

THE TROUBLE WITH THE OTHER

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We are aware of a special ability of the mind to regard a small fraction of reality as reality and to understand the rest as a sort of residue. What we shall try to show in this paper is not merely a close relationship between thinking and pleasure (or even between pleasure and the demand of autonomy (independence)). We shall try to reveal several visible and less visible forms of appropriation of the other, which is ignored and drowned by the preclusive intents of theoretical or practical subjects, by the assimilating light of the idea, and simultaneously to outline the mode of how to “reply” to the demand of the other, which has become a never-ending challenge to human thought. Real heteronomy breaks the dialectics of pleasure. It seemingly leads to autonomy, which does not graduate power and the rule of the subject but it means his rediscovery in humility.

Gravitational field

The story goes that even the master of irony Voltaire was taken by surprise by a lady’s statement that all things about which humans can know nothing at all are definitely such that if they knew something about them it would be without any effect. In other words, everything important is known to us. Paraphrasing an Irish bishop from Cloyne I would say: to be (important) means to be known. But how does a thing become to be known? And how is the unknown able to assert itself under unequal conditions in the world of all the known things? We are aware of a special ability of the mind to regard a small fraction of reality as reality and to understand the rest as a sort of residue. This island, the field of vision, in which it moves, small as it may be, will always be large enough for the endogamous mind, because it will belong to it. It will try to assimilate also what is beyond the horizon of the seen with the help of the concept. However, it will still act as if it knew what it speaks about. You can understand it as a purely metaphysical flight of fancy, which can be shown to be nonsense by logical analysis, but it is not enough in our case. It is because behind egocentrism in theory there survives a much deeper-rooted egoism in practice. We could even speak about a special type of hedonism, a sort of “hedonism of the mind”: of course if we are willing to admit that our thought can be, although invisibly and without reflection, motivated by an unexpressed desire.

We used the expression “hedonism of the mind”. Hedonism was mostly

associated with the pleasures of the body, which is peculiar, because one of its chief herald, Epicurus, did not regard bodily pleasure as the highest pleasure. Rather the other way round: only a wise human observing the principle of *symmetresis* can achieve real pleasure—"pleasure in peace" that is the blessed state of mind. Does not the etymology of the word *eudaimonia* indicate that pleasure is primarily the state of good mind? Deep-rooted human fear of death, about which Epicurus writes in his Letter to Menoeceus, is after all also the matter of the mental state and can be removed by a suitable therapy (although the value of Epicurus's philosophical argument would be for a dying person, in the same way as Hegel's "The Phenomenology of Spirit" is for a deeply desperate person). In any case, what we shall try to show later, is not merely a close relationship between thinking and pleasure (or even between pleasure and the demand of autonomy (independence)). We shall try to reveal several visible and less visible forms of appropriation of the other, which is ignored and drowned by the preclusive intents of theoretical or practical subjects, by the assimilating light of the idea, and simultaneously to outline the mode of how to "reply" to the demand of the other, which has become a never-ending challenge to human thought.

A parable

In a dark fragment assigned to Heraclitus it is written: "The waking have one and common world but the sleeping turn aside each into a world of his own." (Herakleitos 1993, B 89). How should we understand these words?

The person being awake is primarily the one who turns away from one's "own", from the comfortable world—image, the world unable to resist: the person being awake is the one who has woken from his/her dreams. Such an awakening is not pleasant or simple; we all know the dislike and aversion to getting up in the morning. Why is the awakening difficult? More precisely, why is dreaming so pleasant? Firstly, dreaming is amazingly comfortable and simple; it is not difficult to succumb to the alluring power of sleep. Dreaming does not mean here only dream in the common sense of the term: the morning awakening is replaced by a new sleep after a relatively short time. (Let us imagine a shadow or an image of the tree reflected on the water surface in the context of Plato's famous parables; it is in fact a "shadow of a shadow", an image of an image.) The symbol used by Heraclitus should point to *real awakening*; awakening which will not be affected by "the circulation of sleeping and being awake". This type of thought can, however, raise real doubts: do not metaphors and parables based on binary oppositions become problematic when the root of their dualistic assumptions is broken, or, as in our case, when the origin of the metaphor itself becomes questionable? Plato wrote his parable of the "cave" and Heraclitus's person "being awake" slept. Is not the metaphor that should cross the border of the "own", the border of the image, woven from the same light as image, which it denies? Would such a conviction mean the breakup with every thought revitalizing the "remembrance" or the idea of the real? More precisely: does not the

thinking create simulacrum, declaring as unreal something only to save the vision of the real? We are convinced of that or not?

“For those who are awake, the world is one and common”. In Heraclitus’s speech the word “common” occurs several times in connection with consciousness, law, and naturally with speech. Speech is a way to the common exceeding own limitation; it is an “opening up to the whole”. In other words: Heraclitus’ *logos* is *xynon logos*, common speech. It seems that he was looking for such a common speech among Ephesian fellow-citizens, too much concentrated on their own interests.

Much has changed since those times. Today, at the time of the growing inflation of images and signs, hardly anything sounds so naive as talk about “common” or even “universal speech”. Less is spoken about “the divine origin of language” (Cratylus) and more about “the manipulation through words”; less about “the natural light of reason”, and more about the “possible infections and diseases of reason”; less about “the one and common world”, more about “many and different worlds—stories”.

In philosophy (at least in philosophy, which has not yet given up the legendary *care for reality*) the above-mentioned distrust became a sign of increased sensitivity to the demand of the other—the other, whose resistance vanishes in the assimilating light of the idea (theory) and practice, which is eliminated far beyond the border of the gravitational field of the mind centred around the principle of comfort and pleasure. What happens with the thought, in which suddenly *horror alieni* breaks out, will be discussed later.

Lucy in the land of Narnia

In the work of fiction “The Chronicles of Narnia”¹ by C. S. Lewis (1950) he tells the story of Lucy, the youngest of four children visiting the large, eccentric home of an elderly professor; she passes through the back of a clothes closet into another land called Narnia. When Lucy returns and tells her brothers and sister about her experiences, they conclude that her senses had to have been mysteriously deluded. The children finally bring the matter before an authority, the professor himself. His decision is that that Lucy must be telling the truth because she is not known to be a liar. Lucy’s brother Peter protests. He argues that the other children did not find the land of Narnia behind the back of the wardrobe.

‘What’s that got to do with it?’ the professor asks as if Peter’s argument had no weight. ‘Well, Sir, if things are real, they are there all the time.’

¹ C.S. Lewis belongs, together with J.R.R. Tolkien to the most read English authors of the genre of fantasy; his stories from Narnia—the land of magic—were published between 1950 and 1956. They have found thousands of truthful readers (not only among younger generation). The story of Peter, Edmund, Susan, and Lucy (in the novel *Magician’s Nephew*, *The Chronicles of Narnia VI Digory and Polly* also appeared) is one of many stories in the seven-volume cycle of the *Chronicles of Narnia*. The story mentioned above is from the book *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

‘Are they?’ ‘But do you really mean, Sir,’ demands Peter, ‘that there could be other worlds—all over the place, just around the corner—like that?’
‘Nothing is more probable,’ the professor replies.

Lewis’ story is a very good example of a modern fairy tale (among other things). The other does not lie in the fictional plot but rather in its denouement form. What is this form?

Lucy’s magic step creates an impression of crossing the border but both worlds in the author’s story are part of the world, in which the story is narrated. It means that the idea runs into the border of the other and helps itself by similes, which should mediate “the other”. However, is there any other possibility?

If we concentrate merely on the content (which is usually decisive in the stories of this kind) we can only guess whether there would be more knowledgeable professors who would be on Lucy’s side.

It is true that in modern physics the idea of infinite possible worlds is more prevalent than any time in the past but we shall take interest in something else than the quantum Narnia. The other actually does not announce itself from behind the physical frontier; not even from behind the boundaries drafted by our physiological perception...there are insects, which are born in the night, grow up and reproduce themselves and even die; they never survive until morning dying before the dawn. Is the world during daytime Narnia for such an animal? There are similar types of boundaries which a small ant moving on my leg, from one toe to another, is not able to cross (I suppose) not realizing that it moves on the part of a much greater being, who writes an article about metaphysics and thinks that its experience with the world is richer and more comprehensive.

We could and should see ourselves in a similar situation, although such an idea usually creates a problem of everything, it gives an illustrative lesson of our proud ego and teaches us a lesson of humbleness.

Naturally, there is no sense in asking what is it like “to be an ant”. The reflection of the boundaries of our natural world is more problematic, that is, that although we realize these boundaries, we do not cross them in any way: the idea or the concept of the other does not belong to the space ‘beyond’ the boundary, which it demarcates. Or is it so?

This fate seems to have accompanied philosophy for a long time. Was it not the desire of philosophy to cross the border of the “own” from time immemorial? Let us recall Plato’s famous parable or Heraclitus’s fragment about “the sleeping who turns aside each into a world of his own” (Herakletios 1993, B89).

Has metaphor the power (particularly if by transferring the meaning it uses components of what it denies or presents as unreal) to cross the magic border of “the cave”? It seems difficult for our metaphors to take the clothes of the world off.

Let us take a close look at the matter (we can use a simpler metaphor, for example *metaphor of light*).

It is known that the metaphor of light is one of the most popular philosophical metaphors and also one of the most problematic. We know that there is not only light and dark, similarly as there is not only day and night: there is also twilight, dusk, dawn, eclipse, etc. and if we compare them with the state of our consciousness, we

obtain a whole spectrum of the weather of our consciousness. Light has apparently symbolized knowledge “from time immemorial”, while dark symbolized ignorance, oblivion. *Light as a symbol* could have contained physical light and dark, day and night, similarly as *darkness—symbol* also the clearest “physical day”. This is why the metaphor of light is both mysterious and problematic. Its content is woven from the experiences of the physical light and darkness, day and night, and it also looks as if being “independent” of this experience. This is one of the important features of the metaphor and it is reasonable and certainly also polite to presume that even such masters of philosophical metaphors as Heraclitus, Plato, Shankara or Ramanuja had also realized it. *Plato’s parable was written “in the cave” and Heraclitus’s “sleeping man” was awake. Lucy’s magic step creates an impression of crossing the border, but both worlds in the author’s story are part of the world, in which the author tells his story.*

Heraclitus’s “sleeping man turns aside into a world of his own, he does not turn to the common” (Herakleitos 1993, B 89). One of the popular interpretations of the famous fragment is: the sleeping does not realize what is happening to him when sleeping, but he knows what he dreams of, although—and this is the problem—he does not know that his “dreamt reality” is “only” a dream. On the other hand, a man who could have watched him thereby would not have been in his dream, he would not have known what he dreamed about but he would have known what is happening to his body when sleeping (ibid., 20–21).

In order to declare one state to be “reality” and the second one “appearance” (which, in this case was not the author’s intention), it is necessary to build the bottom of dualistic assumptions or distract attention from the origin of the metaphor itself.

However, there is not only the substance and the shadow, original and copy; there is also a copy of the copy. The mimetic relationship between *cosmos noétos* and *kosmos aisthétos* exists in the form of fractals, shadows, and reflections in the world of shadows itself. *Mimésis* is seemingly a popular game of gods and humans. If a tree on the lakeside is an image of the eternal idea of tree, then the shadow on the surface of the water is the shadow of the shadow, the image of image. Maybe the word shadow is not the proper word. However, everyone will understand that the destruction of a simple dualistic scheme will not contribute to the popularity of Plato’s metaphors. Many “postmodern” philosophers would be able to talk, with the irony typical of them, of how fiction of the real can be revived by something which is declared as its opposite; the concept of “illusion” ultimately revivifies the concept of “real”. The madhouse could (should) promote a belief that the world behind the madhouse is normal (or, eventually to hide the opposite), similarly as jails (the place for non-free persons) can promote an impression that the world behind the prison door is free, or to conceal the fact that the whole social reality is as in jail. In the movie of the famous Wachowski brothers *The Matrix*, a mysterious man Morpheus welcomes Neo, a young hopeful candidate for saving the world: “Welcome to the desert of the real” (reality is here something that is *covered up* by the virtual world, named by the authors of the movie *MATRIX*). But the *MATRIX*—declared as unreal—ultimately revives the idea of the real. Who could suspect that the concept of “virtual reality almost indistinguishable from reality itself” would finally turn against the aims of its creators themselves?

The same principle which casts suspicion on Morpheus's words "Welcome to the desert of the real" casts a shadow on Plato's world "beyond the cave" and, after all, also on every parable based on binary oppositions, so much human. There is not only an original and a copy... there is also a copy of a copy. Metaphors and parables based on binary oppositions (for example the metaphor of light or the metaphor of shadow) become problematic particularly when the bottom of their dualistic assumptions is broken or when the origin of the metaphor itself becomes questionable: Plato wrote his parables in the cave and Heraclitus's "sleeping man" was awake; does it mean the breakup with each thought revivifying the "reminiscence" or the idea of the real?

Plato's great question was: what is it that really is (*to ontos on*)? But how is such a question possible at all? What should philosophy be grateful to for this question, which begins, as L. Kolakowski said, the entire *horror metaphysicus* (Kolakowski 1999, 28)? Let us say that the question has its origin in our ontological sensitivity—in what some philosophers name "care for reality". But the concept of "reality" is not so obvious as it seems at first sight. It requires experience with illusion, appearance, dream, etc. It needs a sort of a possibility to compare, gradate something along the same lines as E. Fink's "ontological comparative".

The chapters from the history of philosophy offer a wide range of answers to Plato's question. Once there was even a tendency to concede a purely epistemological status to illusion or the delusive veil of *maya*; there remained no place for it in the world because it was basically identified with "objective reality", with something which "is so-and-so regardless of what we ourselves are like". (It seems that perception of reality as facticity, moreover theoretically accessible facticity—something that is always at hand and in this sense a passive and neutral object—similarly as a book on the shelf that can be opened and read any time [the point is not the possible change of "the text of reality" but rather the metaphor of "reading the world"]—it is a very good safety packing of the idea that reality [because it is deprived of the subjective dimension] can be known regardless of the fact of what we are like ourselves. The vision of reality that cannot resist ruthless greedy efforts of human hunters of truth, which has no real depth because it is "merely" an object and there is nothing else to be done than to be caught in the "nets of our theories", is as old as the myth of objective reality accompanying European philosophy for a long time. The point is not that there always can slip a sort of plankton of uncertainty or incalculability through the net but rather an entirely uncritical presupposition of neutrality and "passivity" of the theoretically accessible object which even some last-century philosophical schools were not able to give up. Therefore we should not be surprised that the "hunters of reality" take away trophies in the form of dead theories.)²

² It is not the incapability to penetrate under the surface of appearance, not the imperfection of the theoretical (cognitive) or practical subject that hinders objectification of reality and/or its reduction to facticity (objective reality). Impossibility is not primarily the inability of the cognitive subject, it does not point to the imperfection of my vision; contrariwise —and this is in this case substantial—it points to the possibility of the other, to his power to establish the limits to insurmountable limits to my objectification. Neither a theoretical nor practical approach to the

Game?

There are hardly any concepts today as popular with the philosophical public as the concept of *game*. It enjoyed it's a renaissance probably thanks to the relieved aesthetic attitude to life of postmodern *homo aestheticus*. It is well known that the game is the opposite of the theoretical attitude facing the contradictions of the phenomenon and the essence frees of seriousness and facticity of the world. In the liberating perception of the world as a game, the boundaries are wiped, roles are relativized, the world and life "become" one large metaphor (Fink 1993, 253–255).

What actually should the understanding of the world as a game free us of? It is known that being absorbed in games, humans are taken beyond the boundaries of "ordinariness" far beyond the onerous severity of the world and thanks to it, they can "forget the world for some time at least".

But we do not have to go far to look for the answer to our question: is not the fact that our activities in the natural world are sovereign, that we live in the world of moods, desires and relationships, that we discriminate between love and hatred, meeting and parting, all this with the awareness that our natural world is allegedly only the *superficial* world and with respect to the "real" one (taught in modern natural science—the world of subatomic entities—particles "and" waves) interpreted through senses and emotions of the mind, is it not a component of a metaphor, an expression of a game symbolism? It seems as if the aesthetic view, not looking at the content and the subject matter of action and focusing on the "pure form", idea, shape, was able to transcend the material by its placing in the sense of the whole, image, archetype, story, etc.

Does not remain, however, after such a game negation, anything not listened to, anything too easily "overcome"...the sense of which consists in casting doubt on each aesthetic "abstraction"?

Is not there a danger that the aesthetics of natural world will lead in game ecstasy to the exchange of the image and substance (in the Platonic sense of the word), particularly if it denies the mentioned duality by declaring it to be an act of hypostasis?

We enjoy the lightness of the eidetic world but we do not want to desert our private caves. We are closer to Plato's great pupil because we do not believe in caves in which we would be able to live so long and comfortably (Porfyrios 1993). Or do we?

In the interpretation of "The Cave of the Nymphs" (ibid., 28) interwoven with

world in that sense is without presuppositions and both can be equally efficient forms of the appropriation of the other. They can be "efficient" only when they "eliminate from reality" its subjective dimension, the real depth inaccessible to endogamous vision (the vision simulating the knowledge of the other). Both approaches are based on the concept of the matter as something "for us" or "at hand": for the first one, the world is something that cannot resist the greedy efforts of truth hunters in the light of reason (experience); for the second one it is a set of instruments for achieving satisfaction and pleasure. Optimism of both theoretical and practical attitudes to the world is disturbed by the concept of reality as a non-neutral, of one's own value and subjective dimension not deprived being.

allegories, Porphyry pays particular attention to the following verses:

High at the head of a branching olive grows,
and crowns the pointed cliffs with shady boughs,
a cavern pleasant, though involved in night,
beneath it lies, the Naiades delight.

The words “a cavern pleasant, though involved in night” have a special meaning. “The cave was usually called pleasant for those approaching it because of its form from the outside, but for those who entered, it was obscure. It is pleasant from the outside, but it is obscure inside.” (ibid.)

The dual image which attracted one of the greatest Platonists of ancient times should in our thinking point to the special relationship between aesthetics of the form and the physics of matter. Some could object that the parables of similar type only revive artificial dualisms. But the idea of interweaving worlds, incidence or penetration of the eidetic forms in material conditions, should point to the questionable moment of the “too easy” aesthetic negation of the matter.

In favour of an undisturbed aesthetic experience of the world as a game we abstract invisibly from its *physis*, from its material conditions, the sense of which is to cast a shadow of doubt on the “aesthetic abstraction”. “In our efforts to overcome this contradiction, we let the imagination do what it will with sense objects.” (Swami 1996, 70)³ As mentioned before, the form as phenomenon is something that

³ In the Vedic philosophical tradition the aforementioned motive is known as a conflict between intention (wish) of the mind and the material conditions of its fulfilment. *Durāśayā ye bahir-artha-māninah?* (Śrīmad Bhāgavatam 7.5.31). The process of perception is an intense experience (pleasure) of senses (including the mind as the sixth sense). The perception saturates our senses with various sense qualities (taste, touch, shape, smell, sound) and our perception is therefore naturally biased. We are too much tied to sense objects—even to such an extent that in the case of disproportion between intention and real conditions we bring consistent solutions about how to do away with (resolved) problems we are facing in the optic field (which hinder our perfect pleasure). Is it not just here where the role of imagination (fantasy), thought following the way of lower resistance consist in? The thought in which gaps and disproportions are invisibly covered by vision? *This invisible covering of resistance, aesthetization operating as anesthesia, takes place as adaptation to the object of our intentions.* It can have two forms: virtual (the principle of cognitive dissonance) or physical (when not only image is adapted to our intention, but also the thing itself (and thus at last vision cannot be distinguished from “reality” because reality itself has become an embodied vision)). At the virtual level, it is mostly incurable romantics and dreamers who become victims of cognitive assimilation (in contrast to “sober realists who do not have any illusions”). But even sober realists need an adequate mental environment for their unperturbed pleasure to support their intention cognitively, i.e. to create an appearance of natural and unproblematic state—usually by interrupting the contact with the surroundings, shutting their ears, shutting themselves off, drowning out the voice of conscience by the strength of their intentions... Following the way of lower resistance, humans create a mental environment harmonized with their intentions and seek a community—i.e. the mental environment already created—where they find support for their intentions. As soon as an objection occurs in our mental environment (created to support the dominant intention) trying to cast doubt on it, it is immediately silenced by the stronger intention. If nothing is able to face the convincing strength of conscience by autosuggestion and fantasy,

transcends the psycho-physical dualism and we live in the world of forms (it does not mean, however, that the form is a “mere” phenomenon something that is uncovered, “embraced with light”, and therefore finite! (Fink 1996, 137); the form is also the essence of appearance, it is not the content but the boundary, the face of the world: it passes through its surface, but it is something different than what could be captured by a superficial view!)

However, the aesthetics of the form will not avoid the effect of the physics of matter! The limits which should be denied through the game bear on the aesthetic genius when the existence ceases to be a game and starts to be a “harsh reality”. The suffering of an actor or a literary character can unexpectedly dramatize the story of a film or a novel and to offer a special kind of aesthetic experience to the viewer (reader). It is questionable whether a Jewish family in Auschwitz or the wounded during the earthquake in Turkey would have it. This is why we can think that every attempt to give an account of or even to apologize for suffering by means of aesthetic interpretation is immediately drowned out by its *physical presence* and, as such, a priori sentenced to failure. Unfortunately, instead of understanding the actual reason of this disproportion, we try to bridge that gap with the help of our incapable friend, the imagination. In this way the mind manufactures many ideas and technics to solve problems encountered in the field of sense perception. This is what “anaesthesiology of enjoyment” actually means. The pertinacity of the anaesthetical, however, is much stronger: it casts a shadow on the reliable country of the day concealing the lurking threats of the night, the country with its gardens of pleasure rarely visited by *horror alieni*. But this country is just a deceptive appearance, the world on the surface... as a city full of tempting attractions, business centres, billboards, parks and gardens with the river of human dirt and waste flowing in the close though unnoticed vicinity under their surface... everything that separated, collected and concentrated far behind the gates of the city. It seems that the superficial beauty is possible only as a separate household of truth and beauty—beauty at a cost of necessary concealing what necessarily belongs to it as the other side of the coin... as an awareness of death

“supporting” substances blunting sensitivity (as alcohol, psychoactive substances, etc.) are set. In connection with the sanskrit verse (*durāśayā ye bahir-artha-māninaḥ?*) we could speak about a conflict between the demands of possessing and the pleasure of sense objects (aesthetic element) and inability to fully possess and use such objects, i.e. without the suffering of the material existence of the own (material element). As Suhotra Swami writes in *Substance and Shadow* “In our efforts to overcome this contradiction, we let the imagination do what it will with sense objects” (ibid.). In favour of the unperturbed aesthetic experience of the world as a game, we abstract invisibly from its *fysis*, from its material conditions, the sense of which is to cast a shadow of suspicion on the aesthetic form. In connection with the fantasy dimension of our perception and thinking we could speak about the meaning of imagination in scientific theory. One of the examples is the measurement and categorization of material nature. Material nature (*prakṛti*) is *mahat* (*mahat=tattva*) in Vedic philosophy, with respect to unmeasurability. “As a means to limit nature, to render it manipulable, measurement is central to the empirical method. Its systematic attempt to define nature in terms of human duality: big/small, hot/cold, heavy/light, bright/dark, positive/negative... Such measurements are analogies of mind imposed upon matter”. (ibid.)

or too big suffering (small could still be coped with⁴), which visits the oases of comfortable world-image from time to time not to let the beings with short memories sleep... and forget.

Preestablished disharmony

It is well known that the suffering can emerge as a positive precondition of anamnesis, as a challenge coming without notice: it crosses our paths and thwarts our plans as a gate-crasher, an event that takes us by surprise, a sudden inhospitableness of the world, time alone... *A reliable world, in which we settled comfortably, has to be convicted of unreliability: it has to suffer a shock, an earthquake after which nothing remains as before.*

When Leibniz wrote his *Theodicy* to defend the best of all possible worlds, he was undoubtedly inspired by the concept of creation as something *a priori* good. It is known that one of the pillars of theological cosmodicy in the Jewish-Christian tradition was (and still is) the known part of the Old Testament: "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good." (Gen.1.31) Very good in what sense? In *A History of Christianity*, Paul Johnson speaks about the Christian interpretation of this place in *Genesis* as of the "*enlightened self-interest*", the self-interest meaning the "long-term and prudent pursuit of happiness". But our understanding of the expression *very good* as "very good for us", "for our sensual pleasure" need not be so good. In the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (3.5.31), one of the Indian classics, Rṣi Maitreya says: *taijasānīndriyāny eva jñāna-karma-mayāni ca...* philosophical speculation motivated by sense enjoyment is passionate, because the senses are products of the mode passion. In other words, the definition of a good world as good for our sense gratification is not good.

Maybe it is time to think about the pre-established *disharmony*; but not as something lacking or a mistake of the programmeme but as about the positive condition of anamnesis, about not being able to settle and forget.⁵ This is the reason for the sudden inhospitableness of the world: *media in vita in morte sumus*. We could

⁴ What I have in mind is suffering, which could not simply be incorporated into the dialectics of pleasure and torment and would not fit in the dialectic scenario of the lack of saturation... suffering which could not be "managed", and therefore, would hinder reason to settle in a world-vision, from which he could later make trips to the surroundings and to assimilate and adapt it then to the self-image... I mean suffering, which would provoke to the road from the stereotype of pleasure and hardship, from the circulation of *samsara*, from the Heraclitean world of dualities.

⁵ Can the stereotype of pains and the growing immunity (loss of sensitivity) to its different forms lead to a complete elimination of the meaning of disproportion? I don't think it is possible. I am sure that no generation of genetic architects and no ideology of entertainment drowning out the hostility of the world by noisy TV shows, will succeed in detracting from the importance of this question. The presence of suffering and death does not challenge to suppression—whether physical (by palliative treatment, genetic interventions, etc.) or mental (by inducing the pleasant state of mind, virtual travelling or by psychedelics). Humans can try to hide its presence—it is in their power). *I do not cover the body with a medical sheet, a wound with a bandage, the face with a face pack, etc. to forget. Contrariwise: I usually forget when I have nothing to hide.*

even ask whether death cannot be deprived of the menacing mask if we “understand” it in the light of economy or the axiology of time as its true messenger, as a value giver (a boundary situation forcing us to consider, to differentiate between the valuable and the less valuable)... If there were no time, there would be a lot of time for everything. The experience—that “there is never time to spare”, that “time will not wait”, that I am permanently challenged to what Socrates used to call *paideia* (concern about the soul) or medieval scholars *vita sub specie aeternitatis* —reveals an entirely unique dimension of time and death, which is equally important as that representing their destructive character. The commandment “You shall not kill” is also related to time. Does this intention not ultimately express the essence of the first aphorism of *Vedanta*: *athato brahma jijnasa*? *Athato* means “now”, “in this human form of life”. In other words: (now) it is time to ask what is Brahman, the Absolute Truth. The necessity of answering these types of questions is a special sign of Vedic anthropology: a human is a being able to raise important questions (*brahma-jijnasa*). Human civilization begins where these types of questions emerge. The capability assumes the character of concern more urgently, the more it realizes the uniqueness (ephemerality) of its stay in the human life form, the challenge to responsibility for what it means to be a human being.

In order to give an example where the embodiment of this timeless motive was best visible, we can examine the story of the king Parikṣit who had appeared first in one of the greatest Vedic epics—in *Srīmad Bhāgavatam*. Not only the form but also the plot itself and the sense of this unique text have many elements of dialogue.

Once upon a time, at the time of famous Vedic wise men, there was a great, virtuous King Maharaja Parikṣit, who one day unintentionally offended Brahman Śamika Risi. Brahman’s son, the witness of the event, put a curse on the king who should have been killed by a snakebite on the seventh day. When the King heard about the curse, he was filled with sorrow at first, but later he accepted it as a merciful act... he entrusted his royal duties to his sons and went to the bank of the Ganges to fast till death and surrendered himself to the Lord’s lotus feet. Many saints and wise men came to support the King, among them also the famous son of Vyasadeva, Śukadeva Goswami. When the King saw him in an assembly, he bowed and addressed him: “My dear sir, I humbly beg to ask you about my duties at this moment. I am just on the verge of death. Therefore, what should I do at this critical hour? Please tell me, my lord, what should I hear, what should I worship, or whom should I remember now?”

The conversation between the King Parikṣit and Śukadeva Goswami about significant questions—from the nature of the self to the origin of the universe lasted seven days and kept the attention of the present saints and kings. For the King Parikṣit, the conversation was not just the way out of need; he could have also gone to the bank of the Ganges to meditate or write a philosophical essay (although he had not much time). In spite of that he preferred a dialogue with a self-realized person; last thought meant to him *to hear* (*Bhagavad-gītā* 4.34). This essential motive of the Vedic method of knowledge differs radically from the demand of independent thought which accompanies European philosophy from its “birth”. It would be naïve to think that it brought a “gray wind of doubt”. Its epochal work was exclusively an event which separated the myth from philosophy forever and promoted concern

about seeking truth to the concern about its preservation (Patočka 1990), a concern characterized by inertia and the will to unchangeability—a special sign of archaic ontology based on archetype and repetition (M. Eliade). What is exactly “the will to unchangeability” according to the aforementioned Czech phenomenologist? Let us use an example: just as an adolescent man can avoid a complicated new life challenge by retreating to the safety of infantilism, the anonymity of childhood, a prehistoric person can escape to the “proven” modest rhythm of everyday life bound to the self, to the life of a priori given and accepted meaning (ibid., 73).

However, what does the prehistoric world of “the given and accepted sense”, “the world before discovery of problematization” mean (ibid., 30)? We know that problems and visions of uncertainty in our life emerge now and then and do not afflict us after the crucial break Patočka has on mind: “Humans put all this at stake on their new pathway” (ibid., 42).

The prehistoric world is allegedly “the most concrete life, bearing in mind nothing else than to live (as a goal)” (ibid., 31). The author’s certainty and conviction in drafting the image of the world with fragmentary pictures preserved in ancient epics is remarkable. “The prehistoric world”, “the world before discovering problematization” is as a country illuminated with the sun, the intense light making possible appearance of things, but simultaneously hindering the outlook on what the appearance enables. There remained something hidden from us.

Nature (non-problematization) means that we confine ourselves to what appears to us, to our daily existence. And the other way round: a principal step towards history and “the birth of philosophy” means to shake the small, although “reliable” sense and to get to the very border between day and night and to stay there; to face uncertainty and necessity to understand life not from the perspective of the day, from the point of view of life bound to itself, naïve physical necessity to exist, but from the perspective of night, or, as Patočka puts it: the issue of history is not what can be disproved or what can be shaken but *concern about the shaking* (ibid., 58).

With this new perspective, people throughout history had to learn how to live. In some periods and chiefly in the worried minds of philosophers, this perspective became a hobby, even deviation, and acquired the best reputation in “the history of western philosophy”. Thus Socrates becomes persona non grata, a witness of the unnoticed night casting a shadow on the reliable country of the day. It does not mean, however, that the concept of “myth” must necessarily be construed here as “the prehistoric (=mythical) age of humankind”, “the world before the birth of philosophy”. Do we really think that the so-called mythical or prehistoric human was deprived of a Socratic question or doubt? Is not the culturally embedded assumption of linearly or progressivistic concept of time one of the reasons for such a conviction?

As for the aforementioned doubt: yes, it can cause a shock; but its consequences may be different. The path taken by the “founders of European philosophy”, philosophers-archaeologists, meant the breaking-up from the myth as one type of thought, unacceptable from a particular point of view (not non-thinking or ignorance). Cannot the above-mentioned move become estranged from its aim if assumptions that keep it alive—the principle of autonomy itself—are exempt from the list of suspects?

An independent search for truth, the thought deaf to all revelations and traditions (even if, paradoxically enough, growing out of them), this—whether passionate or polite—refusal of heteronomy (order and acceptance) as something philosophically undignified and overcome long ago, justifiable as *naturaliter minores* of “the childhood of humankind”, is here as *ius naturales*, as an act of the emancipated free mind.⁶ Freedom as emancipation and philosophy as the autonomy of reason emerge simultaneously. This possibility has to exist, however, if the aforementioned change of heteronomy into autonomy is to take place, if the subject is to achieve awareness of own self-insufficiency in a non-violent way, if it is to be promoted to non-oppressive heteronomy but showing the way towards the acceptance and listening to freedom. The point is the idea of such thought (rationality) that would be more open up to listening and able to reflect the real evaluation of its situation. What we try to make questionable is the enlighteners’ concept of the reason and autonomy; the thinking without tutelage as Kant called it in his article published in the Berliner Monatschrift in 1784. The question remains how reliable and qualified a law-maker is our reason. *Is it an exaggeration to suspect our reason of potential conspiracy, of premeditated creation of false dilemmas, none of which pose any severe threat to its strategic interests?* Does not the heteronomous law showing the way go beyond the competences of my reason? There is a close relation between autonomy and the monadology of enjoyment. Fortified with rights and freedoms, I defend my independence as an unconquerable castle as a special type of monad with windows and doors that can be opened only from the inside. I rule myself in my world and I must admit that, in spite of the emphasized responsibility, I do not care about it. On the contrary, this awareness guarantees me the feeling of certainty and comfort. This is why I will never doubt the fact that freedom and independence should not be taken for granted as logical or mathematical laws. Autonomy is the principle of pleasure; it is the world where I rule myself. It is a very comfortable world: slyness of this principle of comfort consists in the fact that it behaves as irreplaceability as a “burden of choice”: I have to decide myself, I have to want myself... this also means: nobody can command me!!! This is why heteronomy is a target of criticism as practice of the weak, non-self-reliant, immature, who need to be led... By contrast, autonomy, independence is a sign of maturity (adulthood) of the subject; it is the enlightenment of reason, meditation of subject about the self and about his or her opportunities (naturally also of duties); it is a real “absence of borders”, absence of everything that could mean: “I cannot do anything any more!” (Even when the “autonomous subject” denies some possibilities, it is mostly because it can deny or

⁶ It is possible that the illusion of independence and “adulthood” of the subject is based to a great extent on the social boundary between the childhood (not adult) and adult age. It was codified after some time to the boundary separating the state of tutelage from the maturity of the adults, which is in many cultures marked with special ceremonies. As if the question of the growth was not a matter of continuous improvement, as if the doubtful dualism of maturity (childhood) and immaturity (adulthood) and the corresponding division into “heteronomy” and “autonomy” were automatically reflected in our visions and expectations. In many cultures, the so-called adult age differs from its opposite among other things by alcohol, tobacco consumption, legal sexuality, etc. (although the boundary is different in different cultures).

wants to deny them itself. Renunciation achieves here paradoxically an even higher intensity of pleasure (mental satisfaction) than its immediate form “here and now” (pleasure from sensuality). As yet, this kind of renunciation does not therefore overcome the dialectics of pleasure where all the “unpleasant” “I have to” experience, does not principally contradict what *I want* or what *I can*.)

Real heteronomy, however, breaks this dialectics of pleasure. It seemingly leads to autonomy, which does not gradate power and the rule of the subject but it means his rediscovery in humility.

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