful human control* (Santoni De Sio & Van de Hoven 2018) over the activities carried out by artificial intelligence, to ensure a human "controller" has sufficient information and time to intervene on the nonhuman agent. The implementation of such a control raises, however, technical and theoretical issues that are difficult to resolve, which once again involve human-machine collaboration, and interfere, among other things, with progressive automation of intelligent machines.

This complex situation must be taken into account in order to advance a notion of composite responsibility, which can be developed by implementing some valuable indications present in Hanson (2009), Gunkel (2020) and Verbeek (2011). This composite or hybrid responsibility must first and foremost account for the dense web of relationships woven by social actors, including individuals, organizations, natural entities and technology, so as to recognize the role played by the parties involved (Hanson 2009). In this analysis, it is necessary to pay particular attention to the function exercised by technological intentionality, understood as the ability to incline the user towards a certain purpose (see Benanti 2021).

Secondly, as observed by Gunkel (2020), an *extended agency theory* to

which a hybrid responsibility corresponds must have a communitarian perspective, which overcomes ethical individualism. In this direction, it is a question of grasping not only the composite character of responsibility, but also and above all the *shared* responsibility. According to our proposal, this quality of being shared requires an ethical commitment on the part of all those involved in the development and use of artificial intelligence, and thus there is an increasing need today to establish unambiguous ethical principles that guide the planning and use of these technologies.

Finally, in the development of this notion of composite responsibility it is necessary to consider not only the relationship between humans and artificial intelligence, but also the machine-to-machine relationship. Indeed, as Wiener (1988) predicted with great foresight, our technological world is no longer formed by the human-machine relationship alone, but also and above all by the interactions between machines. The notion of responsibility must therefore make sense of this last segment, too, in order to ensure the correct distribution of responsibilities. In fact, machine-to-machine interactions can on their own cause unwanted indirect effects with dramatic repercussions on users. For this reason, a notion of composite responsibility must take into account such a relationship in order to trace the human agents who have programmed, produced, and used the machines involved.

In order to avoid misunderstandings and incurring the criticism of being a-moral or even anti-moral, it is necessary here to clarify that with such a notion of composite responsibility, characterized by the elements listed above (the considerations of all actors, a communitarian perspective, a consideration of machine-machine relations), there is no intention to assign some moral or legal responsibility to the machine, but rather to highlight the role that technology plays in the process of shaping our moral responsibility. This role is particularly evident in intelligent systems, which can promote discrimination and prejudice by making use of data imbued with these disvalues, but this does not make such machines morally responsible for the results they produce. In this sense, Verbeek correctly observes that "technologies also contribute to the moral responsibility of human beings for the actions that come about in human-technological interaction. But […] this does not imply that technologies should be held morally accountable for their mediating roles in human behaviour – just as it does not make sense to consider technologies full-fledged moral agents in the way human beings are moral agents" (Verbeek 2011, p. 108). So, in more precise terms, with the notion of composite responsibility we intend here to account for the active role that technologies play in the sphere of moral responsibility, without thereby assigning some form

of responsibility to them, which could lead to the de-responsibiliza-tion of designers and users.

In this sense, the idea of composite responsibility does not relieve de-signers of responsibility for the effects produced by the technologies they develop, just as it does not relieve users of their responsibility for the ef-fects resulting from the (inappropriate) use of such technologies. In fact, the former can anticipate, albeit within certain limits, the moral impact of the technologies they are developing, while the latter have the duty of appropriate use of those technologies according to the use plan[6]. It is precisely at the design and use stage that one can finally identify the space of human moral responsibility to both appropriately design and use the technologies. In this space of freedom, the moral mediation of technolo-gies certainly plays a central role, sometimes revealing a discrepancy be-tween the values intended and the values actually realized through the use of technologies[7]. This discrepancy does not free the human from his responsibilities, but rather assigns him new responsibilities[8]. To return to the example of intelligent systems that (unintentionally) promote dis-crimination and bias (see the Compas case), the choice of the data on which the algorithms are to be trained turns out to be crucial, and the human is solely responsible for the decision regarding the dataset to be used for training. If anything, the algorithm expands or shrinks the hu-man space of freedoms by virtue of its ability or inability to incorporate certain values, and in this way contributes to the formation of human responsibility that is already always mediated by technology.

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[6] "A use plan is a plan that describes how an artifact should be used to achieve certain goals or to fulfill its function. In other words, a use plan describes the proper use of a technical artifact, and that proper use will result (in the right context and with users with the right competences) in the artifact fulfilling its proper function" (Van de Poel 2020, p. 391).

[7] We use here the distinction proposed by Van de Poel between intended, embodied and realized values: "The intended values are the values intended by the system's designers. However, these intended values may be different from the embodied values when an artifact (or institution or system) has not been properly designed. The embodied value is the value that is both intended (by the designers) and realized if the artifact or system is properly used. The realized value, in turn, may be different from the embodied value: for example, because a technology is used differently than intended or foreseen" (Van de Poel 2020, p. 389)

[8] In regard to the antenatal diagnosis achieved thanks to the sonogram, for instance, Verbeek observes significantly that "the mere availability of testing possibilities had made us feel responsible for *not* testing and for accepting the 'risks' connected with that. The decision not to be put in the position of having to make a decision appeared to be a deci-sion as well" (Verbeek 2011, p. VII). And again: "by making it possible to detect specific diseases, medical diagnostic devices do not simply produce images of the body but also generate complicated responsibilities, especially in the case of antenatal diagnostics and in situations of unbearable and endless suffering" (Verbeek 2011, p. 1).

5. Final remarks

In order to understand the scope of Verbeek's post-phenomenological perspective, it is appropriate, in closing our examination, to provide some clarification of terminology. The use of expressions that we have employed in the text, such as those regarding the morality of things and technological intentionality, has often raised a variety of suspicions regarding Verbeek's proposal. In particular, the conceptual framework elaborated by the philosopher has given rise to a number of criticisms regarding the idea that there is some kind of distribution of intentionality between humans and machines, to which the author himself has already responded in part (see Verbeek 2014). Here we will simply emphasize a point related to the notion of intentionality, which, for example, the articulate criticisms of Peterson and Spahn (2011, pp. 416ff.) do not seem to grasp. Clarification of this point is of vital importance, since Verbeek's entire philosophical project and, consequently, the reflections we have made so far hinge upon it.

With the expression 'technological intentionality' Verbeek aims to highlight the directive nature of technologies, but without attributing any intention to act to technologies, as Peterson and Spahn erroneously believe. Similarly, Verbeek's idea that technologies 'actively co-shape' our being cannot be understood as an action independent of humans, and thus – Peterson and Spahn erroneously observe – "technological objects certainly have an impact on us and our actions, like many other natural and nonnatural objects, but this impact is not active in the sense that it is independent of the designer or inventor who decides to produce or sell the new artifacts" (Peterson and Spahn 2011, p. 414).

Both of these observations of Peterson and Spahn miss the mark because they lose sight of the *co-constitutive* and therefore interdependent character of technologies, which invokes the notion of composite intentionality. Indeed, although Verbeek emphasizes both the emergent properties of technologies and the idea of technological intentionality, this does not mean that these technologies act *completely* independently in the sense intended by Peterson and Spahn. Verbeek in fact states that humans and technologies "do not have a separate existence anymore" (Verbeek 2008a, p. 14; see Peterson and Spahn 2011, p. 414). In this sense, technologies co-shape (and the emphasis should be on 'co-') our world and co-exist with us.

While such criticisms do not seem to impact Verbeek's reflection, certainly, as Coeckelbergh rightly observes, "some of these objections could be avoided if Verbeek would not use terms and phrases such the 'morality of things' and the 'moral agency of things' but stay with the claim that technologies mediate morality" (Coeckelbergh 2020, p. 67). Indeed, although one can understand Verbeek's use of such language in order to

challenge the "common understandings of technology" (Coeckelbergh 2020, p. 67), the post-phenomenological approach cannot refrain from constant vigilance over the type of language we should use when technologies raise increasingly urgent ethical issues. This is the direction in which this paper moves, and it aims to be an invitation to make use of the notions of intentionality and composite responsibility to address the challenges of the present, but without forgetting the ambiguity that at times still affects/constrains these notions, obscuring their ability to account for the intricate web that inextricably binds man and technology.

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Composite Intentionality and Responsibility for an Ethics of Artificial Intelligence

The decisions, forecasts and operations produced by intelligent systems reveal new possibilities for action in various areas of society and radically transform our lifestyles. This epochal change has triggered, in parallel with a remodeling of our habits, an important process of re-semantisation of some notions traditionally ascribed to human beings, such as those regarding intentionality and responsibility. This paper addresses the process of redefining these notions with the aim to shed light on composite forms of intentionality and responsibility in the increasingly close relationship between humans and AI. To this purpose, we propose to apply in the specific field of AI the idea of *composite intentionality* developed by P.P. Verbeek and extend it to the notion of responsibility. Despite some terminological problems related to Verbeek's proposal, his post-phenomenological approach has the merit of taking the human-technology association as its main focus, helping us to better understand the moral status of artificial intelligence.

KEYWORDS: Philosophy of Technology; Post-phenomenology; Artificial Intelligence; Responsibility; Intentionality;

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Ethical challenges of AI-based psychotherapy.
The case of explainability

0. Introduction

Postphenomenology emerged from the examination of how technological artifacts and interfaces mold one's lifeworld, providing a renewed impulse to the transition from the eidetic reduction of phenomena into the acknowledgment of its constitutive relations and mediations. But while important in revealing the impact of technological mediation in the construction of reality, its inquiry provided reduced attention to the complexity of the social framework of design and implementation of technologies, in especially to what is the core of therapeutic mediation, precisely the "in between us" (Van den Eede 2010, p. 157). Over the last decade, the groundbreaking work of authors such as Ihde and Verbeek has been extended to encompass the social and ethical challenges posed by technological artifacts and interfaces molding one's lifeworld, particularly those based on artificial intelligence. In its turn, in its attempt to understand the "material semiotics" (Law 2019) of technological assemblages, Latour's ANT exposed the fluidity of technical events. However, his project failed to recognize how it is precisely the difference between psychic and communicative operations that grounds the emergence stable patterns of interaction. In her recent work, E. Esposito (2022) called for a move from artificial intelligence to artificial communication, showing how much of what we come to qualify as artificial intelligence results from a continuous optimization of information processing oriented to the client's expectations. It is no coincidence that the most recent breakthroughs in AI occurred precisely after attempts to replicate human neurophysiological architecture were replaced by the development of specialized models of information processing.

We may read this move to artificial communication in light of N. Luhmann's concept of person (1995). Beyond the substantialist models of philosophical tradition, by person the German sociologist understood a form containing expectations and attributions of a certain individual, as the outcome of the co-evolution of psychic and communicative systems. Similarly to Luhmann's model (1995, p. 153) instead of reflexive intelligence, AI interfaces of communication rely on the increasing coordination of artificial agents with the client's expectations as the way to anticipate further sequences of communication. Following Esposito's views, the algorithms of conversational agents are very far from intrinsic awareness of the psychic meaning. As communication technologies they "perform understanding" (2022, p. 10) relying on the development of the ability to identify and mobilize relevant distinctions to a particular addressee. This is possible by virtue of a previous profiling, based on her interactions or context of performance.

<p align="center">***</p>

Although some aspects of general healthcare management may be adapted to psychotherapy, clear-cut criteria guiding biomedical therapies are inadequate to address mental disorders and dysfunctions (Uusitalo, Tuominen & Arstila 2020), as these do not concern natural but "human kinds" (Hacking 1996), embedded in psychological, social, and cultural factors important in their etiology, understanding, and treatment.

There is a considerable particularity to mental health that makes its adaptation of IA models and protocols used in other areas of health services problematic or even unfeasible. These concern very specific ways to identify, classify, and treat problems and dysfunctions. Therapeutic conversation aims for more than an input on one's subjective perception; it is a transformative relational field of moods, feelings, and beliefs. The communicative bond will be decisive in the access and elaboration of problematic nodules, making the client feel heard and understood by another. The reception and containment of unbearable affections favor the reinforcement of that safe space of intimacy and belonging.

AI based psychotherapies may be seen as resulting from a convergence between optimization services increasingly assumed to be requirements for social inclusion (Gori, Le Coz 2007, pp. 73-75) and the emergence of transformative IA, supported by a disseminating network of tracking and monitoring devices integrated with programs for managing performance in intimate and professional life.

Despite being a scientifically informed practice, psychotherapy proceeds through a "management of vague things" (Fuchs 2011), requiring a collaborative "esprit de finesse" argued to be lacking in ear-

lier models and perspectives of AI, supported in the computational model of the mind (Dreyfus 1992, pp. 293-4). However, recent developments in connectionism have defied these restrictions with the formation of neural networks and seed algorithms that are capable of autonomous learning.

Differentiating from a larger AI ecosystem (Winter *et al.* 2021), the integration of AI technologies in psychotherapy -particularly machine learning algorithms and deep learning-, demands a reassessment of the following assumptions: 1) AI simulates human intelligence; 2) it necessarily produces stereotyped diagnoses and treatments; and, finally, 3) by lacking the "common factors" of therapeutic success, it can only assume an ancillary role. These convictions tend to obliterate how AI-specific (or narrow) forms produce transformative effects in the therapeutic medium (Gruetzemacher & Whittlestone 2021).

Along with the detection and prevention of bias resulting from "failed projective identification from humans to machines" (Possati 2021, p. 88; 2022), this requires readdressing both the "translation" of classical therapeutic problems into interactive settings based on AI and emerging ones resulting from alternate modes of diagnosing, categorizing, and predicting dysfunctions.

Some authors noted that along with the traditional bioethical principles (autonomy, non-maleficence, beneficence, and justice), the introduction of IA in clinical practice demands the recognition of a fifth principle: explainability (Floridi 2022, cap. 4).

Explainability has acquired increasing importance to understanding and regulating the use of AI based technology since its innovations are based on complex mechanisms that, although not arbitrary, may be inscrutable. Due to their transformative power, there is a quest for transparency and the provision of an adequate understanding of the criteria and goals central to the ethical assessment of their applications[1]. Explainability is thus a concept that refers to a common social technology, but its interpretation or concretization will differ depending on the observers[2] and context. The various parts interested in understanding the operations of machines require different levels of explanation. End-users of a service and the scientific community must be provided with comprehensive accounts of the functioning and purpose of AI technology, although

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[1] Ideally, developers aim for systems that are "complex and intelligent enough to initiate actions on their own, and (…) simple enough to be understandable and controllable by human beings" (Ekbia 2015, p. 63).

[2] "If they lack the relevant technical expertise, a different kind of explanation is needed. This not only reminds us of the problem of education but also leads to the question of *what kind of explanation* is needed and, ultimately, what an explanation is." (Coeckelbergh 2020, p. 121).

a middle level seems required for adequate understanding of its functioning, ensuring conditions for an informed and responsible use. This is all the more decisive when technology is not only disruptive, introducing new ways of accessing and managing information, but also inserted into a field where questions of personal well-being, autonomy, and goals are at the core of interventions. This is clearly the case with psychotherapy.

As a normative principle, explainability may account for the updated prerogatives of free and informed consent, responsibility, and accountability (Coeckelbergh 2020). By virtue of the specificities surrounding the contractual relationship (reduced to perfunctory "terms of service" [ToS]) and therapeutic alliance between machine and client, this line of questioning will reveal the re-emergence of classical problems of psychotherapies, resulting in what Drigalski (1980) characterized as a "system of isolation", reinforcing learned helplessness and dependency (pp. 28ff). These necessitate a reconsideration of the asymmetry between a machine that is supposed to know and the subject, where "algorithmic resonance" provides unwarranted security, which, in some mental conditions, may reinforce the client's withdrawal and isolation. In this paper I will only be able to outline how an adequate form of explainability demands an extension of the concept to encompass various ethical problems related to the "in between" of therapeutic communication.

1. Extension of the concept of explainability

The quest for designing AI agents with operational and functional morality, as conceptualized by Wallach and Allen (2009) is an attempt to complement their increasing assumption of tasks in various fields of activity. Conceived to protect users from harm and malpractice, it goes beyond what J. Moor (2011) called the implicit moral dimension of the machine[3]. Its enforcement may be formal, infusing the agent with clear rules regarding obligations and prohibitions, instilling basic ethical sensitivity, or promoting conditions for autonomous ethical decisions, mainly in the agent's specific contexts of performance. The enforcement of machines' moral behavior by developers, corporations, and government agencies is an attempt to contain liability. However, it is not expected that in the near future, this attribution of moral action and reflection will imply a full sense of moral and legal responsibility.

In these cases, explainability implies that the artificial agent is already

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[3] "Computers are implicit ethical agents when the machine's construction addresses safety or critical reliability concerns" (Moor 2011, p. 16).

able to observe certain moral principles and rules, identify and reflect on ethical decisions, and be responsive as to its reasons for taking certain decisions, *i.e.,* be accountable.

Over the last two decades, there has been a growing recognition of the need to assume that AI agents have ethical implications, not only in terms of their ethical impact but also as "explicit ethical agents" (Moor 2011), capable of not only interpreting and following moral guidelines but also providing reasons for their own decisions. This may be interpreted as the logical sequence to Verbeek's call for the recognition of the "moral significance of technologies themselves" (2008, p. 91), extending well beyond the intentions of creators and users. Regarding the algorithmization of ethical reflection, it is important to know if the machine can be the one providing these explanations and, if the answer is affirmative, what are its specific attributions regarding this explainability. In this article, we address a problem that is prior to those questions. We focus on how the explainability of the machine's moral dimension requires a clarification of ethical issues at the heart of a given service or performance, accounting for the generation of expectations regarding the client's experience and action.

Since it concerns the recursivity of communicative forms emerging in a given environment and accounts for the transformative effects that frequently extend well beyond those experienced by the end-users, the ethics of AI cannot be restricted to the devising of conditions to build "moral machines" or agents, even if these will someday achieve a level of ethical excellence in their specific environment.

Ethical and normative discussions on AI technology must attend to their application in different environments. General ethical guidelines for AI, as those adapted from the bioethical discussion in the EU commission's Ethics Guidelines for Trustworthy AI (2019) or in Floridi's recent book (2022: chap. 4) are a symptom of the fading dream of self-regulation. They are having serious difficulties dealing with AI's autonomy, particularly its impact on systems oriented by subjective experience and values.

In her delineation of "Six kinds of explanation in AI", J. Bryson (2019) sustained that, along with an appropriate exposition of "exactly how the system works", which is made comprehensible for the common user of a service, an account of the actions leading to the release of a product would contribute to a better understanding of its purposes, potential, and risks. Such an account concerns all stakeholders, especially those standing at the "sharp end of algorithmic decisions" (Zerilli 2021, p. 177). The move beyond mechanistic explanations was subscribed by L. Possati which underlined the importance of knowing "why and how the AI was created, who were the people who designed it, what their social field and habitus" (2022). Focusing on the case of Replika, he showed the

way conscious and unconscious motivations modulate the performance of an IA conversational agent, unwittingly forming a new kind of artificial unconscious that "inherits" and amplifies some of its creator's anxieties and longings. In that sense, in order to ensure the creation of "friendly AI" we not only have to ensure continuous regulation of utility functions, we also have to account for how those "basic drives" which resist control and correction, are reinforced through their social enactment. As stated by Omohundro (2008, p. 492), "in addition to the design of the intelligent agents themselves, we must also design the social context in which they will function."

Accounting both for the unpredictable outcomes of the introduction of AI agents in certain environments and their learning, the study of "machine behavior" emerged as a new field focusing on the interaction between agents and humans in their respective environments (Rahwan 2019). This transition from the lab into the social environment is inseparable from a closing of the AI Knowledge Gap, supplementing the battery of benchmark tests of a given algorithm with "protocols that access APIs and algorithms 'in the field'" (Epstein *et al.* 2018). Such study requires the inclusion of new disciplines into the AI research community, which may contribute to addressing aspects of the opacity of AI agents that have been largely overlooked. It necessitates broadening the investigation of explainability to include algorithms' interactive potential, especially their enactive and recursive dimensions. This approach is similar to that of critical algorithmic studies, which recognize the algorithms not simply as an operative codification, a way to adequately process information to perform a task, but also account for the way they become enacted by practices in a given environment.

This has been decisive in correcting abstract views of the autonomy of AI systems and agents, where: "environment is understood as a set of features and properties that the agent *senses* and *acts upon*. What is often lost in this conceptualization is the fact that the environment also *supports* the agent in carrying out its actions" (Ekbia 2015, p. 65). An analogy between this way of conceiving IA agents and the view of the "isolated (human) mind" is tempting, since in both cases the abstraction of the agent from the social and normative environment implies the distortion of their performances and potential. When it comes to an AI agent, this necessitates not only taking into account the presumptions underlying its design and implementation but also the way its users come to interact in a given environment.

This is clearly the case in their support of AI agents, because the efficacy of their performance is dependent on the client's or user's observance of contextual and relational norms and expectations, which, while accounted for in their code-source, occur in the "temporal flow of ac-

tion" (Introna 2015, p. 4). Such performances allow for the enactment by the user, which also accounts for previous interactions and their elicited operations. We can conceive of algorithms as non-trivial autopoetic systems, able to learn and refine their processes according to the observations of their outcomes in the environment.

Communicative performances may be observed by agents outside a social system, which should be able to acknowledge their estrangement from the full significance and outcomes of interactions – not only the developers but also researchers, including those from the social sciences and humanities.

Although their main distinctions may be fixed, including the observance of certain moral principles and/or values, therapeutic agents, for instance, are confronted with certain enactions or ways of communicative engagement that, even accounting for the creation of contained contingencies on which most therapeutic interventions rely, may prove unproductive or detrimental. This is especially true when there are no ways to verify access conditions and there are no clear spatial or temporal set limits in the therapeutic setting.

We are extending the notion of algorithm beyond "the boundaries of proprietary software" (Seaver 2017, p. 10) while accounting for their social embeddedness, materialized as tools, interfaces, and environments opened to multiple enactments in social practice. This will certainly imply a correlative extension of the concept of "explainability", addressing dimensions that usually remain outside its scope. An effective explanation of algorithms' workings needs to address their larger impact on the environment and, taking into consideration that they may, autonomously or under monitoring, originate typical problems, it has to entail ways in which these may be prevented, resolved, or amended. It may be understood as a reaction to the various declinations of ethical washing (Yeung *et al.* 2020) as strategies to evade effective regulation and future legal responsibility. That is particularly relevant in the implementation of mental healthcare protocols, where the transition from technical and controlled laboratorial studies of AI agents and their insertion in end-user interfaces obliterates rigorous certification (Hiland 2021).

The call for reform is bolstered here by the predominance of the concept of transparency in psychotherapy, which includes an epistemic and normative dimension that are critical in its marketing, scientific status, and regulation. It is an attempt to explore a larger framework of a concept that, if taken seriously, provides an overview of the design, development, and implementations of a given social technology. It has different modes and goals depending on whether it is part of the self-observation or inner assessment of a given service provider or is directed to its stakeholders.

Resorting to therapeutic semantics, Coeckelberg (2019) argued for a relational justification of explainability that decenters the observation of AI's technologies from experts. AI applications must be assumed to be moral agents in relation to the moral *patiens* affected by them. The technical dimension of explainability, particularly its epistemic condition, has to be articulated through the ethical obligations of accountability and answerability. Besides the basic warranties of safety and control, in assessing IA technologies, there is "the obligation to greater awareness of unintended consequences and the moral significance of what they do" (2019, p. 16). This is critical for therapeutic interfaces because it calls for particular sensitivity to the potential uses and misuses of a technology according to its addressees or users, based on their typical capacities and situations.

Explainability depends on the promotion of digital literacy on the part of end users. In some cases, this task has been assumed by governments and non-profit organizations, which provide information on websites, at public events, and even in courses aimed at various levels of expertise and use of AI[4].

The problem of control begins with undetectable or subliminal unconscious projections on the machine, affecting the efficacy of instructions and experiences. Simultaneously, it raises the issue of encouraging value reinforcement in new interfaces (Verbeek 2008). Social biases are entrenched in the larger social environment and may be easily reproduced and amplified by those interfaces. They cannot be reduced to glitches or flaws. They are signs of the inexorable functioning of AI machines. In some cases, their functioning makes bias more evident, creating new communicative conditions for their awareness and change.

Regarding explainability, it has been argued that it may be incorrect to assume that IA-based decision processes are more opaque than human decision-making processes. A more transparent exposition of the grounds for AI decision-making may itself contribute to better understanding the actions in "traditional" systems (Zerilli *et al.* 2021, p. 41). Similarly to B. Kuipers's (2012) view of collective institutions and social systems as an evolving *genus* of artificial agents provided with sensory, representational, and deliberative operations oriented towards specific outcomes, we may consider algorithms as the ultimate refinement and condensing of a computational function that was prepared by the "natural" evolution of social systems.

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[4] One of such examples is elementsofai.com provided by the University of Helsinki.

2. The potential of therapeutic chatbots

A chatbot is generally defined as a computer program that engages in natural language conversations with other agents. It is able to recognize verbal expressions and certain pictographic signs and expresses itself through verbal messages, whether written or spoken. While its distinction to the larger genus of virtual embodied conversational agents is becoming increasingly blurred, the chatbot's limited visual and physical presence may be considered its *differentia specifica*.

Therapeutic conversational agents differ from chatbots that perform routine tasks such as customer service and "personal agents" that aim to provide general assistance (Alexa, Siri, or Cortana) oriented by objectivity and clarity of communication. Resorting to a common maritime metaphor, their companies and sponsors present them as assisting users in navigating mental health issues and well-being challenges.

The impact of therapeutic conversational agents is far from being restricted to the way the user relates to herself, not only in the sense that, as a technology of self-thematization, it alters the way the subject perceives and acts on her environment but also because it generates new expectations in various social systems. Some authors refrain from considering the chatbots as agents; however, the singularity of their communicative action is decisive for the generation of a therapeutic bond, extending well beyond the identification with "one's" algorithm in other types of service (Colbjørnsen 2016).

In creating ELIZA, the first ancestor of today's chatbots, Joseph Weizenbaum (1966) parodied the non-interventionist therapies of Carl Rogers' personalism. But he found that his script, which conjured up the expression of one's burdens and anxieties and established ways to acknowledge and approve them, led many users to form an intense emotional bond with the machine. A liberating experience was reported even by those who had followed its development, knowing not only that the lines came from a computational process but also that it was based on the predetermined management of some recurrent topics of therapeutic conversation and the mirroring of the client's expressions, designed to provide credible approval of one's disclosures and instigate further confidences. One of the highlights of what would become known as the "ELIZA effect" was when, a few minutes after starting to interact with the chatbot, Weizenbaum's own secretary asked him to leave the room (Weizenbaum 1976, pp. 3-4). Later, Weizenbaum would confess his perplexity: "[w]hat I had not realized is that extremely short exposures to a relatively simple computer program could induce powerful delusional thinking in quite normal people" (Weizenbaum, 1976, p. 7). In order to prolong their interaction with the program, users were frequently willing

to overlook its errors and limitations. Considering the efforts to develop a computer program able to formalize a psychiatrist's intervention, Weizenbaum worried that such an endeavor would imply tailoring the therapeutic setting to the confines of computational processing and thereby disregarding the client's needs (Weizenbaum 1976, p. 6). But at a deeper level, he feared a moral trivialization of the human being, which was based on a lie, summarized in the computer's use of the personal noun "I" (Turkle 1995, p. 106). In a chapter entitled "Against the Imperialism of Instrumental Reason," he reaffirmed his rejection of a computer-based form of therapy "not on the grounds that such a project might be technically infeasible, but on the grounds that it is immoral" (p. 266).

Kenneth Colby[5], a psychiatrist at Stanford University, took the possibility of computerizing psychiatry seriously, making it his lifelong scientific pursuit. He created SHRINK with the "intent to help, as a psychotherapist does, and to respond as he does by questioning, clarifying, focusing, rephrasing, and occasionally interpreting." (Colby *et al.*, 1966, p. 149). In fact, he famously sustained that "A human therapist can be viewed as an information processor and decision maker with a set of decision rules which are closely linked to short-range and long-range goals" (p. 150)[6].

ELIZA is a prime example of a handcrafted program, largely consisting of a parsing of written input that, by establishing connections with predetermined keywords, provided corresponding outputs. Additionally, in its formation of expressions, it relied on anaphoric references already inserted by the user, particularly pronouns, providing a sense of the interlocutor's engagement. In cases where the correspondence with a keyword in the database couldn't be established, in a very Rogerian way, it responded with new queries or questions, what is today known as the "ultimate default category": "please tell me more…", "very interesting. Please go on", "can you thing of a special example?"[7]. But it lacked any way to process the context of the conversation or a structured memory of the user's states.

The critical observation of the ELIZA effect has pointed to the user's willingness to fill in the blanks of the program, obliterating how the limitations of the machine may promote the development of one's articulation of self-understanding and new ways for its expression. The perceived

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[5] Also creator of PARRY, a program simulating a schizophrenic patient, which had famous exchanges with ELIZA. E.g.: https://datatracker.ietf.org/doc/html/rfc439.

[6] "Almost everyone who has participated in these dialogues reports that he comes to feel annoyed and frustrated by the program's responses" (Ibid).

[7] Here it was also possible to introduce backchannels such as "yeah", "sure", "right", or expressions such as "uh-huh" which could be considered verbal analogs to nonverbal cues such as nodding.

failure to acknowledge the user's accounts may spark the search for more effective ways of expressing oneself, renewing the self-reflective exercise, and seeking recognized action.

"Enaction" refers to the opportunities generated by a specific exchange infused with expectations that must prove efficacious in subsequent interaction in therapeutic settings based on written communication. At the most basic level, it is dependent on the sensory perception of material signs, followed by the interpretation of their symbolic meaning. As it occurs in general forms of psychotherapy, communication forms emerge based on the constitutive distance between "sender" and "receiver" or "alter" and "ego," the in between. In the elaboration of a meaningful message to the other, the subject has to assume herself as the object of interpretation, a reflexive observation that may or may not be accepted.

When the narration of oneself is conceded space and met with the manifestation of genuine interest, the other is confirmed in his role as assistant or facilitator of a process of self-discovery. This communicative framework is enactive in the sense that some opportunities regarding the exercise of self-thematization, accompanied by emotional, cognitive, and behavioral levels, become available with the development of new awareness of one's prospects. In therapeutic communication, the previous themes of conversation may be recovered and revised in light of new interpretations and insights.

Communicative forms of therapy promote second-order observation, i.e. the observation of one's observations and their operating distinctions. This enables their reframing of a current situation or problem, as well as their emotional correlata. Although it emerges from the reaction against repressive pressures of conformity, contemporary therapy may be seen in the context of modernity's "increasing resort to rituals of self-knowing" (Hahn 1982, p. 407). Unlike confession, its work does not necessarily aim for what the subject knows following the interiorization of interdictions, but something she has not yet realized about herself, or, in terms common to psychoanalysis and sociological inquiry, something she does not know that she knows.

The therapeutic relationship's asymmetry is reframed in the new conditions of AI interfaces, but it is still based on the idea of a pact evolving co-responsibility in communication, a responsive practice.

Various therapeutic currents rely on a kind of biographizing of the individual, constructed in view of the present account of a difficulty. Interaction in conversation invites the elaboration of how certain elements affect the individual. It may provide the relief observed when addressing painful subjects or memories, but also the feeling of being understood and accompanied by someone who cares. In cases of anxiety and depression, this acknowledgement of the impact of episodes that menaced or

disturbed one's sense of integrity allows space for a transformative kind of remembering. Instead of reenacting the traumatic episode deemed to be at the origin of one's suffering, the joint exploration aims for a reintegration of these memories into a new coherent narrative of oneself. This is clear in interfaces relying on conversational agents. Their acknowledgement and understanding, manifesting interest in their articulation, allow indications and clarifications to be more or less suggestive, depending on the therapeutic setting. But the anticipation of latent psychic processes evolving through these joint elaborations, similar to what occurs in traditional psychoanalysis, is outside the scope of a chatbot. Except for standardized services where behavioral and contextual profiling are highly optimized[8], the anticipation of emerging (non-explicit) quests or ideas would require the awareness of non-verbal language and the reliance on metaphoric construction of meaning.

According to B. Christian (2020), the problems with AI applications stem from their inexorable exactness, which poses multiple challenges in making certain goals explicit, detecting and correcting bias, and acknowledging certain norms and values. This poses the tentative possibility of programming AI to learn from its own operations or experience in order to acquire greater sensitivity to problems whose complexity resists codification. The model of learning through simple imitation and replication of behavior was too limiting, making interfaces and agents to deal with complexity and contingency. At the same time, an exhaustive codification of conditions of performance is impossible.

Reinforcement learning [RL], particularly in genetic algorithms and neural networks, emerged as a way to achieve a better mapping of a program's environment and recursively assess the results of their interventions. Instead of proceeding from pre-established procedures or decisions according to stable decision trees, machine learning implies autonomously learning from data sets, generally after multiple training cycles. However, in IA therapeutic chatbots, it must begin with the method of data collection and organization. Learning from experience enabled new, dynamic ways to simulate how to achieve desired outcomes without settling for partial achievements. The retrieval of probabilities allowed the actualization of representations for action according to the establishment of decision rules. In order to attain such an operation, we have to consider the specificities of the therapeutic environment and the pitfalls of its communication. These relate to the ways of engaging in an activity whose rewards, aside from their sparsity, are difficult to identify and achieve. A qualified form of interest involvement seems to be es-

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[8] Regarding how ordinary virtual assistants anticipate clients' explicit requests, see: You-you, Kosinski, Stillwell 2015.

sential for therapeutic intervention, as it motivates one to partake in the patient's experiences and decisions. However, in order to avoid devolving into mere curiosity, such as by encouraging erratic forms of dramatization, it must be guided by therapeutic values and goals.

Until the turn of the century, chatbots performed mostly based on an exhaustive codification of all the anticipated inputs and the transformative rules to apply into parsed strings of signs. Due to the conflicting application of rules and conditioning, as well as the difficulty of updating its operative coding, it would be difficult to provide adequate outputs to new, unpredicted inputs and sequences. A timely updated inference of the context and adequate output would require an immense computational load to establish what Minsky termed the "frame of action": dialogue history, task record, encoding of the domain, norms of interaction, and updated information on the user's intentions and goals. The inclusion of statistical data-driven systems, particularly RL, enabled the optimization of recognition of natural languages, multi-level management of dialogue, and natural language generation. Deep neural networks have recently emerged, allowing some tasks of output responses to be generated without modular processing of the input, known as "Seq2Seq" (Sutskever, Vinyals, Le, 2014). The systems are able to fulfill immediate tasks while maintaining orienting goals and higher conditioning of sequences, such as strategic management, for instance, by adopting an engaging or defiant tone according to the present state.

The various forms of observation mobilized in therapy take the illness or dysfunction as the marked space that grounds prospective actions and future assessments of the patient's state. According to their specific distinctions, "therapeutic conversation is about developing a shared idea about the forms of the patient's distinctions and indications, addressing his role in the creation and maintenance of a symptom" (Simon 2015, p. 288). Fictions of understanding play a crucial role in enabling the transposition of opacity into the transparency of the treatment of symptoms or burdens, which may therefore be considered and re-authored.

New chatbots have a greater capacity to retain and organize information to be retrieved according to the dialogue state tracking, replacing an exhaustive mapping of the conversational history and context. This openness to the user's contingency, as generated throughout the interaction, favors the exercise of self-thematization according to the present sequence of acquisitions. Instead of an exhaustive processing of information regarding the individual (and interactions), algorithms select key themes and problems that may occasion new interaction sequences. In that sense, their generativity is anticipatory, proceeding in view of the opportunity to introduce new schemes of self-understanding and observation. Here, the greatest progress in the new generation of chatbots

consists in their maintaining different states (with corresponding output sequences) and updating their probabilities according to new inputs and interactions. In that sense, it largely exceeds the shallow use of anaphoric reference, which we found in earlier computer programs such as ELIZA or SHRINK. The acceptance of input by automatic speech recognition (NLP) leads to dialogue management, which relies on categories to be addressed and scripts that prompt new sequences or output, generally controlling the dialogue flow (Traum 2017). Nonetheless, their effective treatment of the contingency formed in interaction means that their outcomes cannot be previously available to any of the participants in communication (Esposito 2022, pp. 9-10).

Among the new computational operations introduced by the statistical models is the management of various beliefs concerning the current state of the dialogue, particularly regarding the "real" meaning of the user's statements. In this sense, the concept of states being "partially observable" and proceeding according to probability distribution is fundamental to dialogue management[9]. Even under ideal conditions of complete disclosure, the system cannot be certain that it has correctly identified the user's states or intentions. Instead of matching a pre-established meaning, probabilistic grammars and parsers proceed to a parallel formulation of possibilities. Therefore, previous communicative sequences are organized in such a way that they remain open to subsequent interpretation and may be updated in new interactions (they will be evaluated according to Q-function). This means that this communicative mediation works on the latency of present states, the development, and the selectivity of the person of reference, *ie* the client, allowing for flexible points of entry where the burdens may be observed from new perspectives.

A frequent assumption when considering AI-powered mental health agents such as humanoid robots, embodied virtual agents, and chatbots is that they are necessarily conceived to replicate or simulate intelligent human behavior. This is undeniably true because intervention necessitates proficiently using natural language, including stereotyped ways of treating others and forming an empathic bond with the user. However, considering their specific "nature" and potential, including different modes of gathering, organizing, and retrieving information that may provide a more detailed account of the client's individuality, that perspective seems to call for some qualifications. That more detailed analysis of the individual and the more thorough consideration of its possibilities may lead to the execution of strategic interventions whose causal grounds

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[9] Particularly in the Partially observable Markov decision process (POMDP) combining regular Markov Decision Process to model system dynamics with a hidden Markov model that connects unobservable system states probabilistically to observations.

may be difficult to explain to a human observer. This does not necessarily imply structural changes in current therapy methods, though these may be envisioned, opening the door to a "regression" into oracular or charismatic modes of communication (Macho 1999).

Through refined analysis of an increasing number of cases, AI has the potential to create new categories to classify and understand suffering, as well as more efficient ways to intervene. However, because these new classifications concern the human experience of suffering, which can be treated in various ways, the assessment criteria and treatment options must be explainable in terms appropriate for different audiences. This may be the case, for instance, when the "costs of change" or "correction" (Luhmann 2019, pp. 39-40) of a problem are disproportional to the projected benefits or lead to worse problems, so that the efforts one must undergo to achieve a resolution may be counter-productive. Evaluation of online behavior patterns also allows for detecting upcoming disturbances or predicting mental problems. But taking into account that these are "just" predictions, should the program, by default, advise the client or related persons?

Explainability must answer the concerns of at least the users, the government and regulatory agencies, and the scientific community that can assess the technical aspects of a particular program. These are the main vectors to consider when implementing effective answerability and accountability. However, for explainability to be effective, it must consider the impact of a given program interface in the larger environment and the enactments it may occasion. We have good reasons to believe that narrow forms of AI, *i.e.* those whose computational abilities and design are oriented to a particular task or challenge, may enable greater control and epistemic ways to assess the ethical impact of a technology. Mental health settings based on AI pose a particular challenge since, while they answer the problems and aims of individuals and groups through protocols that have been standardized, to communicate in this system, a therapeutic agent is required to have a common knowledge of a wide domain of subjects. At the same time, "therapeutic culture" seems to be potentially applicable in every social system.

In fact, we can't help but notice a significant restriction and change in the factors deemed common in psychotherapy, all of which, following Wampold's mapping (2015), concern the "in between" therapist and patient. Explicit convergence may be achieved in developing the therapeutic alliance, the goal consensus (and positive regard) of treatment, and its cultural adequacy. Nevertheless, the therapeutic work and support provided by an IA agent lack the depth and identification required for empathy and genuine mentalization, even if the client may feel these. The lack of emotional resonance and embodied empathy alters the quality of relationships and therapeutic outcomes.

However, we should not dismiss a therapeutic agents such as Woebot or Wysa simply because it keeps the door to the other scene of the unconscious closed. Given its limitations in terms of range and its promptness in providing solutions that are supposed to reframe complex situations, this may indeed be the wisest choice.

On the one hand, the chatbot's absence of emotional resonance and density ensures a non-judgmental position, promoting revelation and attenuating the management of impressions on the other (Ho *et al.* 2018). At the same time, this absence of resonance is associated with a sense of superficiality or instrumental use that differs from authentic listening and recognition, which aims understanding and identification with the other's situation. Instead of considering the client's hypothetical mental states, the virtual agent concentrates on the action potential. This is the fundamental limitation of these agents. They process multiple possibilities and select according to detected patterns of dysfunction, and the devising of appropriate expressions in the form of questions, indications, and suggestions. Their responsive practice lacks identification with the other's experience, a pulsating form of empathy and interest that allows depth and sensitivity to thought processes.

As a business model, AI-based interfaces for psychotherapy are engaged in a systematic attempt to suppress any intermediary between the user and the program. This suppression of the mediation of any mental health expert at every step of the therapeutic process could only be accomplished through a tactful relationship with governments and health authorities. Instead of a tool or program to be administered under the guidance of a clinician, which would necessarily undergo all the tests on their safety and effectiveness for the users and the larger public, AI therapeutic interfaces fly under the radar, categorized by regulatory health authorities as harmless "mobile applications" (Hiland 2021, p. 22). In order to circumvent the impositions that regulatory agencies such as the FDA impose on health-care providers, including training and deontological obligations, chatbot enterprises maintain that they do not provide diagnostics or treatment but rather assistance and support. This is clearly refuted by the practice of most therapeutic chatbots, which provide an assessment of the user's mental health in view of relief or improvement through exercises, but also by their own marketing of the apps (not only in ads but also in scientific articles asserting its efficacy).

All responsibility is transferred to the user, which necessitates a robust concept of explainability that extends beyond the routine signing of ToS and informs on the multiple risks of these interfaces and the current dispositions to minimize them.

Chatbots' hybrid nature is expressed in their self-presentation as not therapists or psychologists but companions, buddies, or allies in men-

tal health management, serving people and businesses. The question is whether, by denying Woebot therapist status, the enterprise limits not only the scope of its action and impact on the mood of the customer or patient but also its liability for negative consequences associated with its use.

Explainability plays a decisive role in the social promotion of a given technology, positioning it in the commercial and regulatory markets and providing evidence (in various forms) of its security, fairness, accuracy, and efficiency (Babuta *et al.* 2018, p. 18). In AI-based therapy, explainability may not be seen as a deterrent to innovation but as a decisive aspect to reinforce therapeutic alliances and building trust in its setting. At the same time, going beyond its technical specifications and recognizing its transformative effects on the environment may help prevent risks related to moral dysfunctions and their inadequate use by moral patients. Such extension demands reflexive practice, aware of the various pressures that may affect therapeutic service.

Concluding remarks

At this point in the evolution of therapeutic techniques, the human's exclusive contribution is the assurance of a lived resonance of one's words and signs. Rather than a calculation of the spontaneity of empathy, trained therapists achieve a density of interpretation of the patient's affects and experiences, a communicative attunement that allows for a better direction of interventions. This is expressed in the sensitivity to non-explicit processes that must be welcomed and interpreted, requiring openness to the "analogic" dimension of human behavior, recognizing non-verbal cues, speech rhythm, and tone, strata whose full scope remains intangible to AI agents.

However, AI agents have specific advantages associated with their computational abilities. These concern communicative abilities that are severely limited in human forms of cognition, as in the case of predictive accuracy based on the detection of patterns or the ability to better retrieve the evolution of key themes appearing in dialogue. At the same time, the conversation with an AI agent favors the client's disclosure (absence of a moral judgment) and fewer worries about monitoring the presentation of the self. We must also acknowledge the greater scalability and affordability of AI protocols and their ability to reach people with limited access to therapeutic care.

It was the recognition of AI therapeutic agents' potential to collect, organize, and interpret data that led designers and developers to restrict their aims for higher achievements. Along with the increasing potential in the recognition of emotions, the observation of an intense

bond of trust and reliance on support implies the acknowledgement of the powerful and possibly detrimental influence exerted by the agent's expression and suggestions. This development of a narrow form of artificial intelligence may be understood as part of a larger movement toward AI's domestication (Kempt 2020). What was lost in creativity was gained in security and, according to the critics, in programs that conformed the desires to the expectations of the current capitalist society. We may not fully exclude the possibility that some limitations may be inherent to the therapeutic current adopted by a specific program, for instance, CBT, which refrains from deepening introspection or the interpretation of the past.

It is through the new relational forms of meaning construction that renewed doubts arise as to the methods and goals of therapy. These concerns, of a technical and moral nature, may benefit from the extension of the concept of explainability that we have explored in the present article. The elaboration of explanatory models of specific treatments in mental health was already at the heart of epistemic validation of psychotherapies, with increasing calls to use them to regulate and oversee their protocols and practice. Valuing the long observation of the recurrent ethical problems of traditional therapy, we may reinforce safer and more reliable forms of AI based therapies. By privileging the user's understanding, this approach presents a valid alternative both to the ethical washing of AI enterprises and corporations and the paternalistic approaches based on strict governmental regulation.

In implementing AI powered therapeutic settings, these specificities play a decisive role in assessing various ethical questions at the core of mental health services. In addition to clarifying its priorities in light of their technical constraints, a complete model of explainability must take into account these factors as well as how they affect their "moral patients" environments. This implies a sensitivity to their demographic target and typical difficulties, frailties, and impairments, which make some misconceptions and misuses of the setting more likely.

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Ethical challenges of AI-based psychotherapy.
The case of explainability

This paper examines the reemergence of some of the traditional ethical issues of psychotherapy in therapeutic interfaces resorting to AI-driven conversational agents. I will begin by 1) proposing the extension of the operatory concept of explainability to encompass ethical problems related to the "in between" of therapeutic communication. Then, 2) I attend to the evolution of therapeutic chatbots, and how, as self-thematization media, they optimize an algorithmic resonance with the problems of their person of reference. For this, I argue, instead of resisting the contingency of the users' inputs, chatbots rely on it to create new generative distinctions. I conclude that a consistent explainability of AI-driven chatbots needs to move beyond the clarification of algorithmic mechanisms to address the potential effects of this technology of self-thematization.

Keywords: AI Ethics; Therapeutic communication; Self-thematization; Transformative effects; Explainability.

Alistair Macaulay

Composing Improvisors:
Habit and Agential Responsibility

In the liner notes of his seminal album *The Shape of Jazz to Come,* free-jazz pioneer Ornette Coleman writes, "if I am just going to play the changes, I may as well write out what I'm going to play" (1959). Coleman separates improvisation from composition by its capacity for self-expression. In a similar vein, in an interview with Derrida, Coleman describes improvisation as a "democratic relationship", a heterarchical rather than hierarchical practice of music-making (Murphy 2004, p. 319). For Coleman, the spontaneity of an improvisation opens it to external factors, unforeseen tangents and unexpected interjections. Mistakes in recitation become avenues for further improvisation. Improvisors do not simply repeat an established routines but tell us about themselves as they improvise. With this aptitude for self-expression, improvisation is often linked to freedom. Despite this freedom, I argue that improvisation is enabled by intense preparation, contingent on the embedded habits of the performer and their understanding of musical elements. Given that an improvisation fails if an intention is specified prior to its execution, an improvisor must rely on their habituated skills to navigate an unpredictable environment. It is these habits and pre-existing patterns that listeners learn about when they hear someone improvise.

Theorist and pianist Vijay Iyer, defining improvisation as a "semi-transparent, multistage process through which we sense, perceive, think, decide and act in real-time" (2016, p. 74). Decisions have real-time impacts but the constraints of a scenario impact decision-making. With this reciprocal determination, Iyer cogently argues that improvisation inhabits not just music-making but a vast wealth of action such as learning and the modification of habit through trial and error. Improvisation's openness has ramifications to its significance. Adapting one's behaviour to a complex environment is improvising, at least in some minimal sense.

With this openness in mind, George Lewis proposed improvisation as a fertile field for the Turing test, developing his improvising machine *Voyager* in the 1980s. Up to this point, the study of AI and music had focussed on the recitation of composed scores. For Lewis, to satisfy

the Turing test, a computer "had to respond to unexpected questions" (2003, p. 203). What is assessed as intelligent is the machine's capacity to modify its behaviour and respond to a complex environment. Musicians that perform with *Voyager* attest to it performing like a human improvisor in maintaining an idiosyncratic style. Like its collaborators, *Voyager* listens and adapts to the performance environment. This challenges to the view that the realm of music is the domain of humans. Given it feels human to its collaborators, *Voyager* questions whether there is a radical difference between human and machine improvisors.

Answers to this question tend to culminate in Searle's Chinese Room debate.[1] It is important to note that this thought experiment concerns intentions. Human improvisors go into performances with certain goals, but these are general in nature so as not violate its spontaneity. It is important to note that *Voyager* needs to be turned on and off. While this might seem superficial, unlike its human counterparts, *Voyager* does not recognize the end of the performance, continuing to play until stopped. This indicates that it does not have the same kind of understanding, and subsequent general intentions, about musical performances. However, unexpected interjections outstrip an improvisor's intentions, derailing prior plans, and forcing them to rely on and adapt their habits to accommodate the external impacts. The testimony of *Voyager's* collaborators must be explained. Impacting musical material and adjusting to its environment, discounting *Voyager* as an improvisor on the grounds that it lacks the relevant intentions seems unfair.

Given an improvisor's intentions are overflowed by the performance environment, this article focusses on the role of habit in improvisation. This exposes the threat of Lewis' denotation of *Voyager* as a composition. If *Voyager* counts as an improvisor, composed of pre-set routines, are human improvisors simply a series of passive habits and conditioned responses? The replication and modification a habit implicates a complex causal chain of the performance conditions and what and how the performer was taught. This reduces an improvisor's creativity, shrinking their agency and improvisation's capacity for self-expression. Notions of artistic genius or intuition are diminished. Did the improvisor contribute of their own volition or was it a causal mechanism, a conditioned response to a certain stimulus? This jeopardizes how authorial responsibility is conferred. This only tells half the story. Habit has a dual aspect. Agents are not just constituted by passive habits, but also own them, intervening and resisting falling into known tropes.

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[1] Eric Lewis offers an interesting discussion about whether *Voyager* appreciates the Afrological roots of jazz improvisation to determine whether it has the relevant understanding of its intentions (2019, pp. 75-76).

The task of this article is to determine what it means to be an improvising agent and to ascertain the sense in which an agent can claim an improvisation as theirs. *Voyager* provides a difficult test case given the reports that it adapts to its environment, maintains an idiosyncratic style, and its ability to affect musical material in the same way as its human counterparts. In response to issues of agential responsibility, I propose a notion of improvisational space, based on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of territorialization. An improvisor loosely demarcates a complex playing field of musical milieux, the intersection of which gives rise to various opportunities that pull an improvisor to behave in certain ways. This provides a sense to understand how an improvisor impacts and is impacted by an improvisation, drawing out the interrelationship between the dual aspect of habit and agential responsibility.

The dual aspect of habit is explored with respect to Deleuze's notions of bare and creative repetition. Here we see glean the difference between human and AI improvisors, and how an improvisor expresses themselves. As they territorialize musical milieux, I argue that an improvisor learns about patterns in the music and about their habits, the limits and conditions of their trained skills and how these are extended by the performance environment. This demarcates the difference between human and machine improvisors. While both adapt to an unpredictable environment and renovate musical material, what is contentious is whether a machine grasps their habits and can resist their replication in the same way as a human improvisor. This also providing a framework to evaluate whether *Voyager* can be held authorially responsible for its improvisations and if any authorial responsibility should be conferred on its composer.

Improvisational Space

An improvisor cultivates an improvisational space. Jazz musicians call a tune, play a recognisable motif. The orchestra provides space for the pianist's cadenza who recapitulates their melodic and harmonic patterns. Improvising freely still involves a choice, performing certain musical elements over others. In each instance, the improvisor demarcates a playing field of musical material. This may be a conscious decision or absentminded repetition of something they have rehearsed. Playing certain elements over others in a particular fashion delimits potential musical opportunities. These opportunities pull the improvisor to exercise their faculties in certain ways, and as they continue to play, they draw more material into the improvisational space. The initial boundary shifts and opens the improvisational space to contributions from the audience and the performance context more generally.

In *A Thousand Plateaus,* Deleuze and Guattari elaborate a proces-
sual reality of intersecting milieux, assemblages and territories. Un-
derpinned by the interrelated notions of milieu, meter, and rhythm,
territorialization responds to the problem of consistency, explaining
how differential elements cohere. A milieu is not a pre-existing identity,
but an assemblage, a block of spacetime constituted by a periodic rep-
etition by a milieu-component. Deleuze and Guattari distinguish two
kinds of repetition – meter and rhythm. Meter is a repetition that repli-
cates sameness. This repetition codes milieu with a particular direction
and function. Rhythm, on the other hand, is a creative repetition that
emphasizes difference, that transcodes and overcodes milieux. Rhythm
is composed of at least two edges. Consider a duet between violin and
piano. There is an edge between the violin's sounds and that of the
piano. While these sounds come together, the rhythmic edge between
them highlights the difference between the two, producing the music
that is the duet.

Territorialization describes the process by which disparate milieux are
hierarchized and stabilized into concrete entities that make up our every-
day lives. Conversely, the processes of deterritorialization and reterrito-
rialization explain how assemblages interrelate, describing how milieux
are dislocated to be rearticulated. A territory is a self-organizing assem-
blage propagated by an "act of rhythm". Comprising within it "vectors
of deterritorialization", a territory embraces a tendency towards stability,
a specific kind of organization, and to change, opening on onto other as-
semblages, evolving as it encounters other milieux (Deleuze & Guattari,
[1987] 2013, pp. 366-367).

Deleuze and Guattari write there is a territory "when milieu com-
ponents cease to be directional, becoming dimensional instead, when
they cease to be functional to become expressive" (Deleuze & Guat-
tari, [1987] 2013, 366). The transition from direction and function to
dimension and expression mark the genesis of a territory, when milieux
acquire a spatial range and temporal constancy. Deleuze and Guattari
distinguish the difference between milieux and territorial animals with
the song of the non-musician bird and musician bird. The non-musician
bird's song is the result of various biological drives, the milieux of the
song having a particular function and direction. Its song serves a pur-
pose and is the response to a specific stimulus – but maintains no idio-
syncratic features by which it might be identified. By contrast, although
the song of the territorial musician bird may stem from similar biologi-
cal imperatives, it has acquired a spatial range to become expressive of
the bird itself. The musician bird is territorial in that it overcodes the
milieux of the song to express itself. It maintains an idiosyncratic style
so that the discerning listener can identify the musician bird from the

song alone. Opening onto other assemblages, this allows passages and relays of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, explaining how musical milieux is transformed.

In corralling musical material together, an improvisor develops a territory, a loose demarcation of material with which they want to improvise. The rhythmic edges between the improvisor, their instrument, the performance venue, and the musical milieux being played propagates the improvisational space. Like the musician bird, an improvisor wrenches disparate musical milieux from their history of sedimented usages and rearticulates them in a way that is expressive of the improvisor. Musical milieux is overcoded, serving different harmonic and rhythmic functions, expressive of the rupture from its initial assemblage and its reterritorialization in the improvisational space. The improvisor is also territorialized by the musical material in the improvisational space, pulling on them to perform particular phrases in accord with the demands of their instrument and skill. This complex interaction produces the sound organization, the determinate set of musical elements played. Insofar as deterritorialization and reterritorialization describes how assemblages open onto each other, this picture preserves the complex causal system that begat the improvisation.

The notion of improvisational space describes the activity of the improvisor. Territorialization makes sense of the improvisor's lack of control while explaining their activity, describing how their contributions impact the improvisational space and how the improvisor is pulled to play particular epithets. The improvisational space is comprised of territories, that of the improvisor, and that of the musical material. The rhythmic edge between these two territories spontaneously produces the sound organization. While an improvisor may wish to be completely spontaneous, their performances will adhere to stylistic and musical norms. What is performed recalls the habituated behaviour of a rehearsal room, how they were taught, what they have heard. In the volatile environment of an improvisational space, an improvisor uses their habituated behaviour to wrestle with unexpected interjections, as they learn about musical milieux and their own abilities, why they perform a particular phrase under certain conditions.

As a territory, improvisors express themselves through their territorialization of milieux. This helps understand why *Voyager* sounds like a human improvisor. Lewis insinuates that the reason for this is because *Voyager* maintains its "own sound" through its "interactive aesthetic of negotiation" (2000, p. 37). As noted, in needing to be switched on, it is unclear that *Voyager* possesses the relevant understanding to engender an improvisational space. However, there is no radical difference in how human or machine improvisors impact musical milieux. Like musician

birds and human improvisors, *Voyager* renovates musical elements by the same processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, so that it maintains a style. It is not a random note generator, but duplicates certain patterns, listening to and adapting to an improvisational space, relying on its code to navigate the terrain in the same way a human relies on their trained habits.

Creative Repetition and the Dual Aspect of Habit

Using the same processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, to tease out the difference between human and machine improvisors we must examine their respective territories. This section makes a parallel between the earlier distinction between meter and rhythm and Deleuze's notions of bare and creative repetition, identifying how habitual relations constitute territories. Expanding territorialization with respect to habit highlights the interrelationship between action and events and draws out the tension in the dual aspect of habit, indicating the difference between machine and human improvisors.

O'Keeffe eloquently summarizes that "habits hook us into our sense of self-consistency", setting down "a multiplicity of little anchors" into the flux of time. O'Keeffe continues that "too much routine can be bad thing. But a life with no habits is no life at all… a person without habits sticks at nothing" (2016, p. 71). Habits provide relative stability during dynamic change. Patterns within the musical material, and the improvisor's idiosyncratic habits enable an audience to discern stylistic traits and indeed hear the sound organization as musically coherent rather than noise. Of course, improvisation demands new routes be trodden, novel relationships between musical material found. The habits of an improvisor evolve as they territorialize and are territorialized.

For Deleuze, habit is a passive synthesis, a repetition of difference, productive of everyday entities. In *Difference and Repetition,* Deleuze distinguishes bare and creative repetition. Bare repetition is a mechanical reproduction that presents diverse instances of the same. On the other hand, creative repetition promotes the ontological primacy of difference, differentiating difference itself, producing a novel entity or relation. This recalls the distinction between the homogenous repetition of meter and the irregular recapitulation of rhythm. Like meter, bare repetition imbues direction and function. Similar to rhythm being productive of territories, creative repetition comprises a novel relation between milieux.

Both terms are used to explain how difference is productive. It is important to acknowledge that in *Difference and Repetition,* Deleuze's project is to uncover the conditions of thought. To capture its dynamism, he

locates this in difference itself. Creative repetition sparks thought, transforming habitual patterns that arise through bare repetition. Although describing the dynamism of an improvisational space, meter and rhythm do not illustrate an improvisor's attention and awareness detailed in the introduction. The awareness inherent in the notion of creative repetition serves to recapture the agency of the improvisor, how they select and participate with musical milieux.

Holland explores the distinction between bare and creative repetition with the example of learning a musical instrument. This involves bare repetition, practising scales and other formal musical units. The student initially struggles but with rehearsal becomes capable of repeating these scales. At a certain skill-level, they begin practising pre-composed musical works. Holland writes "this also involves a significant degree of bare repetition, since a composed piece is supposed to be performed more or less the same way" (2013, p. 8). Again, with a certain proficiency, the student can begin to improvise, drawing disparate milieux and these passive habits together "so that creative repetition replaces bare repetition" (2013, p. 9).

Holland's example identifies two aspects of habit, and indicates the link between improvisation's capacity for self-expression and its creativity. Bare repetition replicates sameness, a skill that can be executed absent-mindedly. By contrast, creative repetition demands attention and, in Deleuze's words, "forces us to think" (Deleuze, [1968] 2014, 183). Due to the fact that a territory is produced by rhythm, improvising, at least minimally, involves creative repetition. This opens up new avenues of transformation, engendering lines of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, allowing an improvisor to learn about and express themselves in novel ways.

Although Holland refers to practising scales as bare repetition, it is only bare repetition with sufficient mastery. Initially, this is a creative repetition, the individual learns to behave in certain ways at certain times. It is important to note that the term creative repetition is distinct from ordinary usages of the term and does not demand radical change or novelty. Creative repetition is creative in that it forms a relation between disparate milieux. This means that even after attaining this proficiency, bare repetition has the capacity to be creative. For instance, the expert might gain a deeper understanding of musical milieux. Conversely, what was once a creative repetition can devolve into bare repetition. It is easy to imagine an improvisor replaying the same musical shapes. What were once pioneering patterns that opened up new possibilities of transformation and other ways of thinking about musical relations, ossifying into cliché.

The comparison between bare and creative repetition and meter and rhythm highlights the interrelationship between action and events. As-

semblages are comprised of various repetitions. Opening onto other assemblages, the rhythm between milieux produces a creative repetition, allowing lines of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. This captures the complex causal system that produced the event. For instance, an improvisor might be conditioned to perform a certain melodic pattern when prompted by a particular harmonic stimulus. Repetition explains how what they were taught, rehearsed, and listened to, code the performer. It is the notion of style that underpins the concept of territorialization that helps makes sense of how an improvisor can claim their contributions to an improvisational space as theirs. They impact an improvisational space, offer creative repetitions, that express their own territorial constitution.

Agres, Forth and Wiggins expand Boden's three types of creativity to assess whether AI can be creative and artistic. They consider three kinds of creativity in humans – combinatorial, exploratory, and transformational. As the name suggests, combinatorial creativity involves an amalgamation of elements. This is readily witnessed in numerous AI systems that combine elements together. Exploratory creativity involves the discovery of novel relations, while transformational creativity "produces a shift in thought or paradigm" (Agres, Forth, Wiggins, 2016, 5). Echoing the attention demanded by creative repetition, Agres, Forth and Wiggins conclude that "evaluation is a fundamental aspect of creativity" in AI systems (2016, p. 6). Following the testament of human musicians about *Voyager,* we have explicated how machine improvisors impact musical material. The processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization readily describe combinatorial and exploratory creativity. The notion of rhythm demonstrates how novel relations are discovered and explored in an improvisational space. Further, thinking of the improvisor and musical material as territories within the improvisational space accounts for their transformation. This concurs with Agres, Forth and Wiggin's conclusion that to be creative, "the system must be capable of reasoning about itself, either in response to external feedback or with respect to internal evaluative mechanisms" (2016, p. 6). I propose that such an evaluative function is linked to the dual aspect of habit.

Having outlined how bare and creative repetition underpin habit, we can identify that there are habits in the musical material and in the musician. Having established that improvisation involves a creative repetition, it follows that, in an improvisational space, an improvisor learns about themselves, about the musical material or both. An improvisor extends their habits as they territorialize musical milieux, learning why they exercise their abilities under certain conditions. Creative repetition opens up novel opportunities, avenues for deterritorialization and reterritorialization, transforming habituated routines ordinarily used to navigate an improvisational space.

The relationship between bare and creative repetition alludes to the dual aspect of habit and highlights the issue of agency. On the one hand, an improvisor is constrained and directed by their habits, how they think about music and other musical and stylistic norms in which their performance operates. While this explains the bare repetitions underpinning the novelty of the creative repetitions in their improvising, it does not describe the sense in which the improvisor can call their contributions theirs. This is at odds with ordinary everyday experiences in which agents, once aware of a particular passive habit, actively try to avoid it. Translated to improvisational space, although difficult, a human improvisor can break free of trained routines. A musician might realise they are repeating something inappropriate to the improvisational space and cut across absent-minded practice. Although, this will be via other habits. In this way, an improvising agent oscillates between being owned by and owning their habits. This distils the notions of attention and evaluation supposed by creative repetition, and provides a rubric to discern the difference between human and machine improvisors.

Habits of Improvising Machines

Expanding the notion of a territory with bare and creative repetition indicates a territory's internal processes and organization. An improvisor expresses an idiosyncratic style, divulging their habits, the aesthetic decision they have rehearsed, and their ability to adapt. An improvisor's capacity to engender creative repetition, then, describes the freedom for expression involved in improvisation. This section answers what kind of self-expression and creativity *Voyager* is capable of. The notion of improvisational space explains why *Voyager* sounds human, impacting musical milieus in the same way as its human collaborators. What is contentious is whether *Voyager* is capable of transformational creativity given this prerequisite of awareness and evaluation, whether it oscillates in the same way as a human improvisor between being owned by and owning its habits. This section provides a detailed analysis of *Voyager's* programming to determine whether the bare repetition that constitutes it can give rise to creative repetition, clarifying what kind of authorial responsibility it can claim for its contributions.

Colton, Pease, Gucklesberger, McCormack and Llano argue that it is necessary to consider not just the human condition but the machine condition. Initially describing machines as "software and hardware intertwined into what would normally be considered one system", they specify that a creative machine is one that can record events that happen to it (2020, p. 345). In the first instance, a machine is composed of bare repeti-

tion, more or less sophisticated causal mechanisms that dictate its opera-
tion. Able to record what happens and how its responds opens up the
possibility for the machine to be creative. Reflecting the earlier intuition
about awareness underpinning evaluation and execution, this enables the
machine to gauge its capacities under various conditions. The machine's
creativity becomes a question of whether its software and hardware is
sophisticated enough to permit it to cut across certain habits.

Voyager is not an instrument used by a performer, but a player, trans-
lating musical information from its human counterparts in real-time into
MIDI voices, single lines of musical data. This analysis guides "an auto-
matic composition (or, if you will, improvisation) program that generates
both complex responses to the musician's playing and independent be-
haviour that arises from its own internal processes" (Lewis, 2000, p. 33).
While listening, *Voyager* simultaneously arranges data into various sonic
groupings. *Voyager* does this with "64 asynchronously operating single-
voice MIDI-controlled "players", sub-routines that govern its voice, vol-
ume, pitch, rhythm and so on" (Lewis, 2000, p. 34). These sub-routines
come together in the overarching *setphrasebehaviour* and *setresponse*
tasks. While *setphrasebehaviour* dictates *Voyager's* sonic contributions,
setresponse comprises its analytic capability, and a "smoothing routine
that uses this raw data to construct averages of pitch, velocity, probability
of note activity" (Lewis, 2000, p. 35). While *setresponse* explains how
Voyager listens, and makes its contributions relevant to the musical ma-
terial, the *setphrasebehaviour* task means that it does not need a human
performer but will begin improvising of its own internal processes. The
setresponse task then analyzes its own contributions, another launch pad
for further improvisation.

Like a human improvisor's passive habits, *Voyager's* coding facilitates
improvisation. Its smoothing routine, in conjunction with *setphrasebe-
haviour* will "choose" from one of fifteen melody algorithms, taking notes
from these sets, also making "choices" about velocity, timbre and volume.
Given this smoothing operation groups musical data, mediating certain
voices in the ensemble over others, it is tempting to think of *Voyager* like
an orchestral conductor. Although Lewis agrees that *Voyager* is a collec-
tive, he asserts that this picture does not accurately capture its dynamism.
A conductor knows what is to come next or at least has a goal in mind.
Voyager is modelled on the Javanese gamelan ensemble where "control of
musical process is shared" by all of its constituents (Lewis, 2003, p. 37).
Lewis' point is not to highlight the spontaneity of improvisation, but to
reiterate its heterarchical production. The intuition here, is that *Voyager*
listens, not just to others, but to itself.

Voyager's coding constrains the way in which it analyzes music, dem-
onstrating the sense in which it is a composition by Lewis. Lewis is re-

sponsible for how *Voyager* thinks about music. Its algorithm is a complex of bare repetition. It is important to note that focussing on this aspect of habit, isolates *Voyager* from the context in which it interacts. Its listening function returns its analysis to an improvisational space. With the sheer number of potential permutations that comprise its sub-routines, creative repetition is fostered. *Voyager* thus deterritorializes and reterritorializes musical milieux, impacting and transforming an improvisational space and maintaining a style. Insofar as this style emerges from its passive habits, it tells the listener about its smoothing routine, melody algorithms and pre-loaded pitch sets, preserving its complex causal history. Understanding improvisors as territories explains why Lewis cannot claim *Voyager's* improvisations as his. Describing how they affect and are affected, the processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization illustrate the activity of the improvisor, how they can be held authorially responsible for the sound organization that emerges.

It remains to be determined whether *Voyager* realizes it is about to fall into an habituated practice and cut across it. Yet, if it cannot do this, *Voyager* is controlled by the habits that constitute it. Although sophisticated, *Voyager* would be reduced to its causal mechanisms. While territorialization captures how it impacts musical milieux, not being aware of its habits, means that it would not be authorially responsible in the same way as its human counterparts. To my mind, there is a simple test to assess this. Composed of bare repetition, various algorithms, if the circumstances of a performance were precisely replicated, *Voyager* would play the same musical material. This, however, is not the case. The interaction between *setresponse* and *setphrasebehaviour* produces a creative repetition.

Voyager's propensity to calculate probabilities in what its human collaborators will play next presupposes habits in musical material. The difference between the smoothing routine of *setresponse* and the unpredictability and processing power of *setphrasebehaviour* cuts across these patterns in musical material. Recalling the earlier notion of awareness that underpins creativity and connoted in the active aspect of habit, *Voyager* evaluates the milieux within an improvisational space and its musical contributions. It then executes a procedure to make a musical contribution to fit this assessment as best as it can. It must be noted that this awareness and transformation is of musical milieux. It is difficult to gauge whether *Voyager* maintains an awareness that its habits are extended. The habit *setresponse* seems to control its capacity to accommodate complex environments. It does not learn about its behaviour or accomplishments like a human improvisor intuits the mastery of a skill. For instance, *Voyager* will not innovate new pitch sets. The dual aspect of habit thus distils the difference between human improvisors and *Voyager*. Without the ability to recognize and manipulate its own habits, *Voyager* is not as open to trans-

formation as its human counterparts. The condition of improvisation is to renovate. In the improvisational space, witnessing the deterritorialization and reterritorialization of milieux between interacting territories, an improvisor learns about musical material or about themselves. This does not entail a radical difference between human and machine improvisors, given the countless iterations of human performance where the improvisor does not extend their faculties, except superficially.

Given its transformation of musical milieux and effect on other improvisors, AI improvisors open up new avenues for artistic collaboration. The concept of improvisational space, constituted by territories, illustrates an improvisor's activity, explaining how they affect and control milieux. Expanding the notion of territory with respect to the bare and creative repetitions that constitute habits, exposes how the improvisor is affected and controlled by milieux and patterns within the improvisational space. This explains how *Voyager* can claim credit for its contributions in improvised performances. An improvisor has some capacity to disrupt habituated practices. The execution of this ability stems from other habits. Because improvising programs like *Voyager* do not seem to have an ability to critique their own capacities, it is unclear whether they can be held authorially responsible for an improvisation in the same way as human improvisors. Humans, of course, are also constrained by their habits, and like *Voyager,* do not possess a birds-eye view of their internal composition. Besides offering insight into the interrelationship between actions and events, this demonstrates that issues of agential responsibility are entwined with the dual aspect of habit.

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Composing Improvisors: Habit and Agential Responsibility

The improvising machine, *Voyager*, was composed by pioneering theorist and improvisor George Lewis in the 1980s. Sitting at the nexus of action and wider events, improvisation is a fertile field in which to conduct the Turing test. Here, we see whether an AI system can convince someone it is intelligent by responding to a complex environment.

Although spontaneously produced improvisors rely on their trained behaviour to respond to unforeseen contributions. Drawing a parallel between the programming of an improvising machine and the habits of a human improvisor, Lewis' denotation of *Voyager* as a composition seemingly threatens improvisation's aptitude for self-expression and creativity.

Through the example of *Voyager,* this article examines the relationship between habit and agential responsibility. I argue that the novelty of improvisation lies in the improvisor learning about new patterns in the musical material, or about themselves, as their habits are extended by unpredictability.

KEYWORDS: Improvisation, Agential Responsibility, Deleuze, Habit, Composition, Voyager

Floriana Ferro

Meeting the Gaze of the Robot: A Phenomenological Analysis on Human-Robot Empathy

Introduction

The development of humanoid robots has become more and more so-phisticated. Since the 1990s scientists have demonstrated the importance of non-verbal communication in human-robot interactions (HRI), especially eye contact. Very recent studies, carried out especially during the last five years (i.e., Liberati, Nagataki 2019; Schellen *et al.* 2021; Ciardo, Wykowska 2022), prove that the gaze of the robots affects human emotions and behaviour. This appears to be a manifestation of what phenomenologists call "empathy", which is the fundamental phenomenon through which my subjectivity grasps the experience of the other, since the other is perceived as being like me. This phenomenon has been carefully studied by Edith Stein (Stein 1917; eng. trans. 1989) and Edmund Husserl (Husserl 1950; eng. trans. 1960) in the first decades of the 20th century. However, the two thinkers did not live during the digital revolution and the development of robotics, therefore they only referred to empathy between subjectivities in flesh and bone.

After one century, the scientific and technological landscape has consistently changed. The most recent results achieved in the domain of Artificial Intelligence, especially Robotics, present a new challenge to phenomenologists and to post-phenomenologists as well. Since all of them are currently reflecting on new technologies and their effects on human life, the gaze of a robot – of a machine – affecting the behaviour and emotions of humans inevitably raises questions. Is empathy between humans and robots possible? What happens in my subjectivity when I encounter the gaze of an artificial being? When I recognize the gaze of the robot, do I feel the same empathy as I feel for another human being?

This paper aims to problematize the question of empathy related to the robot gaze through the conceptual tools developed by phenomenology. The first section will be dedicated to the most recent studies in robotics concerning the subject under discussion, especially the effects that the robot gaze has on human feelings and behaviour. In the second part,

I will give a brief description of the phenomenon of empathy, as it is developed by Husserl and Stein, and compare this phenomenon with the human experience of a robot gaze. Analogies and differences will inevitably emerge: I will argue that, since the robot gaze comes from robot eyes, the latter are perceived as *similar* to human ones (otherwise they would not have significant effects), but not as *identical* to them. Indeed, the difference between the human and the robot gaze is due to their being embodied: human eyes are perceived as belonging to a living body, whereas robot eyes are seen as part of a machine-body. In the third section, I will use the concept of *transcorporeal analogy*, taking inspiration from the notion of *transdimensional analogy* developed in other studies (i.e., Ferro 2022). In this specific case, I will argue that there is a common empathic ground, based on an extended concept of corporeality, which was well developed by Merleau-Ponty (1964; eng. trans. 1968) and then re-interpreted, with different nuances, by Ihde (2002), Verbeek (2008), Haraway (1985, 1991 edition), Braidotti (2013), and others. I consider this extended body, called by the Merleau-Pontian term "flesh", as a common ground between the human gaze and the robot gaze, thus allowing to widen the phenomenon of empathy itself.

1. The robot gaze and its effects on humans

The role of eye communication is considered very important in HRI, so much that, according to Admoni and Scassellati (2017, p. 25), the earlier research into this phenomenon started in the 1990s among the virtual agent community and then extended to robotics: humanoids with meaningful eye gaze, such as Cog (Scassellati 1996), Kismet (Breazeal, Scassellati 1999), and Infanoid (Kozima, Ito 1998), were thus developed. Admoni and Scassellati, together with other scientists in the domain of HRI, have deeply worked on the gaze of the robot and on our recognition of it: among their discoveries, it is worthy to be mentioned that the robot gaze is more frequently perceived when robots use short and frequent glances rather than long and less frequent ones (Admoni *et al.* 2013). The first important thing, in order for the human to perceive the robot gaze as such, is to become aware of it and this awareness is possible only if the stares have something similar to human ones. For instance, it is not very frequent in common conversation that a friend looks at me with a fixed stare and for a long time, especially in group conversation, since it would make me feel uncomfortable. On the contrary, short and frequent glances are more likely to happen in a social context.

This proves that it is not simply sufficient that robot gaze takes place, but that is shall be directed to humans in a certain way. Moreover, it will

be easily recognized as such if it is generally *directed to me*, to my eyes: Imai *et al.* (2002) have argued that the robot gaze is fundamentally *egocentric*, so that I perceive it when eye contact between the robot and me takes place. This is particularly important for what I aim to show in this paper, namely that the gaze of the robot gives rise to the phenomenon of empathy, notwithstanding the differences between feeling it for humans and for robots. Studies in HRI prove that this difference is maintained even in the case of humanoid robots, that are, somatically speaking, the most similar to us.

> It is tempting to assume that perfectly matching robot gaze behaviors to human gaze behaviors will elicit identical responses from people, but this is not always the case. Several studies suggest that gaze from robots is interpreted differently than gaze from humans. In general, it is difficult to compare robot gaze to human gaze directly, because while robot gaze can be infinitely controlled, human gaze tends to have small, unpredictable variations (Admoni, Scassellati 2017, p. 37).

In order to stimulate the phenomenon of empathy in humans, the robots shall resemble, as much as possible, human gaze. The reason is that empathy takes place only when the human subject recognizes the other as an *alter ego*, another I. It does not imply that the other must be perceived as exactly the same: humans experience empathy also towards animals, as our everyday life with pets and scientific studies prove (Young *et al.* 2018). We recognize animals as living and sensible beings, who can feel pleasure and pain, and to whom we communicate. Their gaze is very similar to what Admoni and Scassellati write about, since they contain those "small, unpredictable variations" belonging to every living being. This is proven also by Ghiglino *et al.* (2020), according to whom humans recognize likeness with robots if their eye movements are slow but variable. Unfortunately, for what concerns the robot gaze, the possibility for every single eye movement to be under control limits our perception of the robot as a living being and thus our empathy towards it.

The development of humanoid robots has become particularly sophisticated and, in the last few years, many studies on the robot gaze have been published. Liberati and Nagataki (2019), taking inspiration from Sartre, Levinas, and Merleau-Ponty, show that a real interaction between us and the robots is possible only if the latter show us vulnerability: even if the robot's vulnerability appears different from ours – i.e., a trash robot which does not recognize some items as garbage – it may give rise to a relationship. Liberati and Nagataki think that, if the robot is able to detect my emotions and makes me feel vulnerable, a closer link between us may be possible. However, the distance between humans and robots is still evident. Kelley *et al.* (2021) show that, when the robot gaze is perceived,

it does not involve the same parts of our brain as the human gaze does: the robot gaze does not engage the right temporoparietal junction, which is involved in the eye contact between humans.

For what concerns the specific effects of a robot gaze, Schellen *et al.* (2021) argue that it increases the possibility of honest behaviour: when the iCub robot establishes eye contact with the human participants to the study, after they have performed deceptive behaviour, they tend to be more honest. It means that moral actions are influenced not only by the gaze of other humans, but even by robot gaze: humanoid robots may be thus considered as social agents. Ciardo and Wykowska (2022) also prove that the iCub may help in the resolution of conflicts, even if not in conflict adaptations; generally, it helps modulating cognitive control.

Similar effects have been found in less recent studies. Saerbeck *et al.* (2010) show that the robot gaze has a greater impact when it is combined with other kinds of behaviours (gestures, facial expressions, etc.): if a robot tutor is able to act like this, it stimulates empathy and improves the performances of students in language learning. Finally, Andrist *et al.* (2015) have pointed out that empathy towards robots is more likely to occur when there are some traits of personality which we recognize as similar to ours. It means that the more the robot is akin to the human, the more the human feels closer to it.

All the abovementioned studies prove something that phenomenology had stated at the beginning of the 20th century: empathy takes place only when I recognize the other as an *alter ego*, as being similar to me on the basis of acts, expressions, and gestures performed. However, in order to understand if empathy as such may be really felt toward robots, and not only toward living beings (especially humans and animals), an analysis of the phenomenon of empathy between humans will first take place.

2. Empathy toward humans and toward robots

Among the most known phenomenological studies on empathy, Edith Stein's *On the Problem of Empathy* and Edmund Husserl's *Cartesian Meditations* may be regarded as fundamental. The two authors show both similarities and differences in their way to conceive empathy in relation to human subjectivity. Husserl thinks that ipseity or selfness (the hard core of the I) is first constituted in self-experience, within the so-called "primordial sphere", from which subsequently springs the experience of the other person (Husserl 1950; eng. trans. 1960, § 47, pp. 104-105). We first perceive ourselves as subjects, who are aware of the other only during the encounter. The recognition of the other is possible because of the "pairing" (or "coupling", in different translations). In Husserl's words:

> Pairing is a primal form of that passive synthesis which we designate as "association", in contrast to passive synthesis of "identification". In a pairing association the characteristic feature is that, in the most primitive case, two data are given intuitionally, and with prominence, in the unity of a consciousness and that, on this basis essentially, already in pure passivity (regardless therefore of whether they are noticed or unnoticed), as data appearing with mutual distinctness, they found phenomenologically a unity of similarity and thus are always constituted precisely as a pair (Husserl 1950; eng. trans. 1960, § 51, p. 112).

The pairing association stays at the level of pure passivity, since it precedes the intentional activity of being directed at the other. "Passivity" here means that, at the transcendental level, I originally tend to recognize who is similar to me and associate them to myself: in this way I recognize the other as another ego. Neuroscientists have found something recalling Husserl's pairing association in the functioning of the so-called "mirror neurons" (Gallese *et al.* 1996), which activate when another subject performs certain actions (i.e., grasping, manipulating, and placing). Without going into details about the differences between Gallese's and Husserl's ideas and frameworks, it is noteworthy that our brain tends to recognize the other *qua* other and to reproduce their feelings and actions. Transcendentally speaking, Husserl thinks that intersubjectivity is not secondary in relation to solipsism: on the contrary, even if, from the experiential point of view, we meet the other "after" we are aware of ourselves, we are already "set up" to recognize the other as an *alter ego*. From the transcendental point of view, intersubjectivity precedes and founds subjectivity: "a transcendental solipsism is only a subordinate stage philosophically" (Husserl 1950; eng. trans. 1960, § 13, p. 30).

Stein's view is more radical, since it tries from the beginning to avoid solipsism as such. Stein thinks that the constitution of the I is intersubjective not only from a transcendental, but also from the experiential point of view.

> This "selfness" is experienced and is the basis of all that is "mine." Naturally, it is first brought into relief in contrast with another when another is given. This other is at first not qualitatively distinguished from it, since both are qualityless, but only distinguished as simply an "other." This otherness is apparent in the type of givenness: it is other than "I" because it is given to me in another way than "I." Therefore it is "you." But, since it experiences itself as I experience myself, the "you" is another "I." Thus the "I" does not become individualized because another faces it, but its individuality, or as we would rather say […] its selfness is brought into relief in contrast with the otherness of the other (Stein 1917; eng. trans. 1989, Chap. III, p. 38).

The I is constituted in the moment when the encounter with the other takes place. Before this encounter the difference between "me" and "you" is not experienced, since both are qualityless. Lived experience as such is not enough to feel myself as an individual: only when I meet the other, who experiences themself the way I experience myself, I am aware of my singularity. The other is an *alter ego* (another I), who experiences their own subjectivity analogously (not identically) to how I experience my own subjectivity. The encounter with the other is crucial in the constitution of my I, since it allows me to experience myself not as a general and undifferentiated subjectivity, but as a unique subjectivity, as myself. My identification therefore occurs as a process of differentiation from the other, which takes place through the phenomenon of empathy (*Einfühlung*).

How does empathy occur? Stein describes this process into three stages. "These are (1) the emergence of the experience, (2) the fulfilling explication, and (3) the comprehensive objectification of the explained experience" (Stein 1917; eng. trans. 1989, Chap. II, p. 10). First the lived experience of the other (i.e., sadness on their face) emerges and presents itself to me as an object to which my intentionality is directed: the other is not considered as a thing among things, but as a psychophysical and spiritual unit that is similar to mine. In the second phase, I try to clarify and feel the experience of the other as given: I leave aside the objectifying glance and try to identify with the other's subjectivity, taking their place, and feel as they feel. This is the stage where empathy actually occurs, when I restructure my identity through the attempt to reproduce the experience of the other: I catch the sadness on the other's face and feel it as my sadness. However, Stein does not think at my experience of the other as perfectly coinciding with the other's experience of themself, since I am not the other and my personal history will never be the same. In the third stage, I catch the experience of the other as an object again: I am back to myself and lucidly understand the feeling of the other, thus putting a distance between our experiences. Synthetically speaking, I perceive the expression of the other's feeling, then I go out from myself in order to experience it, and finally I come back to myself and perceive the other's feeling as different from mine.

According to Stein, I never catch the experience of the other as I would do with mine, since it is originally unaccessible to me. "This other subject is primordial although I do not experience it as primordial. In my non-primordial experience I feel, as it were, led by a primordial one not experienced by me but still there, manifesting itself in my non-primordial experience" (Stein 1917; eng. trans. 1989, Chap. II, p. 11). The experience of the other is not primordial for me as it is for them, so empathy is the non-primordial givenness of a primordial experience: I feel the

other's experience recognizing it as *their experience, not mine*. This modality of perceiving the other is not a specific form of approaching them, but as the foundation of every singular approach to alterity: empathy is "the experience of foreign consciousness in general" (Stein 1917; eng. trans. 1989, Chap. II, p. 11). Empathy lies at the heart of transcendental intersubjectivity.

What happens when I meet the gaze of the robot? Does empathy actually take place? First of all, it must be pointed out that the phenomenon of empathy is characterized by two distinct movements: a) a recognition of the other subjectivity, which is perceived as analogous to mine (Husserl), b) an awareness of the difference between the other's experience and mine (Stein). Similarity and difference are both necessary in order for empathy to occur: if I perceive something as radically different from me (e.g., a stone), I will not feel anything towards it; on the contrary, if I perceive total identity, I will not feel the experience of someone or something else, but my own experience.

In the case of the robot, both movements take place. a) As the abovementioned studies in HRI prove, I feel the effects of the robot gaze, which also affects my behaviour: this happens because of a somewhat similarity that I perceive between the robot and me. b) At the same time, I am fully aware that the robot is not me and is neither a human or a living being. What are these two movements based on, in the case of robots, in order for empathy to occur? Let us start from seeing the effects on us, that is how we experience the robot gaze. I am interacting with a humanoid machine. In order to establish eye contact, and thus experiment the gaze of this machine, I need to recognize something recalling the eyes of a living being. I have already mentioned the iCub (2008), which is very similar to a child: it has a round white head, two eyes, and a nose; moreover, it has a mechanical body through which it crawls, grasps objects, and interact with people. The Kismet, which is ten years older (1998), is less similar to a real human being, however, its eyes, with big round bulbs and pupils, surmounted by eyebrows and above a red mouth, clearly recall us a face. There are many other examples (Nao, TIAGo, AILA, RoboThespian, etc.), which are quite different from each other, but have in common "a face with two eyes surmounting a body". The colour of the body, the presence of square or round shapes, height, weight, etc. are less important features to our purpose. In order for us to feel watched by a robot, we need to recognize the shape and movements of two eyes on a face, which is part of a whole body.

Once I recognize the robot eyes as eyes, my empathy towards the robot can take place: I may perceive that it pays attention to what I say, is interested in my words, in my behaviour, in my interaction with it. If it is a collaborative robot, a *cobot* (Colgate *et al.* 1996), this kind of empa-

thy will help us work together, whereas, if it is a social robot, a s*obot[1]*, it will assist and help me fulfil my needs. Eye contact is very important in this process, especially if, as I showed in the first part of this paper, it is accompanied by other facial expressions, gestures, etc. However, the effects of the robot gaze on humans are not the same of the human gaze. The robot gaze comes from robot eyes, which are *similar*, but not *identical* to human eyes. The difference between robot and human gaze shall not be considered as located in the eyes only: if I look at a human face with one or two prosthetic eyes and perceive the latter as watching me, I perceive a human being looking at me, not a robot. However, if I am watched by a pair of metal and/or plastic eyes within a metal/plastic face as part of a metal/plastic body, then I will feel a robot gaze, not a human one. The difference between human gaze and robot gaze is not due to the different texture of the eyes only, but to their being embodied: whereas we perceive human eyes as belonging to a living body, we see robot eyes within a machine-body.

3. Transcorporeal analogy

I have just shown that humans are capable of feeling empathy toward robots, however, this phenomenon does not occur in exactly the same way as empathy toward humans. The difference lies in the bodies of the subjects to whom empathy is directed: humans have living bodies, made of flesh, bones, skin, muscles, organs, and directed by a nervous system, whereas robots have machine-bodies, mainly made of plastic and metal, and guided by an electronic system or software. The texture of human and robot bodies appears to be very different at first sight. However, there are also similarities between these two sets of bodies, which lie not only in their common shape. Even statues depicting humans resemble human faces and bodies, however, we do not feel particular empathy towards them. It happens because statues stand still and do not move, whereas humanoid robots make facial expressions and gestures, emit sounds and words, walk, manipulate objects, etc. They behave like human beings.

It is time to show what lies under this similarity, what is in common between us and the robots, in order to formulate my interpretation: empathy toward robots is based on analogy between human and robot bodies, on *transcorporeal analogy*. I am taking inspiration from the idea of *transdimensional analogy*, recently coined to indicate analogy between different dimensions of reality (Ferro 2022). In this case,

[1] I am referring here to the most recent use of the abbreviation "sobot" (Cusano 2022), not to the older one indicating "software robots".

the analogy regarding the phenomenon of empathy applies to different kinds of bodies, to the corporeality of both human beings and robots. My intention is to show *how* and *why* differences and similarities between robot and human bodies may be conceived: at the basis of our experience of the world, of ourselves, and of the others there is a common experience of the body. This extended corporeality is what Merleau-Ponty defines as "flesh".

> What we are calling flesh, this interiorly worked-over mass, has no name in any philosophy. As the formative medium of the object and the subject, it is not the atom of being, the hard in itself that resides in a unique place and moment [...]. We must not think the flesh starting from substances, from body and spirit – for then it would be the union of contradictories – but we must think it, as we said, as an element, as the concrete emblem of a general manner of being (Merleau-Ponty 1964; eng. trans. 1968, p. 147).

Merleau-Ponty detaches from both the substantialist view of Aristotle and the classic phenomenological perspective. The flesh is not considered as "the atom of being", the hard core of what exists, its *hypokeimenon*: it is not body *or* spirit, matter *or* form, or their compound, a "synolus" (*Metaph.* VII, 1029a1-3), but rather it is matter *and* form, body *and* spirit, which are intertwined and related in a dialectical movement. This does not imply either dualism or pluralism of substances, but an ontological monism, since the flesh is a common element, "the concrete emblem of a general manner of being" in which the polarities are not opposites, but revert the one into the other. Polarities, whose reciprocal relation is chiasmatic (Merleau-Ponty 1964; eng. trans. 1968, p. 262), move the one toward the other in a hyperdialectic movement (Merleau-Ponty 1964; eng. trans. 1968, p. 94): the word "hyperdialectic" means a refuse of the Hegelian triadic movement and its synthesis, which is the position of a new element overcoming the thesis and the antithesis. Merleau-Ponty seems to prefer a circular concept of dialectic (Vanzago 2012, pp. 194-195), in which the poles are in a position of divergence (*écart*), but not of extraneousness or opposition, since the movement of their common medium (the flesh) implies reciprocal reversibility. Merleau-Ponty's view in *The Visible and the Invisible* is clearly anti-substantialist, thus giving way to an open idea of the body, which may include also non-living parts or elements.

This view is reinforced by the refusal of the classical phenomenological idea of the body, which is rooted in both Husserl's writings and Merleau-Ponty's earlier works. In both the second volume of the *Ideas* (Husserl 1952; eng. trans. 1989, § 41, p. 166) and the *Phenomenology of Perception* (Merleau-Ponty 1945; eng. trans. 2012, pp. 351-352), the subjective body is described as having an orientation through which I position

myself *here*, whereas other bodies are perceived as being *somewhere else*. Even if Merleau-Ponty already speaks about ambiguity and third-person processes in the *Phenomenology of Perception* (Merleau-Ponty 1945; eng. trans. 2012, pp. 106, 230), he develops the idea of an extended body only in *The Visible and the Invisible*. Here the flesh is considered as "the formative medium of the object and the subject" (Merleau-Ponty 1964; eng. trans. 1968, p. 147), so there is neither a clear distinction between them, nor the adoption of a privileged subjective perspective. The flesh may be considered as an extended element, a mind intertwined with a body, which is the body of my ego, of other egos, of the objects, and of the world.

This concept has been re-interpreted, more or less explicitly, in a post-phenomenological and posthuman sense. According to Don Ihde, whose thought gives rise to the post-phenomenological movement, new realities, which are formed with the technological and digital development, may emerge from the "foldings of the flesh" (Ihde 2002, p. 86). Peter-Paul Verbeek interprets this position through the theory of hybridization, according to which technology assumes a crucial role in our relationship with the objects: there is not only a *technologically mediated intentionality*, which is human intentionality directed toward objects through a technological device, but even a *hybrid intentionality*, which takes shape through the mediation of technology merging with the human body (Verbeek 2008). Even if post-phenomenology does not share the extended theories of the relationship between humans and technology (Verbeek 2015), it takes an interesting posthuman turn.

Among other posthuman philosophers, Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti (Haraway 1985, 1991 edition; Braidotti 2013) develop in a critical sense the idea of the cyborg: the latter helps us conceive the new possibilities of the flesh, without opposing it to an assumed concept of nature that excludes technology. In this paper I consider the concept of cyborg – defined as being both "cybernetic" and "organic" – as the meeting point between humans and robots. Through a posthuman interpretation of the concept of flesh (Ferro 2021), robots and humans may be considered as two poles which revert the one into the other, though maintaining their differences. The cyborg may be considered as the moment of the process of the flesh where the human becomes machine and the machine becomes human. If such a process is possible, then the robot is not something which we feel as completely extraneous, but the pole toward which we are moving; at the same time, the robot is moving toward us, it is trying to become human. If the phenomenon of empathy occurs before cyborgs (e.g., we feel it toward people with a pacemaker), nothing hinders it to occur also before robots, even if in a different way, because of their body-machine. If robots and humans are two poles of

a dynamic and hyperdialectic element – the flesh – then the relation between their bodies can be ontologically configured as implying empathy. When I meet the gaze of the robot, I meet the gaze of the flesh, and the gaze of the flesh is somehow my gaze as well.

Conclusion

According to the analysis performed in this paper, the phenomenon of empathy between humans and robots definitely takes place. I do not state with certainty that robots also feel empathy towards humans: this issue needs an extended and foundational discourse which cannot be developed here. However, I have argued that humans may feel empathy for robots, since they recognize them as *alter egos*. The pairing association described by Husserl (1950; eng. trans. 1960, § 51), belonging to the processes grounded in our passive synthesis, activates when we meet the gaze of the robot. This does not erase the differences between the living body and the machine-body, which exclude the coincidence or identity between humans and humanoid robots. The concept of *transcorporeal analogy* allows us to conceive this essential similarity, which is evident in the effects that the robot gaze has on humans, but even the divergence of these effects between human-human and human-robot empathy. Both factors have been brought out by the abovementioned studies on HRI.

Among these studies, Liberati and Nagataki's one (2019), taking inspiration from Sartre and Levinas, offer us a phenomenological perspective on what happens when we encounter the robot gaze. I think that their research, which is crucial in understanding human-robot relations, needs to be brought forward and integrated by more general considerations on the phenomenon of empathy as such. In this paper I have tried to do the latter, hoping to contribute to the philosophical debate about the relation between us and humanoid machines, which draw ever closer to us.

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Meeting the Gaze of the Robot:
A Phenomenological Analysis on Human-Robot Empathy

This paper discusses the possibility of the phenomenon of empathy between humans and robots, starting from what happens during their eye contact. First, it is shown, through the most relevant results of HRI studies on this matter, what are the most important effects of the robot gaze on human emotions and behaviour. Secondly, these effects are compared to what happens during the phenomenon of empathy between humans, taking inspiration from the studies of Edmund Husserl and Edith Stein. Finally, similarities and differences between human-human and human-robot empathy are conceptualized through Merleau-Ponty's idea of flesh, which is the extended bodily element of the world. If there is a common concept of body, including both machine-bodies and living bodies, then a *transcorporeal analogy* takes place, thus explaining why the phenomenon of empathy occurs both in human-human and human-robot interactions.

KEYWORDS: gaze, human-robot interaction, phenomenology, empathy, Merleau-Ponty

Luca Possati
The Paradox of Quantum Information and Its Ethical Consequences

1. Introduction

> The word "information" has been given different meanings by various writers in the general field of information theory. It is likely that at least a number of these will prove sufficiently useful in certain applications to deserve further study and permanent recognition. *It is hardly to be expected that a single concept of information would satisfactorily account for the numerous possible applications of this general field.* (Shannon 1993, 180; emphasis mine)

Will quantum technologies change the way we understand information? This paper is an attempt to answer this question. The central thesis of the paper is that the measurement problem in quantum mechanics prevents the use of a semantic information theory for quantum computing and information (QI), and this has deep technological and ethical consequences. Here I am interested in seeing whether Floridi's theory of information can be appropriately extended or adapted to the quantum domain. I claim that it doesn't seem possible for Floridi's theory to be applied to quantum systems because it requires a process of validation whose requirements are incompatible with quantum mechanics.

The second section of the paper analyzes Floridi's theory of semantic information. This theory is neither the only nor the best possible theory of semantic information. Rather, I see Floridi's semantic information theory as a reference model through which to explore the transformation of the concept of information in a quantum context. The third section analyzes the problem of semantic information in QI. This section is divided into two parts. The first gives a non-mathematical description of the measurement problem. The second shows how the measurement problem exists in the intersection between computation and information. In the quantum field, the veridicality thesis, that is, the core of Floridi's approach, fails because there isn't full accessibility to the system. *If*, following Floridi, we define factual semantic information as a set of data that is (a) well-formed, (b) meaningful, and (c) truthful, *then* in QI we can only get (a) and (b), but we cannot get (c). The third and fourth sections show the consequences of this negative result.

2. The Theory of Strongly Semantic Information

In this section, I intend to analyze some aspects of Floridi's theory of semantic information (Floridi 2011, 2019), considering it one of the main models of information philosophy available today. The goal of this section is not to develop a history of information theories that is as comprehensive and complete as possible, nor to defend Floridi's theses, nor to present an original theory of semantic information. The theory of semantic information in Floridi is only a starting point for reflecting on the concept of semantic information in QI.

Generally, by information we mean what is transmitted by messages carried through physical channels. The first to apply this notion in a quantitative way were Wiener (1948) and Shannon (1993; see also Shannon and Weaver 1949). Both thought that information was connected to the reduction of uncertainty or entropy. Therefore, any content is more or less informative in relation to the type and amount of uncertainty it reduces. Shannon's theory also inspired philosophical theories of information (Dretske 1981, Floridi 2011; see Adriaans 2013 for a brief review).

We can distinguish between theories of non-semantic information and theories of semantic information. Shannon's theory is about non-semantic information. It excludes any reference to semantics; a message is simply any physical structure (for example, a string of signs) connected to a certain probability. Informativeness is connected to the greater or lesser probability of the structure. Theories of semantic information, on the other hand, deal with the reduction of a different uncertainty, which is not formal but concerns a certain state of affairs: "We call semantic information the information a signal carries by reducing uncertainty about some state of affairs. In this case, semantic aspects are crucial: what information the signal carries is constitutively related to what the signal stands for" (Piccinini and Scarantino 2010, 241).

A natural starting point for introducing the notion of semantic information is Carnap and Bar-Hillel's paper "An Outline of a Theory of Semantic Information" (1953). Carnap and Bar-Hillel criticize and extend the theory of mathematical information developed by Claude Shannon. Floridi criticizes this model and proposes a theory of strongly semantic information (TSSI). His central thesis is that the TSSI can resolve the paradox introduced by Carnap and Bar-Hillel.

Carnap and Bar-Hillel (1953) calculate the amount of informativity (i.e., how informative some information is) encoded in a sentence of a particular language. In their case, the language in question is monadic predicate logic. The philosophical details are grounded on an idea that has come to be known as the *inverse range principle* (IRP). The IRP states

that the amount of information encoded by a sentence is inversely proportional to the likelihood of the truth of that sentence. In other words, there is an inversely proportional relationship between the probability and the informativeness of a sentence. The less likely a sentence is to be true, the more informative it is.

In a nutshell, Bar-Hillel and Carnap have developed a poor concept of semantic informativeness; people may learn or be informed about necessary truths. Bar-Hillel and Carnap measure of informativeness does not capture that notion.

Bar-Hillel and Carnap's position implies two paradoxes. The first is the Bar-Hillel-Carnap paradox (BCP), according to which contradictions are the most informative sentences because they are impossible, that is, not probable at all. "There is more information in a contradiction than in a contingently true statement" (Floridi 2011, 109). On the other hand, logical truths are the least informative sentences because they are obvious – as Wittgenstein argued: "All the propositions of logic say the same thing, viz nothing. They are tautologies" (*Tractatus*, 4.46, 6.1). According to Floridi, this idea is paradoxical because it clashes with our intuitive conception of information that information is something true – it cannot be false: contradictions are always false, so they cannot be information. In other words, the thesis of Bar-Hillel and Carnap imposes a rigid separation between the truth and the informativeness of a sentence. The more informative a sentence is, the less likely it is to be true it is. This is paradoxical.

The second paradox is called the deduction scandal (SOD) and is a direct consequence of BCP. The SOD states that an inference does not provide any additional information to our knowledge. "Since tautologies carry no information at all, no logical inference can yield an increase of information, so logical deductions, which can be analysed in terms of tautological processes, also fail to provide any information" (Floridi 2011, 130). This means that the information carried by the conclusion of the deduction must be already contained in the information carried by (the conjunction of) the premises. Logic and mathematics turn out to be utterly uninformative. Sequoiah-Grayson (2008) have shown that Hintikka's (1973) attempts to resolve this paradox (through the distinction between superficial and deep information) fail.

Floridi (2011) proposes to solve BCP and SOD through an alethic approach to information, that is, a theory of strongly semantic information (TSSI). Floridi's central thesis is that only an approach to information that connects information and truth solves the paradoxes and is closer to our intuitive understanding of information. Therefore, semantic information is defined as a set of well-formed, meaningful, and truthful data. This is the formal definition (Floridi 2011, 84):

σ (an infon) is an instance of semantic information if and only if:

1. σ consists of *n* data (*d*), for *n* ≥ 1;
2. the data are well-formed (*wfd*);
3. the *wfd* are meaningful;
4. the *d* are truthful.

It is important to briefly note two key aspects of Floridi's information theory from a philosophical point of view: (a) the lack of any reference to the concept of intentionality and, therefore, to the human subject; (b) the connection to the communication process, in which information is always something communicated, transmitted. The first aspect implies that information can also be generated, distributed, and stored by non-human agents. The second suggests a connection to media theory.

Now some brief clarification about the formal definition:

– "well-formed" means that the data are clustered together following the rules that govern the chosen system, code, or language being analyzed. Syntax here must be understood "broadly (not just linguistically), as what determines the form, construction, composition, or structuring of something" (Floridi 2011, 84);

– "meaningful" means that the data must comply with the meanings of the chosen system, code, or language in question. In this case, "let us not forget that semantic information is not necessarily linguistic. For example, in a map, the illustrations are such as to be visually meaningful to the reader" (Floridi 2011, 84). In other terms, "meaningful" means that the data must also be representative, that is, they must concern the object of the information, i.e., what the information is about.

– Floridi's formal definition establishes that factual semantic information *encapsulates truth*: Matthew is informed that milk contains calcium if and only if Matthew holds that milk contains calcium and it is true that it does. Floridi justifies this thesis through (a) the action-based semantic theory, which explains how data acquires meaning and interpretation, (b) the correctness theory of truth, which explains how well-formed and meaningful data may become truthful, and (c) the logic of being informed. The core of his strategy is the so-called "veridicality thesis," which can be summarized as follows: "the quantity of strongly semantic information in a proposition *p* is calculated in terms of the distance of *p* from a situation *z* (where situations are partial or incomplete worlds) that *p* is supposed to model" (Sequoiah-Grayson and Floridi 2022). From this point of view, false information and tautologies are not information (Scarantino and Piccinini [2010] criticized Floridi's argument that false information is not information).

It is important to briefly note two key aspects of Floridi's information theory from a philosophical point of view: (a) the lack of any reference to the concept of intentionality and, therefore, to the human subject; (b) the connection to the communication process, in which information is always something communicated, transmitted. The first aspect implies that information can also be generated, distributed, and stored by non-human agents. The second suggests a connection to media theory.

3. Quantum Mechanics and Semantic Information

The problem of measurement

Let us first try to give an elementary description of the problem of measurement (Carroll 2020, 26). The wave function in quantum mechanics evolves deterministically according to the Schrödinger equation as a linear superposition of several states. However, the actual measurement of it always finds the physical system in a defined state. Any future evolution of the wave function is based on the state in which the system is found when the measurement is made, which means that the measurement has changed the system and that this change is not obviously a consequence of evolution according to Schrödinger. The problem with measurement is describing what that change is, that is, how a superposition of many possible values becomes a single measured value. In other words (Weinberg 1998, 2005), the Schrödinger wave equation determines the wave function in the times following the measurement. If the observers and their measuring apparatus are themselves described by a deterministic wave function, why can we not predict the precise results of the measurements but only probabilities?

As Hagar (2003) explains, it can be said that at the core of the measurement problem lies the mutual inconsistency of the three following claims:

1) The wave function of a system is complete; the wave function specifies all the physical properties of a system.

2) The wave function always evolves in accordance with a linear dynamical equation (the Schrödinger equation).

3) Measurements of, for example, the spin of an electron always (or at least usually) have determinate outcomes, that is, at the end of the measurement, the measuring device is either in a state that indicates spin up (and not down) or spin down (and not up).

A caveat is necessary. There are many measurement techniques in QI (perfect measurements, erroneous measurements, measurements per-

turbed by the environment, etc.), and we cannot cover them all. Most devices capable of detecting a single particle and measuring its position strongly modify the particle's state in the measurement process; for example, photons are destroyed when striking a screen. Less dramatically, the measurement may simply perturb the particle in an unpredictable way; a second measurement, no matter how quickly after the first, is then not guaranteed to find the particle in the same location. A "quantum nondemolition measurement" can be used in which the uncertainty of the measured observable does not increase from its measured value during the subsequent normal evolution of the system (Yoshikawa et al. 2008). However, none of these measurement techniques avoid what physicists call "the collapse of the wave function," that is, the third statement.

Let us now examine two aspects of the measurement problem. The first concerns the status of the measurement itself. What does it mean to "measure" a quantum state? When and how do we apply Born's rule to extract probabilities? Now, a measurement is not just any interaction with a physical system, "but an interaction so designed as to yield information about *features the system had antecedently to the interaction*" (Maudlin 2019, 96). For example, when I measure my weight by climbing on a scale, I consider the measurement result to be something related to my pre-existing weight. Thus, when we measure the position of an electron on a screen, the measure (the sign that indicates its position) would suggest that the electron had that position *prior* to the measurement. However, this is exactly the problem: "We know by observation that a mark was created. We do not know by observation whether it corresponds to an antecedently existing position of the electron" (Maudlin 2019, 97). Born's rule can be used to calculate a probability for each outcome, but it does not specify how or when the mark was made on the phosphorescent screen.

The second problem concerns the "wave function collapse." In quantum mechanics, the collapse occurs when, during a measurement, a wave function – initially in a superposition of several states – is reduced to a single state due to interaction with the external world. There are many different interpretations of this phenomenon, but this is not the place to examine them (for more technical explanations, see Vermaas 1999, Chapters 10 and 14; Maudlin 2019, Chapter 4; Ney and Albert 2013). Our problem is that:

a) In quantum mechanics, the nature and effects of collapse are still poorly understood (Maudlin 2019, 75).

b) All information about the (probability) amplitudes "is destroyed upon measurement" (Grumbling and Horowitz 2019, 71). Measurement fundamentally disrupts a quantum state: "it 'collapses' the aspect of wave

function that was measured into a single observable state, resulting *in a loss of data*" (Grumbling and Horowitz 2019, 57; emphasis mine). In QI, we know the results of measurements, which are probability distributions on the system. However, we have no direct knowledge of the evolution of the process, just several possible interpretations. In other words, we deal with not observable, or noumenal, states of affairs (Vermaas 1999, 211) as a "thing known by the mind as against the senses." In other terms, in quantum mechanics, observations and measurements made on systems do not give immediate knowledge of those systems. We need an interpretation, that is, a model, to *infer* something about the state of a system from observations and measurements.

Now, if we examine some important QI textbooks (De Lima Marquezio et al. 2019; Hughes et al. 2021; Rieffel and Polak 2011; Kaye et al. 2007; Kurgalina and Borzunov 2021), the problem of measurement and collapse are only hinted at, or they are not dealt with at all. The measurement of the qubit is reduced to a mathematical formalism to be applied to the algorithmic process, but it does not pose a problem in itself. For example, Kaye et al. (2007, 55) state that "given a single instance of an unknown single-qubit state, there is no way to determine experimentally what state it is in; we cannot directly observe the quantum state. It is only the results of measurements that we can directly observe" and then introduce mathematical formalism to deal with the measurement.

The measurement does not imply anything mysterious. It shows us the probabilistic and indeterminate nature of quantum systems. In our case, we need to understand how the measurement problem impact on the veridicality thesis.

The veridicality thesis

According to Floridi, semantic information is characterized by the so-called "truth encapsulation." This point is justified through the correctness theory of truth, which explains how well-formed and meaningful data may become truthful. The veridicality thesis has also been subscribed to by Dretske (1981) and Graham (1999). This notion has been heavily criticized (Colburn 2000; Fetzer 2004; Piccinini and Scarantino 2010). I do not want to deepen the debate here – that is not the purpose of this paper. However, I believe that all these criticisms affect Floridi's thesis only to some extent so far. Just a brief consideration: Floridi does not speak of "semantic information" in general, but of "semantic information functional for epistemic purpose." This means two things: (a) obviously, there are propositions that may be false and informative, but which do not have an epistemic value; b) semantic information with

epistemic value is always an interface between an agent that processes data and models related to a system that were developed in order to understand that system better and better. The veridicality thesis is therefore based on three crucial factors: (a) the need to avoid the BCP, (b) the justification of the phenomenon of semantic erosion, and (c) the possibility of connecting information and knowledge. To invalidate the thesis, it is necessary to eliminate all of these factors, but the price to pay for doing so is very high (Floridi 2007).

My claim is that QI undermines the veridicality thesis and forces us to reformulate the theory of semantic information. The core of the veridicality thesis is the process of validation. Floridi (2011) explains this process through two key concepts: interaction and accessibility. Both presuppose one element: the informee, that is, the agent who seeks information. Floridi writes:

> The sort of accessibility at stake here is a matter of pragmatic or factual interaction, which provides an exogenous grounding of correctness. It is the one that we find specified in computer science, where accessibility refers to the actual permission to read (technically, sense and retrieve) and/or write (again, technically modify and record) data as a physical process. The result is that *a*'s proximal access to *m* commutes with *a*'s distal access to *s* if and only if *a* can read/write *s* by reading/writing *m*. (Floridi 2011, 197)

Validation, that is, the examination of correctness, takes place in two steps. First, the informee has immediate access (writes/reads, modifies) to the model and thus has remote access (writes/reads, modifies) to the system, and vice versa. By modifying the model, the informee modifies the system, just as by modifying the system, the model is modified. The scope is the increasing adequacy of the model to the system. Therefore, *x* is true semantic information if and only if it is fully verified and validated, that is, if and only if (a) it meets the criteria of the inquiry (the context, the level of abstraction, and the purpose), and (b) it is better than other models we can develop based on the data. In other words, the validation process implies the *traceability* of the constitution of data and information from the model to the system and from the system to the model.

In QI, the accessibility relationship fails. Floridi (2011, 196) explains the accessibility relationship through the concept of a "commutative diagram." In category theory, a commutative diagram is a diagram in which all directed paths with the same start and end points lead to the same result. In other words, the accessibility relationship to the model and the system is commutative. Proceeding from the model to the system is equivalent to proceeding from the system to the model. In QI, on the other hand, proceeding from the model to the system (i.e., measuring the qubit, then reading/writing data) is not the same as proceeding from the

system to the model. A commutative relationship is not possible because the measurement transforms the system – we cannot know the system regardless of the measurement. We can only go from the model to the system in the act of measuring. However, the measurement eliminates all the data on the evolution of the system before the measurement itself – it transforms the system. This situation does not arise when the information concerns a classical physical system.

Therefore, we face a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, QI gives us good semantic information functional for epistemic purposes. A quantum algorithm (e.g., Shor's algorithm, Grover's algorithm, etc.) allows us to solve very complex problems and gives us true and epistemically relevant information. On the other hand, the same algorithm does not allow a full validation of this information because of the lack of accessibility. We can go from the model to the system, but not from the system to the model. From an engineering point of view, this works great. From the point of view of semantic information theory, the traceability of data and processes is not possible.

In summary, *if* we define factual semantic information as a set of data that is (a) well-formed, (b) meaningful, and (c) truthful, *then* in QI we can only get (a) and (b), but we cannot get (c).

4. The Ethical Consequences of the Paradox

The measurement problem does not affect QI from a technical point of view; the results of the computation work, and this is enough from an engineering point of view. The measurement problem becomes instead a very serious obstacle on the ethical level because it makes processes opaque and prevents the justification of the behavior of a quantum algorithm. Transparency is not an "ethical principle in itself but a pro-ethical condition for enabling or impairing other ethical practices or principles" (Floridi and Turilli 2009, 105). Transparency and explainability are particularly important in QI. As is noted in the Australian strategy for the quantum revolution, "a precondition for the social debate about quantum technology is that all participants have a reasonable understanding of the technology and its implications" (Brennen et al. 2021, 10).

I draw on the concept of opacity from the AI literature:

> Opacity refers to the epistemic barrier between the engineer and its creation. The created systems will become so complex, and self-modifying (via machine learning) and the engineering teams are so big, that no single person can comprehend it fully. Hence, there is *a lack of visibility*, or there is

the presence of opacity in a sense from a human point of view. This is despite the fact that in the case of software, details are knowable down to the last bit. (Héder 2020, 3; emphasis mine)

Opacity in AI is an epistemic concept, not an ontological one, in the sense that it concerns the ability of engineers to know and explain the behavior of a system. The behavior is knowable in itself, except that the level of complexity is too high for a single person to fully analyze it. Factors contributing to the overall lack of algorithmic transparency include the cognitive impossibility of humans interpreting massive algorithmic models and datasets; a lack of appropriate tools to visualize and track large volumes of code and data; code and data that are so poorly structured that they are impossible to read; and ongoing updates and human influence over models (Tsamados et al. 2021). In the case of neural networks, humans know what AI is doing (for example, they know the code of the AI and know how it works in general), "but in another sense they don't know (they cannot explain a particular decision), with the result that people affected by the AI cannot be given precise information about what made the machine arrive at its prediction" (Coekelbergh 2021, 117). The impossibility of opening the "black box" is a practical and cognitive limit, that is, it is linked to the limits of human capabilities.

Now, Héder (2020) points to five main barriers to transparency in AI systems:

1. The emergent behavior of machines. (In the upper layer, at any point in the architecture, things happen that are within the boundaries set by the lower level but not entirely governed by them. The exact interplay of the two layers cannot be predicted.)

2. The embodiment effects (the issues that can arise from the material realization of an artifact and that cannot be predicted).

3. Material layer effects on hardware. (The effects of the dissipation of heat between the layers of the system, for example, can affect the whole performance of the system.)

4. Statistical knowledge (the environment's unpredictability + the probabilities generated from past experiences distilled from the training data).

5. Human factors (the unpredictable reactions of the humans, e.g., malevolent acts against the system, and the cognitive impossibilities).

Quantum computing amplifies all these opacity factors and thus makes it even more difficult to solve the problem of opacity and trust. What constitutes a good explanation in QI? What are the differences between explanations and reasons, and can machines provide any of these? Here

the risk is not only of manipulation and domination of the technology by capitalists or technocratic elites, creating a highly divided society – the so-called "quantum divide" (de Wolf 2017). The deeper risk that looms here is a high-tech society in which even those elites no longer know what they are doing, and in which nobody is accountable for what is happening in the system. If in AI the "black box" might be opened in theory (Coeckelbergh 2021, 120), in QI this possibility does not exist. If in AI the lack of transparency is a practical fact, *in QI it is an ontological fact*.

The measurement problem makes the traceability of the algorithm's behavior problematic, that is, the understanding of why a quantum algorithm decided in a particular way and not in another. This problem arises on three levels:

a) a technical level, that is, the impossibility, due to the measurement problem, of knowing directly and justifying the evolution and decisions of the quantum algorithm;

b) an interpretative level, that is, the difficulty of interpreting data and constructing semantic information; for example, see all the different interpretations of the collapse;

c) a communicative level, that is, the difficulty of communicating the why and how of the decisions of a quantum algorithm to an audience of non-experts, for example, politicians, entrepreneurs, or citizens, due to the general counter-intuitiveness of quantum mechanics.

Artificial intelligence ethics can provide some help in formulating design solutions suitable for QI. Making AI systems explainable and transparent is an important ethical principle (Watson and Floridi 2020; Gultchin et al. 2021). The explanation of a decision in AI must always be contextualized in such a way as to be adequate and protect the autonomy of the recipient of the explanation. Furthermore, explanation and communication in an AI system builds trust and fosters cooperation in the system. It has been shown that an increase in the complexity and opacity of a system corresponds to an increase in the de-responsibility of the human beings who use it (Floridi 2022, 184–186; Buchholz et al. 2020). This can easily lead to the spread of crimes. However, the explanation and communication must be established in correct terms. According to Wachter et al. (2017), they must concern (a) the functioning, (b) the logic used, (c) the reasons why a certain decision was made, and (d) the objective of the system. Nevertheless, it must also be remembered that transparency is not always the best choice; there could be very good reasons why AI system designers decide not to inform users of the goals or logic of their software (e.g., security reasons or the need to preserve the scientific value of a project). For this reason, it is essential for the design of an

AI system to assess what level of transparency (what type, for whom, and on what) the system intends to adopt in relation to its overall goal and the context of the implementation.

In QI, these tasks are even more essential. Designers must therefore provide rational and persuasive arguments in line with the general purpose of the system and suitable for the various types of stakeholders (customers, institutions, universities, companies, etc.). The internal communication of the system between the different components becomes essential. Furthermore, given the complex nature of quantum computational processes, the interpretation of the results acquires an even more decisive role. For these reasons, it is essential to involve physicists and philosophers of physics in the public debate on the social impact of quantum technologies together with stakeholders and other actors (Vermaas 2017). Designers should therefore create graphical interfaces capable of clarifying as much as possible the quality of the data used and the nature of the processes carried out in QI systems. In this case, data visualization (Rodighiero 2021) can play a key role. How to visualize QI is a great challenge. It is an essential condition for a transparent use of QI, and therefore also for the design of QI systems capable of transmitting and protecting values in relation to a specific social context.

5. Conclusions

The aim of this paper was not to increase the sense of strangeness around quantum theory and quantum technologies. As Carroll (2020) claims, and I agree with him, "quantum mechanics is unique among physical theories in drawing an apparent distinction between *what we see* and *what really is*" but "it isn't hopelessly mystical or inexplicable. It's just physics" (17). I think that there is a profound connection between the lack of clarity on the foundation of quantum mechanics and the difficulty of popularizing this theory.

In this paper I have provided several arguments demonstrating that the measurement problem in quantum theory makes a semantic information theory for QI more challenging – not impossible.

As I claimed, the problem of the construction of semantic information in quantum technologies is not simply a theoretical problem. It also directly affects how we attribute meaning to quantum technologies and thus the expectations and fears associated with them. Perhaps there is a connection between the opacity of quantum technologies and the absence of great narratives about them. The emergence of quantum technologies is not accompanied, at first glance, by the development of powerful narratives such as those we have seen for AI or nanotechnologies

(Grunwald 2014). From this point of view, quantum technologies pose a hermeneutic problem, that is, the hermeneutic appropriation of quantum technologies.

The difficulty of building a quantum semantic information theory also has an impact on software engineering, that is, the development of suitable software for quantum computer. In fact, software is not just a set of algorithms. Software is primarily a translation process. Software translates a problem and a solution to that problem from the plane of human understanding to that of the machine. Our computers can accomplish certain tasks because we have succeeded in translating the way of accomplishing those tasks into binary strings understandable to a Turing machine (Possati 2022). A semantic information theory is essential in this undertaking.

There are two limitations to my thesis. The first concerns the information theory model to which I have referred, namely Floridi's philosophy of information. There are obviously other models, and they could give different results. However, I believe that Floridi's model is a good model that is useful for identifying and analyzing a problem. The second limitation relates to the purpose of this paper. Highlighting the measurement problem in quantum mechanics and its impact on QI does not mean that I want to emphasize the enigmatic nature of quantum phenomena and so compromise the public debate. I think that if we want to develop the public debate on quantum technologies, we do need to make these technologies more transparent, and to do so, we need to identify the problems that prevent this transparency on ethical levels. For this reason, physicists and philosophers of physics are an essential part of this endeavor.

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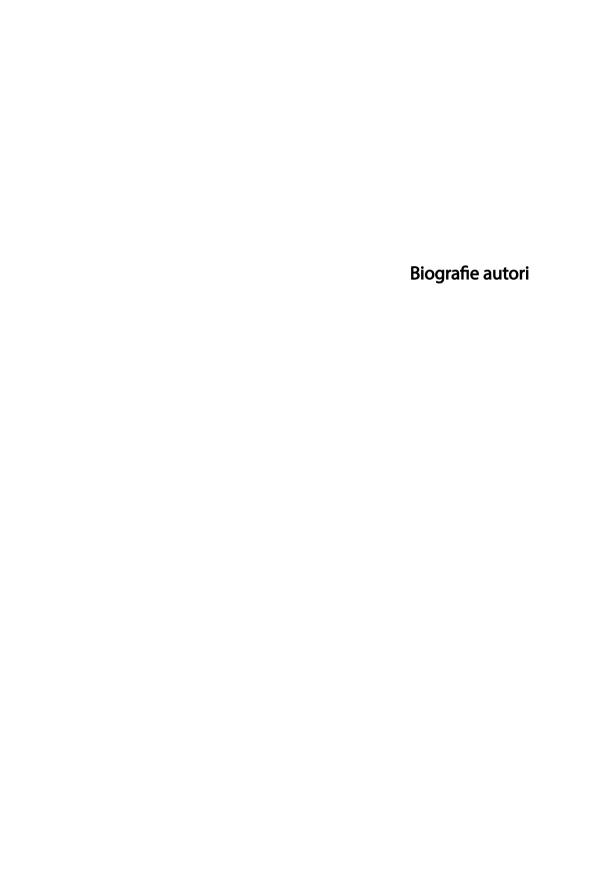
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The Paradox of Quantum Information and Its Ethical Consequences

This paper explores the impact of the measurement problem in quantum mechanics on quantum information theory. It intends to see whether Floridi's theory of information can be appropriately extended or adapted to the quantum domain. The claim is that it doesn't seem possible for Floridi's theory to be applied to quantum systems because it requires a process of validation whose requirements are incompatible with quantum mechanics. The second section of the paper analyzes the notion of semantic information through the lens of Floridi's theory of semantic information. The third section examines the problem of semantic information in quantum computing. This section is divided into two parts. The first gives an elementary description of the measurement problem. The second part shows how in the quantum field the veridicality thesis, that is, the core of Floridi's approach, fails. The fourth section investigates the ethical consequences of this thesis. These consequences mainly concern the opacity of quantum algorithms, that is, their lack of transparency and the difficulty of explaining and justifying their decisions.

KEYWORDS: *information, quantum technologies, uncertainty, semantic*

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