Thinking at crossroads: in search of new languages

Co-ordinated by **Eduardo Portella**

with contributions by **Rafael Argullol, Jean Baudrillard, Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira, Emmanuel Carneiro Leão, Barbara Freitag, Zaki Laïdi, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Ronaldo Lima Lins, Eduardo Lourenço, Michel Maffesoli, Eduardo Prado Coelho, Muniz Sodré, Gianni Vattimo**

The Philosopher's Library | UNESCO Publishing

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Preface

The sole organization in the United Nations system encompassing education, science, culture, communication, as well as social and human sciences, UNESCO cannot lose sight of its intellectual and ethical watch mission. Borne of a world heritage – a pluralistic vision of modern philosophy – UNESCO must always seek to preserve its memory and diversity, providing a forum where ideas can be exchanged, compared, honed and fostered.

As a new millennium begins, our ethical benchmarks seem fractured and dispersed. In the wake of utopian ideologies, we are compelled to reassess our philosophical traditions, as well as the questioning to which they are submitted. For what is at issue is philosophy – today increasingly challenged and even completely obscured by media and techno-sciences – and whether it should, or can, relinquish its age-old tradition of envisaging different worlds.

With a view to unearthing new perspectives for thought and reflection, Professor Eduardo Portella was requested to initiate, in 1997, an open, unbiased, dialogue, bearing critically and constructively upon this heritage. The first steps in this direction are sketched out in this volume. Far from leading to clear-cut answers, *Thinking at crossroads: in search of new languages* is intended to stimulate the questioning which is inherent to philosophy.

It is as crucial as ever that thinking should endure. To foster the deeper understanding amongst peoples which is of essence to peace, UNESCO must make every effort to enter this new millennium with strengthened capacities to marshal contributions from different systems of knowledge, cultures, philosophical trends and scientific methodologies.

Foreword

To prepare to receive what is new in the millennium that is emerging from the manifold expectations of our time, we must probe the centuries behind us and broaden the scope of our questioning.

In this passage from old to new, the age-old conscience of Western thought is troubled by the presence of the timeless non-conscience that is given in any passage of time, but remains beyond our reach as long as we forsake the concentration and patient serenity of reflection. The conscience that prevails in the modern construct has seen and continues to see that the longest route is that which leads to the closest destination, and the ultimate course, whichever it may be, always takes us back to the non-conscience of every beginning.

Are the crises of today, which are unsettling the hegemony of conscience, the crises of one particular conscience, or are they crises of conscience as such, of conscience as conscience? Is it not a property of all conscience as conscience to engender crises, conflicts and distress? Could it be that all crises of conscience as conscience are, in themselves, already overcome by the creativity of non-conscience?

Every lapse of time, be it a millennium, a century, a year, a day, an hour or an instant, is always both an evening and a dawn. In our times, so filled with

expectations, the evening furies of the second millennium prevail over its daylight feats. A cycle in human history, which began twenty-five centuries ago, has reached the point of culmination and come to a close. And this is propitious for non-conscience. Everything is fluid and nothing is fixed. We can become more freely what we have, and have more intensely what we are. The old models crumble and the new have yet to be grafted. The limitations of conscience and of its representations are felt more compellingly. The world goes into a transition and feels the pressures of a crossing.

Twenty-five hundred years ago, Buddha appeared in India, Lao Tseu in China. Zarathustra emerged in Persia, as philosophy developed in pre-Socratic Greece. Today we find ourselves in the cracks of history, in the antechamber of another historical time. Parameters lose their meaning. Values disintegrate. The basic principles of order are weakened. We enter a malleable state, where the old no longer retains the importance it once had. The past relinquishes its power. And the future – if it is already here – is not yet fully anchored. We are living in an interval of history.

It is a time for thinking about dis-installation and creation. As its foundations are shaken, philosophy shies away from the preponderance and irrefutability of conscience. Nietzsche's Zarathustra begins his descent to announce to 'the last man' the coming of the 'super-being'. For if the 'super' of the 'super-being' brings something radically new, it is a detachment, an emancipation from conscience and its dominance. We are invited to contemplate the renewed non-conscience to which Nietzsche alludes in the prologue of the first book of Thus Spoke Zarathustra: 'I wish to be unsparing and sharing until the wise rejoice in their non-conscience and the poor in their wealth! That is why I have descended to the depths, just as you do at dusk, when you leap into the sea and bear light into the world beneath, you, star above all else!'[1]

1. *'Ich möchte verschenken und austeilen, bis die Weisen unter den Menschen wider einmal ihrer Torheit und die Armen wieder eimnal ihres Reichtums froh geworden sind. Dazu muss ich in die Tiefe steigen: wie du des Abends tust, wenn du hinter das Meer Ghest und noch der Unterwelt Licht bringst, du übeerreiches Gestirn!'*

If this is a time of changing principles, we have to ask ourselves if we can steer a course into this passage without knowing what history will take as its verb. Will it be to do, to act? Will it be to happen, to produce? To presuppose one or the other is to risk falling back on the devious devices of conscience, which claims to be rid of history's non-conscience, under a pretence of control.

Emmanuel Carneiro Leão

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Tracing possible courses[1]

Ebbing with the second millennium is a particular conception of history, predominantly written from a Western perspective and conducive to a specific world-view and a manner of construing interpersonal relationships which some regard as metaphysical.

It is a perception of life as a process, with points of departure and destination, the one subordinated to the other. According to this model, interpersonal relations are ranked according to their greater or lesser degree of operational capacity. The rationality of scientific knowledge, the efficiency of technical production and the persuasive strength of religious, artistic and social values are the principles ordering this metaphysical history.

The security devices sustaining this order are founded on the division and exclusion of differences – good or evil, truth or falsehood, functionality or inoperability, efficiency or inefficiency. But as these devices come up against their own limitations and the unbending course they have taken, they begin to falter. What is different ceases to be a threat to hope. Promise is harboured in the unexpected.

1. Proposals developed by Emmanuel Carneiro Leão, Eduardo Portella and Muniz Sodré, in co-operation with Frances Albernaz and Claudius Waddington in view of the discussions reproduced in this book.

A 'late modernity'

A sense of overwhelming complexity stretches the limits of our reference points. Depleted of strength and intensity, the parameters of modernity waver between hazards and hopes, perils and promise. The historic experience of chaos and perplexity depicted as 'post-modern' appears to reflect a twilight or decline of modernity.

This is because modern history is up against something essentially new: an incapacity to proceed with exclusion and even more so with difference. Since law is an individual construction with a collective vocation and freedom proceeds from plurality, rights arise from understandings and misunderstandings between beings, men and things. As such, declarations and universal extensions of equal rights are not enough to ensure a durable peace. Wars are devised to exclude by force what our identities have to gain from difference. Peace arises not from a unification of likeness but from an acceptance that the other is a constituent element of the same and vice versa. It requires the giving and taking of difference as a gift.

Beyond metaphysics

Metaphysics has culminated in science and technology. As a result, the modern discourse appears less all-encompassing than it once did, and current modes of reflection are tending to debate the relative merits of their contents.

Yet it is just as the thought renounces its former claims to wholeness, that metaphysics reaches a limit. The pretension to control and uniformity becomes workable to the point of absorbing or encompassing plurality. Anything is accepted, recognized and encouraged, as long as forms of power exist and instances of control are established. Models no longer need to be unique. They are free to diversify as long as a working process of control is ensured.

It becomes neither necessary nor enough to steer clear of the standardization of models. Threats and dangers lie not in uniformity, but rather in the sacrifices and losses exacted by efficiency.

The challenge then consists in dealing with complexity while steering away from the duplicitous schemes of objective metaphysics. But can thinking persist with the inexhaustible patience that it requires? Can it still dispose of an endless temporality? Can it indeed survive if its time is the *aion*, the hazardous moment that invests the wait for the unexpected with hope? Is thought's only urgency not that of proceeding beyond the dichotomy between speed and quality?

Thought and institution

In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle bluntly expresses the connection between leisure and work: 'We work so that we may have leisure'. He provides the basis for this in *Politics*: 'Every human accomplishment is founded in leisure'. Today this subordination of work to leisure, which prevailed as an ethos throughout Western history, is reversed: we have leisure to busy ourselves.

This reversal settles into the virtual sphere, in the cloning and recycling of all by all, always for the purpose of producing everything, including the conditions that make it possible to produce. Total production provides modern man with a clearly determined reality and gives to his history an equally specific finality. His mind is led to suppose that everything results from the work of reason and that this work can produce everything, good or evil, true or untrue, real or unreal.

That is why modernity, to be truly modern, has become a historic avalanche. It has had to reverse everything and to operate through a virtualization of its own features. The subordination of leisure to commerce is a radical feature of this reversal.

How can the leisure of creation, invention, innovation, be institutionalized? Is it only the repetition, renovation, reiteration of business that can be institutionalized? Can there be commerce without leisure? If hope contains the unexpected, can the leisure to think arise from commerce?

Horizons of Modernity

Alongside the recent celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, numerous questions were raised about the distress or the possible regression of the modern project's edifying discourse and universal scope. The yearning for freedom, justice and coexistence expressed in the heritage of an enlightened modernity is besieged all at once with exacting questions and increasingly precise demands. Could a 'radical ', or more finely tuned, modernity be within reach? Might the right to Utopia give way to a Utopia of rights? If a vision of rights is reconstructed, can it give legitimate form to a needed democracy?

Can it keep science and technology from advancing into minefields? Must these be marginal or in opposition to what is left, at the turn of a millennium, in the manner of critical thought? Could critical reflection on science and technology overcome our nostalgic, pessimistic or alarmist impulses? If technological progress stands in the way of the Enlightenment's emancipating gains and if reason

continues to display an authoritarian character, which shares of the modern legacy remain relevant in this day and age?

Open identities

The issue of identity – within and beyond national or cultural borders – is increasingly fraught with complexity. It may be opportune to confront the concept of identity as a delimited, closed or compact instance, with a notion of identity as an open, susceptible dynamic, under constant transformation. Could difference in this sense be overstressed or overestimated to the point of negating its interactive dynamic with sameness? In placing too high a value on difference, do we incur in its isolation, stultification and sterile classification as a sort of historical monument?

Globalization and cultural diversity

Is globalization proceeding necessarily and blindly to the detriment of cultural plurality? Can it be possible to think of the West without the East, the North without the South? Why are some languages silenced, omitted from the keys of the Western and/or other world-views which are characterized by forms of fundamentalism? If culture is still and all too often perceived as an instrument of reparation, consolidation and preservation in a rigidly predefined context, how can it play its crucial role of combining and reorganizing memory, oblivion and hope?

Media and cyberculture

We envision the media as guarantors to freedom of expression and information. Yet their ethical compasses appear overwhelmed by their antennae's imperious, accelerating and often intrusive reach. Is their impact not often arbitrary and sterile? Does virtuality detract from and interfere with reality? What remains in the manner of culture in the multimedia spheres? If the cyberworld holds promises or illusions for the human spirit, what might its impact be on subjectivity?

A philosopher who died recently envisioned a time that is 'no longer anything but velocity, instantaneity and simultaneity'. The technology of time tips abruptly towards a time of technology, with the pretext that there is no time to lose. Can it yet be possible to reconcile quality with speed, values with performance?

Does art still have a role to play?

Metaphysics has accustomed us to place art and science at opposite poles. It has taught us, through reason, that truth is found on scientific grounds and that art is at best entertainment or nothing but fantasy or falsehood.

After a flourish of vanguard movements in the course of the twentieth century, art arrives at this early stage of a new millennium with telling signs of fatigue. Can this be attributed to a triumph of technology? Is art necessarily subject to society's impulses and, in this case, to the performance imperative? Does it still have a role to play in today's history? Can art be considered beyond its opposition to the technical? Should we now give critical thought to how art interacts with techno-science?

In the sense that science and technologies impose on society an increasingly restrictive order to reproduce sameness, could the perplexity prevailing in our era present an opportunity to discern what art has to offer as *another* knowledge? If the languages produced until now do not correspond to the challenges of this turning point in history, could a search for 'new languages' do without a probe into this other knowledge?

Ethics in a complex world

To what extent can development proceed sustainably from 'competitive values'? How can law, freedom and organization be conciliated in a complex world? How can exclusion and non-inclusion be overcome? What gives pluralistic sustainability to development? Is it the individual, society, ethical strength, or all three at once?

Is ethics a matter of being, of creating conditions for being, or of maintaining norms and rules for a time? Do we have the hope and the knowledge to increase the share of democratic legitimacy, so that the dichotomies at work in every confrontation can give way to fruitful negotiations, dissolving the rift between winners and losers?

Reasons of the West and beyond

Metaphysics and violence: a question of method

Gianni Vattimo

A preliminary problem with which contemporary philosophy must contend if it still wants to exist as such – and not only as essay or clever exercise in the historiography of thought or as a subsidiary discipline of the practical sciences, as is the case for epistemology, methodology or logic – is that posed by the radical criticism of metaphysics. The word 'radical' must be stressed as it describes the only type of metaphysical criticism that accounts for a problem presupposing any form of responsible philosophical discourse. Forms of metaphysical criticism which more or less explicitly restrict themselves to viewing metaphysics as a philosophical school, trend or point of view among many that should, on philosophically argued grounds, be abandoned, are not radical. We might take as an example the diffuse scientism of nineteenth-century thinking, which assumed that metaphysics should be abandoned in favour of epistemology, methodology, logic and linguistic analysis.

Against the background of this fundamental 'turnabout' in the evolution of philosophy from a traditional metaphysical discourse towards a form of scientism that becomes in the long run hardly distinguishable from science itself – whether as purely auxiliary thinking, epistemology, or positive scientific approach to everything that seemed to specifically pertain to philosophy, i.e. the human sciences – we might give good chances of success to metaphysics' claim to being a 'knowledge of the soul', as grounds for the development of those 'auto-descriptions which conscious and rational life can elaborate in its basic conflicts' – in short, a

renewed theory of auto-conscience in the sense clearly defined and specifically given by Kant to all modern metaphysics.[1]

This 'turnabout' driven by positivist logic not only brings as its shadow and inevitable correlative the resumption of the metaphysics of auto-conscience; it also bears traces of non-consummated metaphysical remnants. Either it dislodges from its grounding in truth, in a classical, positivist sense, the metaphysics that is traditionally attributed to the sciences (natural or human), or it retrieves metaphysics as a 'semantic-linguistic' ontology in Donald Davidson's sense.[2] But even in this case the classical criticism of metaphysics is not radical since – as happens in several areas of neo-empirical thinking, and even in Popper's idea of influential metaphysics – the stepping away from the metaphysics of the past occurs in an explicit terminological continuity which, in turn, reflects a conceptual continuity. Indeed, metaphysics is still a matter of philosophical theory along the broadest, 'elemental' lines, even if these lines express the world of experience in linguistic rather than objectivist terms.

Observations concerning the limited radicalism of the positivist kind of metaphysics can be extended to many forms of 'reductionist naturalism', to use terms that Henrich[3] has borrowed from Nietzsche. They can also be extended to the various 'schools of suspicion' which considered metaphysical proposals, all of them 'primary auto-interpretations' of man and of being (another expression of Henrich's), as fictions to be retrieved and disintegrated in due regard of a clarification of the conditions that determined their formation. Even with these reductionist views, the extent to which suspicion can really be radical is at issue. The history of one of the best known and elaborated 'reductionist naturalisms' of the twentieth century – Marxism – can also be interpreted as the history of a radicalization of suspicion that evacuated every remnant of metaphysics. That is true at least of 'Western' Marxism, even throughout its political reversals, and up until its recent crisis and the dissolution of the Communist parties.

The critique of metaphysics is radical in so far as it presupposes a fundamental 'question of method' when formulated in such a way that affects not only

1. D. Henrich, 'Was ist Metaphysik Was ist Moderne? Thesen gegen J. Habermas' in *Merkur* (Stuttgart, 1996, pp. 495–508) questioning an essay by J. Habermas 'Rückkehr zur Metaphysik. Eine Tendenz der eutschen Philosophie?' Ibid., 1985, pp. 898–905.

2. D. Davidson, 'On the very notion of a conceptual scheme', *Inquiries into truth and interpretation*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1984.

3. D. Henrich, op. cit.

certain philosophical practices or contents but also the very possibility of philosophy as such: a discourse characterized by its logical and social status, the two being inseparable.

Nietzsche is the master of the radical criticism of metaphysics. According to him, philosophy was created and developed as a search for a 'true world' which could serve as a reassuring basis to resist the uncertain changes of the visible world. This true world has been assimilated in turns with Platonic ideas, the Christian 'beyond', the Kantean a priori, the unknown domain of the positivists, up until the selfsame logic which had brought about all these transformations – in seeking an authentically true world capable of 'founding' and impervious to criticism – realized that its idea of truth was nothing but a fable or fiction useful in certain conditions of existence. And the gradual disappearance of these conditions led to a further discovery of truth itself as fiction. The problem which Nietzsche saw emerging in a world where even the attitude of revealing was revealed, was nihilism. Should one really think that the destiny of thought, upon discovery of the non-originary but transformed and 'functional' nature of belief in the value of truth or in the foundation, should be to install itself with no illusions, like an *esprit fort* in a world of struggle of all against all, where the weak perish and only the mighty prevail? Or would it be that the ones who will triumph in this context are 'the more moderate', evoked in Nietzsche's hypothesis at the end of a lengthy discourse on 'European Nihilism' (Summer 1887), 'who do not need extreme principles of religion and not only accept but also welcome a large amount of chance and absurdity'?

Although Nietzsche does not take this allusion to the 'more moderate' much further, it appears from the notes he wrote in the last years of his life (from which he drew his discourse on nihilism), that the more moderate man is for him the artist, who knows how to live with a freedom he derives from having overcome everything, even survival.[4] Be that as it may, it can clearly be seen in what sense his criticism of metaphysics is radical. If we accept it, we cannot continue to philosophize in a world where it is now evident that philosophy is nothing but a struggle, a game of strength or a conflict of interpretation, a conflict which to the extent that it is no longer concealed as such, cannot but be a real conflict.

4. See, for example, note 10/168 (numbering in Colli-Montinari edition), and *Généalogie de la morale*, II, Chapter 16.

The alternative to the supremacy of the more moderate is not developed by Nietzsche who embarks on a course that is not philosophical but rather, in a problematical way, artistic. In fact, Nietzsche pinpoints the unjustifiable nature of an nth 'metaphysical' solution that would assign to moderation a transcendental narrative role, a sort of historicism 'à la Dilthey' and would make philosophy correspond to a systematics of world-views in conflict. In this case there would be, once again, a real world: that of the supreme historical conscience, as well as an extreme rediscovery of Socratic wisdom, certain of knowing that it does not know. . . .

Perhaps the least aporistic and most characteristic dimension of Nietzsche's discourse on metaphysics – the one which endows it with the radicalism that makes it appear as an inescapable stage of current philosophy – is the link it suggests, not in univocally but in multifariously suggestive terms, if only because of its irreducibility to a defined plan, between metaphysics and violence. This link has two aspects. One is the unmasking of metaphysics which marks the arrival of nihilism – an unmasking that links metaphysics to a condition of violence and reveals itself as an act of violence. As a philosophy of foundation, an illusion of seizing the heart of reality, a first principle to which 'all' is attached, metaphysics corresponded to 'an attempt to take by force the most fertile countries',[5] a sort of reassuringly magical reaction to an extremely uncertain condition of existence: that of man before rationalization and domestication, two events rendered possible precisely through the discipline imposed in the name of metaphysical fictions. These fictions are no longer in demand. Man in rationalized society no longer has need for these forms of extreme reassurance. He can live in 'proximity', modelling his thought on science, not because science is the true objective knowledge, but because as a form of thought it is not as beleaguered with problems of salvation and individual fate. 'I am of no importance' is written on the door of the future thinker.[6] That is the relatively 'optimistic' Nietzsche of the 'morning philosophy' outlined at the end of *Human too Human*, which reflects the essential tone of his work during what seems to be the 'sunny' period of his writing from *Human too Human* to *Aurora* and *The Gay Science*.

Whilst following the indications already present in, for example, *The Gay Science*, his later work, including the discourse on nihilism which I have just mentioned, brings to light a second and inseparable aspect of the crisis of

5. Note 40/21 of the Colli-Montinari edition.

6. *Morgenrote*, No. 547.

metaphysics – revealing the latter as a violent thought which is, moreover, determined in relation to manifest violence as such. And not only in the sense that metaphysical beliefs leave nothing in their wake (*Grund*, natural or divine laws, etc.) to limit the conflictual nature of being or the struggle between weak and strong which is legitimized by the fact of opposition alone. But also in the sense, which is just as determining for Nietzsche as for the problem of metaphysics in general, that the disappearance of metaphysical beliefs does not just reveal and liberate the violence of existence as it is. It already appears to result from an unleashing of violence.[7]

It is difficult to say whether or not Nietzsche's later theses – the ideas of the eternal return, the super-being, the will of power – constitute solutions to the problem of reuniting these two aspects of his criticism of metaphysics. What would be the sense in unmasking metaphysical violence if but to lead to a later practice of violence, even with no mask? There is not only a reluctance to accept that Nietzsche's philosophy is conducive to justifying a return to primal ferocity, but also an inherent contradiction in his thesis: the Nietzschean conception of 'symbolic forms', that is, ideological productions, metaphysical, moral and religious fictions, seems indeed to preclude that the latter are simply superficial masks. To consider them thus is to return to the typically metaphysical belief in the 'bare' truth of the thing itself. Unmasked violence could be 'better' in so far as it would be 'more real'.

Thus the two aspects of the metaphysics-violence link must be, as it were, contingent on each other. The radical criticism of metaphysics is exerted in so far as one searches, and sometimes finds, a 'thinkable' link between the two, thus resolving the question more clearly than Nietzsche, although taking the same route he opened. It is, moreover, probable that the Nietzsche-Renaissance which characterizes European thought from the beginning of the 1960s is motivated more by a rediscovery of Nietzsche's 'constructive' theses, the interpretation of which remains problematic, than by the clarity with which he relates the problem of the end of metaphysics to the question of violence. With this 'discovery', a decisive intuition which opens a new discourse, Nietzsche anticipates the global meaning of numerous discourses – if not all – which have taken the centre stage in philosophy from the end of the nineteenth century to the present day. The way Nietzsche poses the problem of the impossible future of metaphysics in regard to the unmasking of

7. See, for example, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, No. 329, and Gianni Vattimo, *Il soggetto e la maschera*, Milan, Bompiani, 1974, pp. 116ff.

violence – whilst it must be remembered, in both the senses indicated above (the theoretical act of taking off the mask extolled by the school of suspicion, and the practical, political appearance of a limitless violence) – takes to a critical point, which becomes truly inescapable at the core of twentieth-century philosophy, the 'question of method'. It is from this point that we must begin to look at the transformations and crises that philosophy has known over the last hundred years. It is a daring and characteristically 'apocalyptic' statement that remains unsurpassed in its later development (which will lead to a precisely contrary position with regard to any apocalyptic temptation). Its plausibility seems to presuppose a decision to favour a certain twentieth-century line of thinking – roughly the one that flows between existentialism, phenomenology and the Hegelian-Marxist critical theory – as opposed to more 'sober', or indeed more professional ones, which have worked in particular to develop the study of the critique of knowledge.

However, this calls for two observations: the first, essentially 'historical' and the second, systematic. From an interpretative viewpoint on the history of contemporary philosophy, it can be plausibly upheld that to stress the metaphysics-violence link, with its multiple facets as presented in Nietzsche's work, does no damage to what appears at first hand to be the central universal problem, namely, the connection between philosophy and science. Neither the problem presented by the unity-distinction between natural and human sciences, nor that which, whatever its prejudices and conflicting expectations, has developed around the epistemology of natural sciences (from the dispute on the foundation of mathematics to the neo-positivist 'physicalism' and the results of analytical philosophy) seems liable to consideration except as simple responses to a theoretical demand to refound the relation between forms of knowledge after the model affirmed by the far-reaching effects produced by the experimental science of nature – which provides for all knowledge a more socially determining and efficient model.

In yet a clearer way with regard to the debate on the mind sciences and even, to some extent, to the 'positivist' thematic of the epistemology of natural science, what determines their popularity and their central position in the philosophical discourse is the more or less explicit reference to the rationalization of society as the place where the connection between metaphysics and violence was revealed,

4. Voir, par exemple, la note 10/168 (numérotation de l'édition Colli-Montinari), et *Généalogie de la morale*, II, chap. 16.

5. Note 40/21 de l'édition Colli-Montinari.

even if this is not often stated in this way, and even if we had to wait for the Nietzsche-Renaissance for it to happen. The connection between phenomenology and existentialism on the one hand, and expressionism and artistic avant-garde movements on the other, has already been widely explored and henceforth constitutes a common ground. However, it should be borne clearly in mind that even Dilthey and the apparently so exclusively epistemological question of the basis of the mind sciences belong – along with Henri Bergson in France, Benedetto Croce in Italy, Ernst Bloch somewhat later, the first of the Frankfurt School and, of course, the existentialists with Heidegger at the lead – to the very atmosphere that finds its literary and, more broadly, cultural expression in the avant-garde and in claims of 'spiritual' irreducibility to expropriation by scientific-technological rationalization, at the time of the transition from the theoretical dream of the positivists to that of an imposing social reality.

Of course, neither Heidegger in *Being and Time* nor, later, Husserl in *The Crisis of European Science* is interested in the theoretical problem of refounding scientific knowledge. Nor are they moved by an interest in giving precision to the particular scientific status of the human sciences. In different but strongly related ways they each philosophically approach the question of a rationalization of existence guided by the mathematical sciences of nature. Heidegger restates the problem of being in *Being and Time*, since the concept of being that is given by European metaphysics is only able to think of being as the object of positive sciences. This object is verified, measured and manipulated by science and then, by means of this technology, qualifies for exhaustive description as something that fully displays itself with no past and no future other than the not-yet-present or the no-longer-present.

According to Heidegger, this concept of being 'does not work'. It needs revision but not for theoretical inadequacy. In reality, this concept represents an attack on existence (as Kierkegaard had already thought with regard to Hegelian metaphysical rationalism). It makes it impossible for man to think conceptually of his lived experience because that experience is not only extensively impregnated with future projections and past memories, but also and above all fully bound up with practical and social experience and with the rationalization of society and existence in terms of 'total organization'.

6. *Morgenrote,* n° 547.

7. Voir, par exemple, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*, n° 329, et G. Vattimo, *Il soggetto e la maschera,* Milan, Bompiani, 1974, p. 116 et suiv.

Nietzsche's suggested 'reduction' of the problem raised by the impossibility of continuing metaphysics with its violence unveiled seems more difficult to accept if one considers the epistemological, logical and methodological problematics of the positivist tradition in philosophy. Yet, even on this ground, it seems increasingly clear that the dominant concerns were not exclusively theoretical or epistemological, or, at least, that they were embedded in a cultural framework itself greatly influenced by avant-garde themes. Such a conscience as that – which can be seen maturing in the historiographical auto-conscience, starting with 'Wittgenstein's Vienna'[8] – is clearly not enough to justify Nietzsche's 'reduction' in a theoretical way, even in regard of the twentieth century's 'epistemological' line of thought. However, it appears less and less arbitrary to think that even the apparently purely *erkenntnistheoretisch* theses of analytical philosophy might acknowledge deep-seated links to the Nietzschean theme that connects metaphysics to scientific rationality and violence – whether on the basis of the renewed historiographical auto-conscience that centred around 'Wittgenstein's Vienna'; on that of the cultural position adopted by the analytic-philosophical schools over recent years through the debate on such theses as Kuhn's paradigms; on the grounds of the epistemological anarchism of Feyerabend and Lakatos (theses which ever more clearly express a conscience of the relation between the verification and falsification of proposals on the one hand and the social-historical existence of scientific communities within which all validity is 'claimed' on the other, whatever the historical, political and economic reverses this implies); or yet on the basis of the ever more frequent anthropological interpretation or 'application' of Wittgenstein's theory of linguistic games and their connections. The relation between different linguistic games, their possible incommensurability, the possibility of a metagame or, at least, of procedures for translation, are more and more often related to the question of an interaction between such diverse cultural entities as different civilizations, colonists and colonized, etc.

In addition to contingent reasons (for example, that the Viet Nam war was no doubt a decisive factor for American thought as evidenced in the minor permeability of British thought with regard to this theme), the revelation of such a link can also claim a certain continuity just as much with the 'anthropological' vein

8. A. Janik and S. Toulmin, *Wittgenstein's Vienna*, New York, Simon & Schuster, 1973 (Italian translation, Milan, Garzanti, 1975).

of classical positivism as with its interest in the use of science for rationalizing and humanizing social relations.

Developed in a more historiographical perspective, these arguments, and others like them, can advance on historical grounds to demonstrate the legitimacy of bringing the Nietzschean reduction of metaphysics to the problem of violence as a question of method in which all philosophical debate is currently anchored. But there is also, as was already mentioned, a systematic observation which appears more conclusive. The question of the end of metaphysics and of its impossible development is not inevitable in so far as it demonstrably constitutes the explicit or implicit driving force of the principle courses of twentieth-century philosophy, or also and above all as it questions the very possibility of continuing to philosophize. That possibility is not particularly threatened by the theoretical discovery of other methods, other types of discourse or other sources of truth, thanks to which one could dispense with metaphysical philosophy and argument. What throws a flash of suspicion on philosophy as such, and on any discourse that means to resume on different levels and with different methods the process of 'foundation' or the edification of originary structures, principles, primary and conclusive evidences, is the unmasked relation maintained by these processes of foundation with domination and violence.

The reference to this relation, accidental though it may appear, is however what really makes the critique of metaphysics, when seriously considered, radical. Without it, everything is reduced to simply replacing alleged metaphysical truths with other 'truths' which, in the absence of a critical, radical dissolution of this same notion of truth, end up putting themselves forward as new instances of foundation. It is difficult to oppose to 'a question of method', as one might be tempted to do by referring to Hegel, the invitation to try to swim by jumping into the water, by beginning, in fact, to construct philosophical arguments while trying to see if it is possible to establish, against all odds of suspicion, some certainties, even if only relatively 'final' and shared by everyone.

However, the invitation to jump into the water or the invitation to philosophize cannot come from nothing. It is necessarily attached to the existence of a tradition, a language and a method. Yet the legacies we receive from this tradition are not all equal. Among them is Nietzsche's announcement of the death of God, his more than theoretical 'experience' of the end of metaphysics and, with it, of philosophy. If we really want to accept the responsibility imposed by the legacy of philosophy, we cannot but take seriously the preliminary question of that

'experience'. It is precisely the faithfulness to philosophy that imposes above all a non-evasive confrontation of the question of its radical negation; a question inextricably linked, as has been seen, with that of violence.

It is, moreover, in these terms that two masters of contemporary thought, Theodor Adorno and Emmanuel Lévinas, posed the problem of metaphysics. Their lessons may yet be the only ones to 'tumble' the Nietzschean theses that spread throughout contemporary culture into the inevitable question that links the destiny of metaphysics with the destiny of violence, even if, with regard to Nietzsche and particularly Heidegger, their thought seems to result in solutions that remain embedded in the metaphysical tradition.

As we know, the Adornian 'negative dialectic' links the crisis and impossible future of metaphysics to its tragical parody represented in Auschwitz, as well as and on a broader scale, the society of total administration. The contempt of metaphysics for all that obsolesces in the body, in the individual, and in all their specific and accidental singularity, objectively 'prepares', beyond any intention of the philosophers and of their expressed culture, the extermination of a great number of men in the name of a theory, on the one hand, and their subjugation to a plan of global rationalization of existence, on the other like that of the totally administered society of the advanced technological world.

With Adorno, what happens to metaphysics is what must more specifically happen to the truth of the Hegelian system. If truth was whole for Hegel, when this principle is realized in the form of parody of the administered world, the whole, on the other hand, is false. To a certain extent, it is in its 'realization' that metaphysics reveals itself as a thought of violence – according to a thesis of Nietzsche which we have already considered.

But the law by which obsolescence, individuality and offended existence rebel against the violence of extermination and total administration is itself a metaphysical transcendence: a promise of happiness, which legitimizes all critical and ethical distancing from the present state of affairs. Consequently, any return to something other than obsolescence, any passage 'from here to there', from appearance to truth, from accidental to essential, is not metaphysical violence. What is missing from metaphysics is its mobilization in the present state of things as a totalizing effectiveness. This thesis is remarkably close to that of Heidegger, for whom metaphysics ends in a culmination in the world's effective technical-scientific rationalization, which divests it of all transcendence and makes of it a totally present state.

Contrary to Heidegger, however, Adorno seems to consider it possible to separate metaphysics as a promise of happiness and utopian reference to the transcendental authenticity of the present state of things from its mobilization as a form of totalizing rationality and violence. That can be assimilated to 'halting and revoking the false conciliation movement'[9] which the Hegelian absolute mind played out as a parody. It involves a reduction of the promise of happiness to a state of appearance, the appearance which also characterizes the beauty of Kant's *Critique of Judgment*, to virtually nothing. The happiness contained in the metaphysical promise, the one to which the finality of its accidental and ephemeral nature aspires as an inalienable right, is the dialectical conciliation which is also the *telos* of the Hegelian absolute mind: a fully mobilized auto-conscience which no longer conflicts with nature and is thus, in a way, unfinished.

With regard to this ideal of a conciliated subject – an ideal which retains, even when displaced by Adorno towards a utopian horizon, its value as a unique standard of emancipation, as the only thing 'true' – the 'revocation' of the movement of conciliation, the return to Kantean appearance and the revelation of metaphysical transcendence in the almost nothing cannot not have the feel of a pure and simple relapse. In effect, the 'conclusive' position of the *Aesthetic Theory* in Adorno's philosophical itinerary is not only an accident of time. The intrinsic vocation of the negative dialectic is to culminate in aesthetics. Philosophy here gives way to the aesthetic experience through which conciliation culminates in the moment of appearance.

Numerous arguments of Adorno's critique of metaphysics find an even more radical form in Lévinas's work. For Lévinas, as for Adorno, the Holocaust was the biographical occasion which determined – on theoretical bases developed in advance – the revelation of the link between metaphysics and violence. As with Adorno, the extermination of Jews by the Nazis compels recognition of this theory, and not only as an unfathomable qualitative fact – Lévinas indeed considers the extermination as perhaps less 'extraordinary' than Adorno, to the extent that it was yet another demonstration of man's guilt, but also in light of its significance as a 'founded', theoretical and rationally planned act.

What for Adorno constituted the ambiguous significance of metaphysics as simultaneously the thought of violent removal of rights to obsolescence and the latter's only place of affirmation in a return to a transcendent promise of

9. G. Carchia, *La legittimazione dell'arte*, Naples, Guida, 1982, p. 123.

conciliation, is expressed for Lévinas in the terminological distinction between metaphysics, as the opening of the finite towards the infinite, its proper right – and ontology – which is in turn the knowledge of general structures of being, in relation to which the singular is only the exemplar of a species, and ready on principle to be effaced, killed and exterminated. Even for Lévinas, what must be held up as a claim against the violence of ontology is the irreducibility of the singular, its existence as a 'face': to reduce the Other to an exemplar status of being, of which we already know the essentials – and according to Lévinas such is the meaning of 'violent', even in Heidegger's ontological pre-understanding – does not only mean to violate the rights of our peers.

The relationship with the Other derives its ethical nature from its endless asymmetry and thus imposes on us a responsibility beyond any contractual relation, whether implicit or explicit. The Other has a face and merits welcome and respect, since he is turned towards the Infinite. His aspiration puts him in relation with God, whose mark is upon him. What is here opposed to violent metaphysical thought is not a call for pure fraternity and egalitarian respect for the Other, but rather the idea that the experience of being, which happens originally in the encounter with the Other, is the experience of an infinity which affirms its 'majesty' and 'command and authority'.[10]

If Adorno seems to be envisaging a surpassing of metaphysics and of philosophy itself in the aesthetic experience, Lévinas – despite any appearance to the contrary – prefigures an end to metaphysics and philosophy in a transition to religious experience. It is true that his work goes beyond Talmudic commentary and constitutes a veritably philosophical discourse. But it is difficult to imagine that this discourse has a sense other than that of a *praeambulum fidei*, of a far more definitive and radical 'destruction of the history of ontology' than the one conceived by Heidegger when proposing it as the programme for *Being and Time*.

In their symmetry, the conclusions of Adorno and Lévinas can be placed without any forced interpretation within the familiar Hegelian framework of the forms of the absolute mind. Both try to 'revoke' the Hegelian conciliation by halting the dialectic at an earlier stage, be it art or religion. The return to an 'earlier' time of dialectics is particularly evident with Lévinas. The way out of metaphysics as thought that reduces the Other to the Same is sought through a restoration of *Grund* metaphysics in its most originary and basically even more final form (and,

10. E. Lévinas, *Totality and Infinity*.

at least in this sense, more violent) of the Lord, of majesty and commandment. Is this connection with majesty really less violent than metaphysical 'foundation'? Or is this a sacred experience – one might recall, for example, René Girard's theses – already underway in the first secularization begun by metaphysics, which should be followed through to the very end with a later secularization?

Adorno seems to make it less obvious whether the surpassing of metaphysics is sought in a return to a previous phase of the Hegelian absolute mind. Nonetheless, indications abound in that direction and, foremost among them, even though this may appear paradoxical for an avant-garde apologist like Adorno, is his fundamentally 'classicist' notion of beauty and aesthetic experience. Indeed, for Adorno, the justification of the avant-garde rebellion against the art of the past is not so much sought in the need to surpass the traditional nature of the experience of beauty – the 'fullness' and structural perfection of a work of art – as in the will to valorize, even if in a purely utopian way, an ideal of conciliation, of harmony and therefore of perfection and completion, against the phantasmagorical degenerescence of the art of the time of mercantile triumph.

This still profoundly classicist conception of beauty and of the aesthetic experience is but a telling symptom of another more general trait of Adorno's thinking, that is to say that, despite its emphasis on micrology and appearance, the negative dialectic still conceives of the duty of thought as to devise a *telos* defined in terms of unfurled presence, of accomplished conciliation and of 'fullness'. But is not the unfurled presence of being – as final conciliation and authority, majesty and order – what ultimately constitutes the violence of metaphysics?

Objections to metaphysics are likewise not principally raised for 'reasons of knowledge' or pure and simple theoretical insufficiencies. The more or less resolved nature of its surpassing, as proposed by Adorno or Lévinas, cannot be measured solely in terms of their theses' internal contradictions and apophthegms. What is expressed in efforts to pinpoint in theoretical terms the limits and apophthegms of Adorno's and Lévinas's positions is rather the vague sensation that, each in his way, 'leaves out' too many elements of the problem posed by overcoming metaphysics as a thought linked to violence.

The religious conversion which is ultimately represented by Lévinas, or the return to aesthetic experience which seems to conclude the journey of Adorno's critical thought, evoke by contrast Heidegger's words in *Was heisst Denken?*[11], with

11. M. Heidegger, *Was heisst Denken*?, Tübingen, Niemeyer, 1954, p. 34.

regard to the uselessness of man's 'interventions' or 'decisions' until being addresses itself to man again in a different way from those that conditioned the fate of metaphysics.

Indeed, even Heidegger's overly emphatic 'preparatory' and 'listening' attitude seems to offer too little in relation to the problems facing thought. However, in comparison with Adorno and Lévinas, and with many other efforts in view of renewing metaphysics – most recent and notable among these those of D. Henrich, whom we have already mentioned – Heidegger has the advantage, albeit problematic, of explicitly posing the problem of whether thought and subject belong to a historic horizon and destiny from which there is no possible illusion of escape by appealing to originary experience.

Conversion and recourse to aesthetic experience represent two solutions which place the subject at the centre of decision. With Lévinas, decision is still too subjugated to ideals of strength, in so far as it lets itself be led and determined by the gift that infinity makes of itself. And with Adorno, it is too weak in so far as it relies on the appearance of beauty. In both cases, however, to come out of violence and to transcend metaphysics, the subject must have access to an originary experience which remains characteristically metaphysical: it continues to function as an access to the *Grund* by virtue of which, as though through a process of deduction, thought should undergo a 'mutation' while placing itself in a dimension of authenticity.

Heidegger tries to get out of this problem by taking a distance from humanism, insisting more on preparation and listening than on decision and conversion and, above all, in his later writing, on the conception of *Ge-Stell* – a term which could be translated as 'im-position', respecting Heidegger's intention to attribute to the German word *stellen*, or 'scaffolding', the meaning of 'to put',' to lay out', 'to impose', 'to compose', etc. For Heidegger, *ge-* indicates the nature of the technological-scientific world of today, and roughly corresponds to the world of total administration depicted by Adorno. Although neither Adorno nor Heidegger acknowledged it, there is a concordance in their ideas on metaphysical realization: the leading ideal of metaphysics being to enclose everything in the plane of the principle of sufficient reason, bringing all things back to basic, explicit links. This is a programme that completely accomplishes itself in the tendentiously unlimited possibilities of the techniques perfected by modern experimental science.

Unlike what happens in Adorno, Heidegger's idea of the realization of metaphysics in the *Ge-Stell* is not a 'parody' which one should oppose by

'revoking' false conciliation in a return to the dialectic dynamic to a preceding moment such as that of the aesthetic appearance. If thought has the good fortune to transcend metaphysics and the violence attached to it, that chance is linked to the very movement of *Ge-Stell*, into which it is the fate of thought to immerse itself totally. *Ge-Stell* is that limit of destiny from which it is useless to escape through conversion or contemplation of beauty. Being can only turn to it again by transforming itself (as expressed in *Was heisst Denken?*), and only thus can we hope to transcend metaphysics.

With this conception of *Ge-Stell*, we return to the globality and to the ambiguity of the Nietzschean conception of the relation between metaphysics and violence. As a revelation, this relation places thought in a contingency which does not allow for thinking in terms of conversion or, even in the least, of originary experience. That is what Heidegger says when he denies – precisely in the context of the transcendence of metaphysics in relation to *Ge-Stell* – that metaphysics can be considered a mistake and, upon its recognition as such, be discarded like a piece of unwanted clothing. This must be taken in its most immediate sense, given by Heidegger himself in his text on humanism, where he attributes the missing link of *Being and Time* to a survival of metaphysics in the language of philosophy, a survival which simple terminological and linguistic devices cannot suppress. But that should also be taken in the sense that one cannot depart from metaphysics with a new beginning. For this would always imply the possibility of acceding to another foundation, another truth – and be tantamount to replacing ancient thought with a new metaphysical thought with the same functions: that is, the passage, in advanced societies, of intellectual hegemony from 'philosophers', or at least humanist intellectuals, to scientists – who can exercise a far less illusory hegemony, which is, in addition, perhaps more in accordance with the fact that metaphysical 'realization' in *Ge-Stell* confers a new weight of reality even to the hegemony of knowledge which, in traditional metaphysics, had been largely ideological. This passage represents another renaissance of metaphysics even whilst corresponding in a 'final' form to *Ge-Stell*.

Thus, we do not come out of *Ge-Stell* by way of a renewed access to some originary experience, even if disguised as scientific knowledge under a novel scientific hegemony. That confers, all the same, a deep ambiguity on the Heideggerian use of *Ge-Stell* which conceals, further to the risks of his position, a positive scope for speaking in terms that are not purely aporetic of transcending metaphysics and its connected violence.

In developing the problematic of *Being and Time* – which already depended on motives irreducible, even if remotely, to *erkenntnistheoretisch* terms – Heidegger was led to an ever more radical 'existential possibility'.[12] He recognized that everything borne out of 'existentialist' reflection in this earliest work could still appear as constituting existence – even if already clearly distinct from the 'categories' to which intra-world entities (that is: things) belong – and should be brought back to the event of being. The human being's essential features are not there. Existential analysis discusses modalities of realization (that is, *wesen*, 'to become', 'to come into being') for the being of man at the time of accomplished metaphysics. Any pretension to eject a *Verfassung* (in other words, an originary, natural, constitution of existence, or at least an authentic experience of pure structures of being) through the unauthentic existence of the ordinary day or destiny of man in the age of metaphysics, technology and social rationalization – is still rooted in the time when successive and diverse 'primary principles' hierarchically structured the phases of Western history. And these are the diverse configurations of the 'real world' which Nietzsche saw transformed into 'fable'[13] in the chapter of *Twilight of the Idols* cited above.

Through a growing awareness of this definitive nihilistic scope of the idea of existence as presence, and of this need to think of it in a radical manner as an event, Heidegger was led to see, in *Ge-Stell*, the *destiny of being*. As already mentioned, metaphysics, even for Heidegger, is the thought that occurs in the (tendentiously) total rationalization of the world; but as such it is precisely that story that ends with 'nothing remains of being'[14] to the extent that being is absorbed in its subjugation to the power of technical availability, which – in conformity with critical descriptions of alienation – ends up imposing itself on the subject, itself become an 'available' element in the universal affirmation of *Ge-Stell*.

12. Gianni Vattimo, *Essere, storia e linguaggio in Heidegger*, Genoa, Marietti, 1963, Chapter IV.

13. On the history of metaphysics as history of the diverse primary principles progressively adopted as basis, see R. Schürmann, *Le principe d'anarchie. Heidegger et la question d'agir*, Paris, Seuil, 1982 (The Principle of Anarchy. Heidegger and the question of action).

14. M. Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, Pfullingen, Neske, 1960, Vol. II, p. 338; on the identity between metaphysics and nihilism, see ibid., p. 350.

It is also precisely in this futility, towards which both being and man evolve in the development of *Ge-Stell*,[15] that there exists the possibility that *Ge-Stell* represents not only the ultimate moment of metaphysics, but also the first step towards its transcendence. The deployment of metaphysics in the world of total technical-scientific availability precludes any attempt to think of being as foundation – since foundation is totally transformed in self-sufficient reasoning, whose founding force is inseparable from the will of the subject which discovers it, manipulates it, calculates and uses it. But all that in turn rules out the possibility that thought, having registered the dissolution of foundations, can have leverage on another 'foundation' – be it originary experience, aesthetic appearance or divine majesty – in order to start again from scratch. If a new beginning is possible, it cannot lie in the possibility that the subject turn towards a different principle, while remaining in the same relation of man as subject and being as objective principle, as a *Gegen-Stand* which is there, like something to which one returns after error, oblivion or deviance. But it could happen, however, that *Ge-Stell* deforms itself. And that is how being returns to it, beyond oblivion and metaphysical dissolution. The consequences held in store by this are ontologically as well as 'historically' significant.

The being that might turn towards the *Ge-Stell*, carrying its thought beyond metaphysical oblivion, is divested of the character of principle, authority or foundation, which it had in the metaphysical tradition, in so far as the realization of these characteristics and of their disintegration is not 'solely' a human error (subject confronted with object-being, 'there outside'), but the destiny of being itself. On the historical level, this radical way of transcending metaphysics expresses a singular disposition to receive the announcement of a new being outside of the violence that is proper to the metaphysical age, in the deployment of the total rationalization of society. In *Ge-Stell* lie the only chances for transcending, even in mass society, the inauthenticities that characterize the history from whence we have come.

Here we are faced with two of the most problematical features of Heidegger's thought: the fact that it demands the transcendence of metaphysics not

15. M. Heidegger, *Identität und Differenz*, Pfullingen, Neske, 1957, p. 26: 'Das Ereignis ist der in sich schwingende Bereich, durch den Mensch und Sein einander in ihrem Wesen erreichen, ihr Wesendes gewinnen, indem sie jene Bestimmungen verlieren, die ihnen die Metaphyysik geliehen hat.'

on man's initiative but through being itself and its destiny; and the consequent acceptance of modern social rationalization and massification which, in spite of such ample evidence to the contrary in his 'archaism' and disdain for techno-science, Heidegger would consider undeniable, even if perhaps exaggerated by Adorno.[16] A discussion on Adorno's objections, which set down the essential elements of Heidegger's positions, even if badly interpreted, can clarify the sense in which Heidegger's meditation on *Ge-Stell* contains decisive indications for the continuation of the discourse on transcending metaphysics as violent thought.

Heidegger's anti-humanism and the fact that he makes man's destiny depend on the destiny of being appears to Adorno as an illusory satisfaction of the 'ontological need' of contemporary man to save, by whatever means, the self's substantiality in a world where all is resolved by a functional connection. To this system of functional universal connection, Heidegger opposes a philosophy of being which is all the more consoling and efficient in that it places being beyond any possible initiative of the subject, under the domination of a destiny which appears to supply a solid guarantee, but in so far as it avoids any human initiative or decision, is overturned and transformed into an implicit justification of the existing order.

Adorno believes he opposes to what he sees as Heidegger's reversal into objectivity – which is inspired by anti-subjectivism and motivated, it must be remembered, by the need to ensure the stable ground which the subject, impoverished by universal functionalism, no longer provides – the dialectic ideal of freedom placed beyond the subject/object opposition that Heidegger also criticized. But as can be seen in the argument developed in *Negative Dialectic* on 'ontological need', what he finds threatened in Heidegger's inversion is the free subject, as precisely a principle of unlimited auto-determination that opposes to itself the object as a purely antithetical end and as an element of its domination. It is only from the viewpoint of a strict opposition between subject and object that the Heideggerian effort to transcend metaphysics by summoning a destiny of being can appear as a pure reversal to objectivity. Perhaps it is true, as Adorno puts it, that the 'history accumulated in subjects' keeps thought from turning abruptly into positions that appear to be radical, but are in fact merely wanderings in emptiness – like certain migrations to the East, Buddhism, Zen, etc.[17]

16. I refer to the chapter on the 'ontological need' in *Negative Dialektik*, Frankfurt, Suhrkamp, 1970.

17. T. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik*, ibid., p. 74.

The history of Western subjectivity holds more experiences than those included in the Adornian canon. The subject he sees as threatened by Heidegger's reversal is only the dialectic subject which has yet to pass through Heidegger's existential analysis or Nietzsche's criticism. The violent character of metaphysics is really manifest, as Adorno sees it, in the mortification of the freedom and rights of the sovereign subject (that is, the modern subject), for whom conciliation with the Other corresponds to a non-alienated, that is, unlimited, practice: the will of power – and could we not rather suspect that it already begins and finds its roots where being is deployed in the conflictual opposition between subject and object? If *Ge-Stell* holds a chance for transcending metaphysics by divesting man of his qualification as subject, Adorno has no doubt that this qualification – in name of a cultural memory which ought not to be betrayed but which he drastically limits no less – must be defended and affirmed. For nothing can make us doubt its 'validity', which is only threatened, from a practical point of view, by total organization.

Bearing in mind this difference, it is to be expected that Heidegger's attitude to *Ge-Stell* seems to Adorno a justification of precisely that, metaphysically inspired, form of existence which realized itself in a parodic way and which ought, on the contrary, to be transcended. To a certain extent, Adorno is right. Heidegger sees *Ge-Stell* as a destiny, even if this term denotes a 'one-way'direction, beyond the 'highest measure of danger', like a maturing of (and here he quotes Holderlin) 'what saves'. If we can no longer believe – because precisely the unveiling of the metaphysics-violence link forbids us from summoning an originary or other foundation, be it in the form of aesthetic appearance or of divine majesty – the summons to transcend metaphysics, in revealing its impossible future, must come from metaphysics and its world themselves. If we are willing to give plausible meaning to almost the only passage in which Heidegger describes *Ge-Stell* as 'a first glimmer of *Ereignis*', there is no other way than that which Heidegger offers when observing that *Ge-Stell* rids man and existence of 'those determinations that metaphysics had conferred on them', that is to say, first and foremost, the qualifications of subject and object.[18]

Heidegger and Adorno agree that metaphysics has decisively shaped the exacerbation of violence in the world of total organization. But Heidegger goes

18. See note 15 *supra*; the *Bestimmungen* that metaphysics has conferred on man and existence are particularly those of subject and object, as shown in *Identity and Difference* which discusses the reciprocal *Herausforderung* in which man and existence are taken to the metaphysical era.

much further than this observation. That is why he cannot be implicated in the various efforts – apart from the more philosophically significant ones of Lévinas and Adorno, which we have discussed – that seek to transcend metaphysics by restoring a preceding phase in its development, by returning to those instants when metaphysics had yet to be dissolved or to culminate in technology. This has been the case with a certain archaism that has spread in Italian philosophy over the past decades (Emanuele Severino), sometimes in conjugation with a tragic philosophy inspired in Schelling, Nietzsche and Heidegger (Cacciari), but also with a rehabilitation of the modern project by Habermas or of the Kantean programme by D. Henrich.

The realization of metaphysics in *Ge-Stell* makes such backward steps 'impossible' for Heidegger. *Ge-Stell* cannot be exorcized through an attempt to recover in an illusory way a certain childhood or adolescence of thought. Because if metaphysics had the fate that it had, and it was a destiny (and not an error or an arbitrary choice of man), the resumption of one of its preceding phases could hardly take us elsewhere than where we are. *Ge-Stell* must be passed through. The experience of the subject's dissolution imposed on us by the world in which we are thrown must be lived to the end as a destiny. But not in the name of a dialectical belief in a reversal of extreme negativity into positivity, as though the total absence of being and of subject were a guarantee of the coming of a restored presence. Metaphysics would only be disguising itself in nihilism to rise again gloriously – powerfully and violently – as a new 'evidence'. Thought and the existence of 'post-metaphysics' can only be formed by following the 'dissolvent' route indicated by *Ge-Stell*. Man and existence must definitively, not temporarily, lose the features of subject and object that characterize them in metaphysics: The 'essential word' that Heidegger incessantly sought, even in his obdurate search back into the dawn of European philosophy, is perhaps far closer to everyday discussion of our world and its later modernity than the mysterious silence of mysticism and divine experience.

Heidegger did not travel this route, although he was the one to open it definitively with his vision of *Ge-Stell*. It would therefore be an exaggeration to conceive of 'the simple silence of silence' evoked in his *Unterwegs zur Sprache*,[19] for instance, as the sole and unique 'authentic *Sagen*', suggesting an invitation to 'abandon being', not only as *Grund*,[20] but also as essential silent words. Yet this is

19. M. Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, Pfullingen, Neske, 1959, p. 152.

20. The advice of Heidegger in *Zur Sache des Denkens*, Tübingen, Niemeyer, 1969, p. 6.

the route along which we must travel, with and beyond Heidegger and beyond the words of his text, if we are to remain faithful to his programme for preparing a new coming of being that answers to the summons of *Ge-Stell*.

It is unlikely that this summons – to be taken out of metaphysics and, first and foremost, of its basic plan (i.e. the opposition between subject and object) – shows only a way to recognition of the inter-subjective constitution of the subject itself, as in Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action*. Habermas keeps a conceptual distance from Adorno, in his view still attached to a metaphysical idea of subject, but then remains, in his turn, devoted to constructing a normative structure for a subject that is likewise 'socialized', in that inter-subjectivity retains a position of a supra-historical constitution and yields to no contamination by the idea of 'destiny', of referral or of contingency to an event. As such, the 'advantage' in doing away with the self-centred, metaphysical subject appears fairly minor, and even carries the risk of a restoring reversal.[21]

The road taken by Habermas, as well as by Apel with his idea of limitless communication, is exemplary, although Habermas himself affirms, to the contrary, the impossibility of going beyond metaphysics unless the subject is exhausted. Even for Habermas, it is the *Ge-Stell* as society of 'roles' – for which the recall of the experience of American interactionism is deemed decisive by both Weber and Habermas – that renders the subject unthinkable as self-centred ego. But the imposition of communicative action as a transcendental norm then makes the initiative useless and attempts to exorcize the very dissolution which had, on the contrary, to be continued.

We leave metaphysics and the violence attached to it by bearing in mind – and not only 'negatively' – the dissolution that the *Ge-Stell* works on the metaphysical subject and the object. Heidegger presents multiple aspects of that dissolution. For instance, he does not explicitly thematize the dissolution of the objectness of objects operated by the *Ge-Stell* to the extent that its characterizing technology is no longer that of mechanical force alone – the motor or, at the very most, atomic energy are the major examples used by Heidegger when speaking of the technical – but also by the collection, organization and distribution of information.[22]

21. See fair comments of D. Henrich, in cited essay, pp. 503–4, on Habermas's 'Rousseauism'.
22. Gianni Vattimo, *The Transparent Society*, Paris, Desclée, 1990, Chapter I.

But is that not precisely the same as staying in the world of completed metaphysics, giving in to *Ge-Stell*, accepting it and making it – more or less explicitly – an apology, such as Adorno has always held? But where is (or no longer is) *Ge-Stell*? To think of Heidegger's ontology as a new deterministic metaphysics, which gives being (as the universe's technological destiny in late modernity) a pre-eminence over man's initiative is tantamount to imagining once again a 'founding' relationship between the 'real world' – the laws of being's destiny of which Heidegger speaks – and the 'apparent world'– history, society and the existence of man – whereas it is a matter, on the contrary, of dissolving that distinction. Heidegger's ontology would be a deterministic one if it established the primacy of the object over the subject. It would then be a question of defending subjectivity against the monstrous prevalence of the structures of universal objectivism, as Adorno claims.

But the *Ge-Stell* which divests the subject/object opposition of its meaning can no longer be thought of as real world, as a necessary structure from which man's destiny is 'deduced'. It is a conjunction of *stellen* – the technological civilization in which the universe is no more (or no longer more) than an inter-linking of 'world images',[23] the subject a geometric site of multiple, never unifiable roles, history itself just a sort of constellation of multifarious – non-unifiable – reconstructions conferred by historiography and narratives. It is impossible to show, or 'describe' *Ge-Stell* as the basis of an 'objective' need which imposes itself on the subject by restricting its freedom. The veritable purpose of metaphysics is rooted in this impossibility – which thus emerges simultaneously as aim and as 'guide' to philosophical discourse – at the time of its culmination in the technological order of the world.

The being that Heidegger invites us to hear, the being from whom we expect a word addressed to us, no longer speaks as the '*arch*'of founding principles or essential structures, nor even as an inter-subjective constitution of existence. The 'real world' has turned into fable. That is reflected in the sort of 'crumbling' or splintering style that Heidegger's philosophical discourse takes on after *Being and Time*. If this being does speak, it is in whispering, polyphonic murmurs and perhaps in 'neutral' tones which, as Blanchot portends, we must expect to discern.

23. With a meaning which Heidegger did not explicitly develop but which can be linked to the conclusions of his essay on 'World Image Time' (Die Zeit des Welbildes, 1938), in *Holzwege,* Frankfurt, Klostermann, 1950.

'Tolerating a good dose of chance' or 'abandoning the idea of being as foundation', or even 'encouraging a certain frivolity with regard to traditional philosophical questions': are some ways to describe the philosophical discourse which heeds the call of *Ge-Stell*. Does this amount, as Adorno would have it, to a simple and cynical surrender to the alienating course of things? The alternative – which, moreover, Adorno does not explicitly adopt – would be to cut the knot which ties metaphysics, rationalization and violence together with an act of extreme and ultimate violence, as in the dream recurring, even at certain peaks of twentieth-century philosophy, from Benjamin to Sartre. Nietzsche and Heidegger suggest the opposite path of 'moderation' and listening – one which does not once again set the scene for a founding design, but resigns to it, accepts it as destiny, deforms it and secularizes it.

The truth. What a lie. . . .

Ronaldo Lima Lins

'Yes, what hides a thing in its midst and shows another
is as hateful to me as the gates of Hell.'
Homer, *The Iliad*

If we could photograph them, the lines of the soul would show some very strange shapes. Our relationship with truth is so complex that often, in order to tell it, we lie. That is an old story. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, one of the last people to have sought the truth so keenly, paid dearly for his efforts. He never realized even towards the end of his life that they were successful.[1] It could be that the two contrary processes of legitimation (truth on one side, falsehood on the other) form a mixture as though the chemistry of intentions and the knowledge of concepts are doomed to failure when one confronts the other. It would never have been possible to say that the sea we were sailing on was impossible to navigate, despite the gales. The journey had to be continued, even if in the case of failure it meant replacing one for its opposite in such a way that the appearance of the discourse completed or

1. Honesty as commitment appears like the assumption on which he founded his life story. 'I have revealed my inner self', he said, addressing himself to God, 'as You Yourself can see it'. (*Confessions*, Paris, GF-Flammarion, 1969, p. 43). But in reality, no one is beyond deeds. They pursue us when we are silent and do not spare us during confession. In his middle years, repudiated and insulted wherever he went, he wondered if in wanting to reveal his faults, he had deformed and exaggerated them. See *Les rêveries du promeneur solitaire*, Paris, GF-Flammarion, 1964.

concealed its content. The trick, through repetition, was in getting the 'no' imposed by reality to be accepted. With time, this version would be sanctioned simply because that is the way it always is. But you must not imagine a conscious exercise of manipulation which determines and deforms the use of words with the aim of leading to a mistake. On the contrary, the complication comes from what is natural in a lie which slides to the surface, smooths things over and cunningly installs itself. All of a sudden, we are aware of it. An intuition, a bubble which bursts sometimes soon enough but sometimes too late. We are amazed.

Understanding such a process supposes that we stop to think. Both rebellion and indignation obey impulses. They explain nothing. We have to go slowly, literally feeling our way, beyond the categories of failure and success. That is the only way of nearing the light at the heart of contradiction, and observing how it shines on us.

The Ancient Greeks appear to have been less uncomfortable than we are in resorting to duplicity. In a dialogue with Hippias, Socrates[2] valorizes the ability to dissemble on the condition that it is intelligent. To Achilles – the model of virtue – he opposes the qualities of Ulysses, the embodiment of trickery. The best man is the one who uses things with skill – whether they are qualities, reasons, technical knowledge or people – and whether good or bad. If it is the deed of a *wise man*, of someone capable of telling a good lie, even falsehood will not lower a man if compared to another, less gifted, but one dedicated to truth and ready to defend it.

If such an argument borders on Sophism, it none the less demonstrates the relative dimension that Plato, the narrator, attributes to the values that behavioural models hold up as absolute. The topicality of this position forebodes Hegel, for whom there are neither good nor bad people in history, only necessary ones. It takes on an aspect of absolution as though, in most of our efforts, we find ourselves on the ethical plane not on the side of Achilles but on that of Ulysses. Foreseeing danger and full of nostalgia for humanism, Adorno analyses barbarity and pinpoints Homer's extremely malicious ideology. He begins to examine the misdeeds.

2. Plato, *Hippias minor, or the false one*. In: *Complete Works*, translation by Francisco de P. Samaranch, Madrid, Aguilar, 1981, p. 99. In the course of the dialogue, Hippias discovers he has been found out. Vexed, he goes so far as to complain. If he agrees all the time, he will end up finding himself in opposition to his initially held position. And that is what happens, as in the process of metalanguage, by appealing to humility, since the one speaking, the one giving reasons, is the interlocutor. Socrates only uses the arguments which belonged to the other. Thus, where it seemed there was truth, there was only falsehood, the latter being the irrefutable proof of truth.

He describes the problems of a never-ending civilization[3] which, despite all its conquests, is obsessed with the idea of conquering, whatever the consequences. Adorno sums up the problems as 'positivism'; a positivism whose origin lies in its own negation and gives us only the theory of simulation. Horrified by Auschwitz, it is not from the Ancient Greeks but from the Jews that Adorno draws the substance of his criticism. He considers, in so far as such an aim is possible, a proposal of morality. But there is no question of anticipating the outcome of our reasoning.

In Albert Camus's novel *The First Man*,[4] the main character – aged forty – orphaned at eight months, is shocked on looking at his father's tombstone. The dates inscribed on it make him react. Indeed, he discovers a father 'aged' twenty-nine. Eleven years of maturity separate them. Feelings of the absurd and the illusory drive him into a search of the past and truth. Someone, something has distorted those years.

That discord, as though the world were suddenly playing in the wrong key, is not unrelated to the anxieties of Rahel Varnhagen, as described by Hannah Arendt.[5] Living in a society – the German society of the eighteenth

3. When Heidegger evokes this problem, which he does fairly late on, he deals with it calmly. His interest lies in ascertaining the precise point at which maturation of the phenomenon occurs. Barbarity, as opposed to humanism, is to Heidegger a product of the Roman Empire, incorporating the *virtus* of Hellenism taught in the schools of philosophy. 'It was only at the time of the human republic that *humanitas* was intentionally thought and seen for the first time with that name. *Homo humanus* is contrasted with *homo barbarus*.' In: *Letter on Humanism*, Portuguese translation by Pinharanda Gomes, Lisbon, Guimarães Editores, 1987, p. 41.

4. 'Yes, that was his name. He looked up. The sky had become paler; small white and grey clouds moved slowly along, alternately making the light appear brighter or duller. . . . It was then he read his father's birthdate on the tombstone and realized he had not known it before. Then he read the two dates, "1885–1914" and did the sum in his head: twenty-nine. Suddenly a thought struck him so violently it made him physically shake. He was forty. The man buried beneath that stone, the man who was his father, was younger than he was.' Albert Camus, *The First Man*, Paris, Gallimard, 1994, p. 29.

5. Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen, a vida de uma judia alemã na epoca do romantismo* [The life of a German Jewish woman at the time of Romanticism], translated by Amtpmop Trânsito and Gernot Kludasch, Rio de Janeiro, Relume/Dumara, 1994. The tolerance shown towards the Jewish population in allowing them to stay while at the same time restraining that presence by disallowing their right to citizenship, encouraged assimilation (by baptism), thus producing the dual effect of humiliation on the one hand and hope, one day, of acceptance on the other. Hannah Arendt observes that a German Jewish woman of the eighteenth century, in order to affirm herself socially, had no alternative other than money or beauty, either of which held the possibility of an advantageous marriage. Rahel had neither of those resources despite her intelligence and her personality – her only inheritance. Her deceptions are many.

century – opposed to the recognition of Jews, she is haunted by her lack of citizenship. She is a foreigner with no other home. The discovery that she carries with her five thousand years of history not of her choosing, is something she resents like a condemnation. It leads her to the very limit of bewilderment. Little does it matter that in a way that is also the lot of non-Jews on either side of rejection. Human beings choose neither when nor where they are born. The difference resides in the principle of wounded brotherhood and the lack of a community able to recognize and lessen suffering. Minorities organize themselves in order to cope with adversity and oppression. In the eighteenth century, the only resource available to these minorities was introspection and isolation of the soul, in itself problematic because of the lack of philosophical techniques capable of countering oppression. According to Hannah Arendt, Rahel Varnhagen struggles with the problem and finds no solutions until she discovers Lessing's formula: 'the fact of making oneself think' – for Lessing, that is man's supreme ability. 'Everything depends on the fact of one's own thought', he affirms during an interview. That fact of 'thinking on one's own' would free us from objects and their reality, it would set up a sphere of pure ideas, a whole new area accessible to any rational person, with neither knowledge nor experience. The self-sufficient act of 'thinking on one's own' frees us, representing a device of truth against the lie: the truth of the world. By an ingenious trick, characteristic of the Enlightenment, rectifying thought would make everything become clear. Inner confidence, the result of such an affirmation, would raise us above preconception; it would prevent cancellation, which happened before, and would neutralize humiliating glances, whispered comments and social barriers.

The spark of reflection strengthens the individual and lights up reality. Ambiguity had been revealed. Compared with how things had been previously, here was an opportunity: that of ushering in oppression as a political category. The time offered a favourable opening for contestation which, in turn, would lead to discussion ranging from injustice to kings and princes, which, moreover, would prove fatal for them. Soon the disadvantaged would have the right to speak.

However, the path followed by ideas is not an ordered one. As Jules Michelet remarked, even the printing press was incapable of immediately speeding up the tribute to life against the spirit of death, the one pervading the Inquisition which in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries lit the pyres of the Iberian Peninsula. On the contrary, the new invention was first put to service in the distribution of the dominating conceptions of the time which were cruel and archaic.

The relief that Lessing's formula had given Rahel Varnhagen did not, however, alter her condition. The thinking at that time would still continue to exert its power. So true is it that, as Hannah Arendt says, against the facts, thinking works in a mysterious and unfathomable way. In order to cope and find her place in society, for the young girl in question, lying was the only way.

She succumbs. Her very marriage is the result of unhappiness and thwarted love. She ends up advising her husband, libertarian at the outset of their relationship, to make use of available strategies in order to gain a title of nobility, which could only be obtained in getting closer to the appropriate people and positions.

Truth and falsehood have symmetrical, tortuous origins.

In the Judaeo-Christian world, the question of truth posed no problem. Coming from God, it was irrefutable. It had to be imposed on man with or without sacrifices. Moses was irritated by the opposition of the people for whom he was responsible, and by their being too fragile for his plan. His irritation moves from the contradiction between the behavioural proposal which was put to them and its practice. Terror and punishment intervene each time insubordination goes too far. The resulting theology is concentrated in the deepening of knowledge about God and not in an effort to prove his existence – a modern enterprise, bound to failure, as we know. At the turn of the millennium, we have become more careful and have put aside debate on the matter. The subject no longer interests us as much. We simply have to take it on ourselves, disconcertedly, but telling the lie of our principal truth loud and clear.

In one of his *Pensées* (778),[6] Pascal asserts that 'the history of the Church must properly be called the history of truth'. He goes on to admit that 'faith embraces several truths which appear to contradict each other'. Further on, he says 'There is therefore a great number of religious and moral truths, which seem repugnant yet all subsist in an admirable order'. Later in the text (793) he adds 'Truth has become so dimmed of late, and falsehood so settled, that unless one loves truth, one could not recognize it'. Pascal already belonged to a time of crisis.

In Christianity, questions of truth, falsehood and revelation all appear through the idea of evil. The only God, and Jesus, his representative, are not weighed down with the contradictions of Ancient Greece. Truth is imposed – whole and beyond all question. We are aware of the difficulty of the commandment,

6. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, in *Complete Works*, Paris, Gallimard/Pléiade, 1954, p. 1334.

given the natural dispersal of impressions, belonging to existence, turned in all directions, towards life and towards death, towards pain and towards pleasure, towards self and towards the other, and, in this inner self – unity, we should remember, does not exist outside mathematical inventions – towards self and towards self, in the multiplicity of 'selves' that make us up. We have, however, retained Saint Augustine's parameter and the shape of his discoveries when he reached what he was seeking. Here are the terms he used to describe the light which was finally penetrating his soul: 'Thus I was talking and crying, oppressed by the most bitter pain of the heart, when suddenly I heard a voice coming from the house next door. I do not know whether it was of a boy or a girl. The voice sang and said over and over again: 'Take up and read; take up and read'![7]

Receiving this message like an enlightenment, he took the book of the Epistles of the Apostles and read at random. From the very first chapter, he is struck by the sentence: 'Do not wander through gluttony and drunkenness, nor dishonesty and licentiousness, nor quarrels and fights, but clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ and do not lust after the pleasures of the flesh.' The conversion was made.

That type of discovery reappears throughout Western culture and can be seen quite unexpectedly in the centre of lay modernity as with Descartes' nights, in 1619, when dreams and visions provided him with the first outlines of a philosophical position,[8] or Rousseau of whom it could be said that in a similar way, during a break on his journey to visit Diderot, imprisoned at Vincennes, he intuitively received the ideas for his *Discourse on Science and Art* which later, in 1750, was acclaimed by the Academy of Dijon. Disguised in a secular manner, but without being in the slightest unusual, the mystical mechanism is clearly that of Saint Augustine.

For the latter, truth is divided into three, and the three make up one: the general principle which the thinker develops in the text entitled *On the Trinity:*

7. Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, 12th edition, translation by J. Oliveira Santos and A. Ambrosio de Pina, Braga, Livraria Apostolado da Imprensa, 1990, p. 205.

8. One of his biographies tells of the event in the following terms: 'Here, everything is felt passively, on the border of depression, while the initial phrase, faithfully quoted, transmits the positive momentum of inspiration which filled the philosopher with the keen will to move ahead.' In Geneviève Rodis Lewis, *Descartes, a biography*, translated by Joana Angelica D'Avila Melo, Rio de Janeiro, Record, 1995, p. 54.

being, knowing and wanting.[9] In the logic of that text, comments Hannah Arendt, 'I am knowing and wanting; I know who I am and what I want; and I want to be and to know'. An analogy which does not mean that being is analogous with the father, knowing with the son and wanting with the holy spirit, but simply that the spiritual 'I' has three different, inseparable yet distinct elements.

The being, knowing, wanting triad complements another triad, a triad of the mind: memory, intellect and will, three faculties which do not indicate three minds but only one, referring mutually to one another. I remember that I have a memory, an intellect and a will; I hear what I hear, what I want and what I remember; and I want to want, to remember and to hear. Let me say again, the lines printed on our souls are so winding. As with the movement of men and philosophy, experience leads to a dispersal whose evaluation, if we are not careful, risks being both unsatisfactory and confusing. To escape from that jungle – dangerous because of the sounds, colours and suggestions surrounding us – let us go against the current in the only direction which can free us: the taste for our own, typically human order. We form part of a kind which is not rigidly structured as are certain insects (bees and ants), nor lost and a slave to its basic needs as most animals are. To the extent that we are and we wish for chaos, we want to fight it and we do our utmost.

What is interesting in a parallel form is that in terms of the triad – birth, life and death – to the extent that our ideas deteriorate with use, we form ideas with which we have to confront what cannot be avoided: the incapacity to know. 'The eternal mystery of the universe' – said Einstein, quoted by Hannah Arendt – 'is its comprehensiveness'.[10] Because we have the will to know, and not the contrary, the mystery which prevents us from having full access to it intrigues us. Thus ideas follow one another in a profusion of opposites, in a type of war through which we fill absurdity and emptiness. It had to be that in a world which creates contradictions and fragmentation – in recognizing the value and utility with regard to progress – its subject, should be set free from God. Stranger is the fact, proven from time to time, of the rehearsal where we give only the impression of innovation, in calling

9. Hannah Arendt, *The Life of the Mind*, Vol. 2, translation by Helena Martins, Rio de Janeiro, Relume/Dumara, 1993, p. 259. This author's fascination for the father of the Catholic Church is known, as is his decisive influence on her ideas and how she organized them, and on the search for a revelation (the encounter with oneself) which implicit cruelty and pain render us incapable of perhaps ever attaining.

10. Op. cit., p. 104.

on age-old hypotheses, in the midst of change. More than ever, modesty dictates that humanity be clothed, and it hides its body in the same way that it flees from truth. From so much searching for truth, humanity proves rebellious. And if that is the way, what protects us? And why do we need protection? Since truth was with God, we should go and look for Him in the name of salvation which would allow us to confront adversity and win. But modernity killed such an idea. If we keep on discussing the question, it is only through its apparition – in the same way that, for a while, the traditional mind survived the invention of the printing press – drawn by habit, and not by conviction, and in fact we are more lost than we were before.

The lie is never totally untrue – psychology is aware of that,[11] since we pledge ourselves to falsehood while hiding part of what we are. Through falsehood and not only through truth, we continue to hope, we postpone a difficult, possibly unbearable encounter, we breathe and fill our lungs with oxygen. Contrary to delirium, which brings us to the innocence of fools and the intense beliefs of mad people – and we explain nothing as to the temperament – the 'grandeur' of lying, if we take away its malice, does not raze the barrier oppressing us; it opens up to us glimpses of a fissure and an interval. With no ethical clothing, falsehood reveals its role to us.

Coming back to Hannah Arendt's words: 'Hope makes us spy on the world through a minute crack, which circumstances may not have noticed, but which might, albeit so very narrow, help to arrange and attain the core of an indefinite sphere – because what is desired, what is hoped for, could at the last moment come through the crack like a definite happiness.'[12]

Lying is obviously also a way of not seeing. Anxious not to be recognized, Rahel Varnhagen, because she did not accept her situation, had to close her eyes, at least until she could see her way out. Lessing's 'Thinking by oneself' introduces superiority into inferiority. But for all that, one had to isolate oneself and keep quiet. Once in society, in the crushing profusion of reality, the motor began to fail. Strange mechanism, she must have thought, that at times offers protection and at others, cannot; sometimes it dominates reality and sometimes bows down to it, in defeat.

11. But does not psychology also represent falsehood, something we invent in order to believe that one day – like mathematics and conceptual science – like a god created by us, it will pull a rabbit out of a hat, the truth of what we have conjured, only to shut it up straight away in a cage?

12. Op. cit., p. 24.

The drama which follows, despite the changes which took place, surpasses the limits of the time. Apart from the actual circumstances, the Eichmann trial in Jerusalem raised questions. Hannah Arendt realized that she had certain affinities – common ancestry – with her compatriot, in whom she had taken an interest since her youth.[13] What disturbs her cannot be simply stated as a behavioural problem about what is and what is not permitted, which would allow her to melt into the crowd and hide the question of segregation. The crisis of absolutism of the eighteenth century decreed the end of imperialism with its political conceptions, and ejected them from Europe where civilization appeared more just and more pure. Negation of the Other was concentrated in the colonies, on black people in particular, or oriental people on whose shoulders rested the economy as well as agreements between nations. Cruelty was thus exported through subterfuge, denounced by clashes in international relations until the Second World War. But that is another story.

Evil, clothed in innocence, took up its place in the dock. Opposite evil is the question of thought as place and origin of dilemma. Far more than a spectre, because it makes us conspicuous, thought is with us like freedom but also at the same time as responsibility. Considering this when faced with Eichmann, one comes to terms with the presence in civilization of barbarity, civilization and barbarity hand in hand, without the possibility of separating them. At one point, the author of *The Human Condition* resorts to the importance of the category of astonishment, that other capacity attached to knowledge, scandal and life, as opposed to apathy, unconscious brutality and death. The practice of astonishment and showing it, however, happens mainly in a selective manner, with the phenomenon of choice which cancels some issues and retains others among what we can or cannot do without.

Eichmann would have represented security if he had confirmed the lack and not the presence of thought. To presuppose that barbarity comes from a process of deficiency opposing the spark of intelligence, would make things easier regarding anything to do with civilization. But this is obviously not the case. In fiction, crazy professors are able to carry their inventions through to the final outcome. If that were to happen we would find ourselves in the midst of a destruction

13. The first manuscripts of the book on Rahel Varnhagen date from 1933 when Hannah Arendt left Germany.

which would annihilate us all without the inventor's enthusiasm being in the slightest shaken or diminished.

'Thinking by oneself' or self-sufficient thought: does that provide the solution? How can we be sure that truth is in the thought and not in the deed? Criticism shows that there are true truths and false truths. Are the true truths the ones which obey an exacting communication between the self and the world – in the manner of the existentialist dream – between what I want and what is wanted (including what is wanted from me)? Unfortunately, we have to recognize, sadly, remembering Sartre, that singularity and totality – apart from a few fleeting moments – are not meant for each other.

According to his biography, Heidegger reflected on this question at some length.[14] He puts forward three theses – once again, there is a triad – to distinguish the traditional conception of the essence of truth and what he imagines to have been the first definition: the 'place' of truth is the statement (judgment); the essence of truth is in the 'agreement' of the judgement with its object; Aristotle, the father of logic, linked truth with judgement as though that were its place of origin (*De interpretatione*) while enforcing the definition of truth as an 'agreement'.[15] Is there a ruling in this manner of seeking out origins? And in the end, what do they mean?

Justice as authority of truth follows a long trail – which is reaffirmed from the Renaissance onwards – leading to the modernity of secular man, master of himself, making his own laws and obeying them.

14. What Karl Jasper or Karl Löwith could not accept was Heidegger's absence, rather than the mistake he made during the Hitler period. After 1945, Heidegger did not merely content himself with no longer tackling this subject, but he erased from his texts all militant references. Now, confession is inscribed in the West through the institution of absolution, on condition that the sinner recognizes his fault by way of linking being to idea. The scholars who handed down to us the habit of confession, imagined that once it had been made, it took possession of the individual. If such recourse were not enough among men to lessen the misdemeanor, depending on the gravity of the act, God gave it worth and recognition. Which is where we come to our question: did Heidegger use silence in order to lie? And apart from him, in absolute terms, is silence (the great silence) truth or falsehood? After all, even the most inexhaustible, unending discourse – and literature stresses this theme – is powerless to make us explain what we really are. Is it not possible, therefore, with regard to our presence in this world, that it is all nothing but words, in the style of Becket, enormous, impossible heaps of words, totally meaningless, our greatest secret (and who, with any certainty, could affirm to the contrary?) being the outcome of our basic inability to bear silence?

15. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translation by François Vezin, Paris, Gallimard, 1986, p. 214.

According to Kant, in *Criticism of Pure Reason*: 'Truth and appearance are not in the object in so far as it is induced, but in the justice applied to it in so far as it is thought'.

Eichmann instilled in Hannah Arendt in the idea of a circle, like one of those traffic islands conceived by the urban genius, where vehicles come together in order to disperse, as though arriving where they arrive, somewhere in all the basic possibilities – in this case, evil – it were possible to find a way out. The same idea is reflected in her aversion to Adorno's anti-Heidegger views.[16] At the time, it was supposed that the point of no return held secrets. It merited close examination. She believed that thinking, wanting and deciding were the fruits of just one tree. Earlier than Hannah Arendt, Kant had imagined that good depended on an act of will whose aim was to deliver each one of us from evil. Agreement came from a decision taken by our distant forebears and preserved intact by the majority who settled down and prevented its dissolution. Whatever may be the hell making up our group behaviour, the strength of acting together has advantages over isolation and the peace of egoism. It is not a question of instinct. It was not simply by accident that the security which came on the scene helped prevent the ruins inherent in the process from going beyond acceptable bounds and becoming a death scenario. The authentic engineers who invented this security perfected their talents in order to collect the material, learn from mistakes and, above all, discover vocations.

The dimension attributed to will in such a basic concept reaches other levels. Understanding the causes of virtues and failings through psychology does not lead us to accept perversions simply because through them everything ends up being reconstituted. In the last analysis, there are clearly no guilty parties since everyone recognizes that, directly or indirectly, they are responsible for what happens, with or without God. The principle of fraternity prevails over the scars which preceded it. None the less, will – the law accepts this – retains a role within actions. People who show proof of rectitude are the way they are because of the rigour with which they decide to be so, and not because of temperament or genetic inheritance.

How can we explain the use of one law for the rich and one for the poor with regard to Nazi activities and Eichmann on the one hand, and Heidegger on the other? Does intellectual poverty on one side, faced with wealth on the other,

16. Will the generosity of love be enough to absolve the crime, as in the view of Christ? Why, then, were there the Nuremberg and Eichmann trials? The relation between human nature and forgiveness remains unpredictable and extremely problematic.

increase or decrease the gravity of their attitudes? We know to what extent inheritance puts a value on intellectual legacy, a sort of essential heritage for us.

In France, during the purging, when those in new positions of power questioned the responsibility of collaborators in 1945 with the victory of the resistance, the debate became complicated when it touched on artists and philosophers. When called upon to state his position on Brasillach, who had received the death penalty, Camus, who was opposed to executions (although he was obsessed by those who had died because they had been denounced by the accused), in the end signed the request for clemency. He did, however, send a note to Marcel Aymé, explaining in order to avoid any misunderstanding, that he would never 'shake his hand'.[17]

Opting in favour of a half-way position, Camus refused to declare his convictions and at the same time avoided being unconditionally associated with absolution. He digresses on the meaning of justice which he would always consider as problematic. To paraphrase Pascal, Camus could say: truth is not in the extremities but in the middle.[18]

Human nature has difficulty in following the teachings of Christ. From that time on runs the chronicle of wars perpetuated by history. The feeling of love stops at the object of that love; it does not extend to the next person. It is, however, enough to decrease the rigour of how omissions are considered and even the explicit participation in perverse circumstances. Like Rahel Varnhagen, Hannah Arendt could do everything except pledge her heart and recognize, in Heidegger's case, the falsehood in truth and vice versa. This pain is so firmly established in us, between being and not being, that only through misunderstandings or in a delirious fever can we be explicit on the incapacity to think of what is actually taking hold of us. Like Shakespeare's Richard III:

What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by:
Richard loves Richard: that is, I am I.
Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am.

17. See Olivier Todd, *Albert Camus, une vie*, Paris, Gallimard, 1996, p. 375. This declaration appears in a letter dated 27 January. In addition to the implicit question of morality, this incident shows the importance given on both sides to declarations made by intellectuals. The whole country was listening – yet another argument to show that the importance of actions depended on who would take them.

18. This indicates that he is in favour of revolt against revolution, even to the extent of breaking with his friends, at a time when everyone was radically divided into two factions.

Then fly: what! From myself? Great reason why:
Lest I revenge. What! Myself upon myself?
Alack! I love myself. Wherefore? For any good
That I myself have done unto myself?
Oh! No: alas! I rather hate myself
For hateful deeds committed by myself.
I am a villain. Yet I lie, I am not
Fool, of thyself speak well: fool, do not flatter.'[19]

The trap is set and closing. The rabbit we are pulling out of the hat is now ourselves and that is what divides us. We have to decide whether to stay in the centre or out on the edge, or if we decree death to the notion of guilt. Such a doubt brings to mind Thomas Hardy and the outcome of his beautiful novel when the heroine, safe in the life she has made for herself, looks back, conscious of the precariousness of her conquests: 'And in being forced to class herself among the fortunate she did not cease to wonder at the persistence of the unforeseen, when the one to whom such unbroken tranquillity had been accorded in the adult stage was she whose youth had seemed to teach that happiness was but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain.'[20]

It is only within the sphere of illusion that good and evil, and truth and falsehood detach themselves from each other into distinct worlds. In the last analysis, the cult of life does not give us truths in which we can have confidence such as we would have in God. That is where our tragedy lies. And yet we do not merely accept and take a rest. Art clearly shows us this with the conviction of Don Quixote for whom 'the important thing is that although not seeing it, you must believe in it, confess it, affirm it, swear it and defend it.'[21]

19. *The life of the mind*, p. 142.
20. Thomas Hardy, *The Mayor of Casterbridge*, London, Penguin, 1994.
21. Edmond Jabès, *Le Seuil, le Sable: Poésies Complètes 1943-1988*, Paris, Gallimard/Poésie, 1990, p. 15.

Who thinks whom? It is the world which thinks us[1]

Jean Baudrillard

The problem lies in abandoning the critical thought which is the very essence of our philosophical culture but somehow pertains to a past history and a past life. As the analysis of a deterministic society was deterministic, so should the analysis of a society which is indeterministic, divided, problematical and exponential – a society of critical mass and extreme phenomena, entirely dominated by the relation with uncertainty – be indeterministic.

The conventional realms of subject and object, of the end and the means, of truth and falsehood, good and evil, no longer correspond with the state of our world. The dimensions of our so-called 'real' world, including those of time, space, determination, representation, and therefore of critical and reflective thought, are misleading. The whole discursive plane of psychology, sociology, ideology and mentality which surrounds us is a trap. It still functions in a Euclidean dimension – and at the moment we have hardly any theoretical intuition into a world which has become quantum – just as unknowingly it has for some time lapsed into simulation. I would even go so far as to say that it is in this dogged superstition of the 'real' and of the reality principle that lies the true deception of our time.

The question, therefore, is not the recent one of the abuse of scientific metaphor. Rather, is it not abusive to use concepts such as indetermination and

1. This paper is followed by a debate which took place in Rio de Janeiro on 23 April 1999.

uncertainty, which came from elsewhere, from the confines of physics? The question is precisely: what is the relation of quantum mechanics, fractional physics and catastrophes, and the radical principle of uncertainty to our universe, and to the human, mental, moral, social, economic and political world? It is not a question of transferring concepts from the physical and biological sciences to metaphors or science fiction, but of literally transfusing them into the heart of the real world, and conceiving of them literally and simultaneously in both worlds. They appear in our real world like theoretical, non-identifiable objects or strange attractions, which they already are in the scientific microcosm they revolutionized, and they upset our human macrocosm and our linear time without our being really aware of this disruption.

The fractal, the uncertainty relationship and chaos are not confined to the scientific field. Everywhere they are active, here and now, in the order of mores and events without one having any priority over the other. Part of the uncertainty is indeed that we cannot say if a particular intuition of science is relevant to a particular state of society or particular moment of history, or the reverse. This problem of causal relation and disciplinary mechanics is itself a deterministic problem and therefore meaningless. All this erupts simultaneously and we cannot but deplore the incurably causal and deterministic impotence of both our thought and our language, in confronting the simultaneity of our material and mental world.

When theoretical thought calls on uncertainty, anti-matter, viruses, the critical mass, and when it calls on biology, micro-physics or cosmology, it is not a question of metaphor, which always implies a subject's exploring the world from the privileged position of subject and language – although according to Lacan, it is language which thinks. It is rather a question of simultaneous correlation in all registers of the same uncertainty principle and of homologies that prop each other up with no other definition or verification than that convergence which is not the convergence of truth, but of a type of objectal thought, of thought coming from the object, and where the subject no longer has a hand. The subject cannot be trusted to evade the truth. What must be trusted is the object and the filter of the object, particularly the theoretical filter of all these new objects that have sprung up beyond our horizon.

From now on it is no longer the human being who perceives the world, but the inhuman which perceives us. We can now only grasp the world from an omega point outside the human being, from objects and hypotheses which play the

role of strange attractions for us. Already a long time ago, thought flirted with this type of object at the confines of inhumanity – with primitive societies, for example, questioning Western humanism. But today we have to look beyond that critical thought, towards far stranger objects which carry a radical uncertainty and on which we can no longer impose our perspectives.

The only hope is in criminal and inhuman thought. That is because thought itself must form an integral part of the object process. It must become exponential, take a leap, mark a change and surge in power. The risk is no longer in placing the system in contradiction with itself – we know that it regenerates itself in the spiral of crisis – but rather in destabilizing it by infiltration or injection of a viral thought, thought that is basically inhuman or lets itself be thought by inhumanity.

Are thought and conscience not indeed already a type of inhumanity, a growth or a luxurious dysfunction which contravenes all evolution in turning back upon itself and trapping evolution in its own image? 'The human conscience gave a bad conscience to the world' (Jean Rostand). Does not the neuronal development of the brain already constitute a critical threshold in relation to evolution and to the species? So why not play the game through to the end, accelerating the process and hastening other sequences and other forms – those of an objective fatality about which we have not the slightest idea?

But with this view of thought as the pole of uncertainty, the question remains: is this uncertainty of thought a consequence of the uncertainty of the world, or is it thought that makes the world fall into uncertainty? Same problem, same unsolvable dilemma – a dilemma that does not exist in the classical thought of truth, where everything is admittedly not true, but nothing is 'undecidable'.

Physical uncertainty is presented in Heisenberg's principle. Position and speed of a particle cannot be simultaneously perceived. Uncertainty is in the fact that there does not exist in any code or formula a possible transcription or equivalence of the global state of a particle. So much for physical uncertainty. The same goes for 'metaphysical' uncertainty. It characterizes all reality where exchange is impossible and where there is no equivalent in any other language. Thus there is no equivalence of the world in its globality. This is even its definition: the universe has no equivalent anywhere – no exchange, no duplicate, no representation and no mirror. Any mirror would still be part of the world. Therefore there is no possible point of reference or verification – no proof of the world, therefore none of reality either. That is the deep root of uncertainty, the impossibility of going beyond

illusion. Whatever may exist and be verified locally, the uncertainty of the world in its globality is unquestionable.

Let us take as example the field of economics, the field of exchange *par excellence.* Taken in its globality, nothing is exchanged for it and it cannot be exchanged. There is no meta-economic equivalent for economics. Therefore economics itself is a basic uncertainty. Of course, this is something economics pretends to ignore and economic science tends to 'side-track'. Yet through the very workings of the economic world, this inevitable indetermination reverberates in the wavering of its assumptions, equations and strategies and, finally, in the drift into speculation and the chaotic interaction of its agents and elements.

The political, ethical or aesthetic fields are all affected by the same eccentricity. Taken as a whole, none can be exchanged for anything else. Literally, none has any meaning outside itself and nothing that can justify it. The same goes for the political field. Nothing escapes it; it absorbs all meanings. But politics itself can hardly be converted or reflected in a superior reality which would give it meaning. That is the secret of the political illusion: deprived of an ultimate reference, it deliriously creates its auto-references. From there comes the exponentiality of the political mass, the staging, the speeches and the endless expansion on a scale with nothing but that uncertainty. The world of reality itself cannot be exchanged for the world of the sign. Their relation becomes 'undecidable'. This is when reality itself becomes, at it were, exponential. Everything becomes real and everything happens unconditionally, ceasing to mean anything or meaning only itself and everything at the same time: virtual reality. Meta-languages of reality (human sciences, social sciences, etc.) develop in an eccentric fashion, in the image of their centrifugal object. They become speculative. A parallel universe grows, a virtual one, with no internal or external limitations, with no references, therefore with no connection to our own. It forms the total screen but does not reflect it; it develops for itself until it overtakes and contradicts its own finality. All trends taken together (media, television, Internet, cyberworld), that so-called 'information' universe, produces only the 'undecidable' and becomes 'undecidable' itself.

We could go on like this forever. Even in the biological and life spheres, the phenomenon of life can neither be exchanged for some ultimate causality, nor for any transcendent end (despite all the religions and metaphysics). It can only be exchanged for itself or for nothing. And this uncertainty in turn contaminates the biological sciences, as well as any ethics which might want to exchange them for values, and makes them, in the course of their discoveries, more and more uncertain

as to their prospects, and not because of any temporary incapacity but because they are nearing the definitive uncertainty which is their absolute horizon.

And what about thought? What is the situation with regard to thought? With what can it be exchanged? If exchange is impossible on all sides, and if a critical point of view no longer exists – be it moral, political or philosophical – and if we hypothesize that there is 'nothing' rather than something, then thought cannot be exchanged with truth or reality. Thus, in turn, thought becomes impossible to exchange with anything at all.

Thought is the outcome of a dual conjugation. In this sense, it has a double, not individual form. The very essence of Otherness. We are not free to think (nor to exist) only of the self and of our identity, nor only of the so-called 'real' world. Everything comes from this adversity, this twin complicity. No one can lay claim to his own life or to his own thought. The human being is a sequence of forms and self-will is meaningless. Existence and thought are 'devolved' to us and all transference is possible according to a symbolic sharing which has become the basic rule of all other cultures. Neither existence nor the world belongs to us. They are devolved on us and we are also devolved on them according to a reciprocal ordering which is the golden rule. In this ideal form, we cannot say literally that it is the world which perceives us, the Other which perceives us, or the object which perceives us. Thought, intelligence and seduction all come to us from elsewhere, from that parallel sequence. That was the secret of vanished cultures and it totally contradicts our contemporary will to think of the world objectively without the shadow of reciprocity. Doubtless nothing has changed fundamentally; it is still the world which perceives us. The difference is that today we think the opposite.

Critical thought wants to be the mirror of the universe, but the universe does not go through the mirror stage. Thought must therefore overcome the mirror stage, the ultra-conformist stage of the subject confronted with its object, and accede to the later stage of the object which perceives us and of the world which perceives us. The thought of matter, the object/thought is no longer reflective; it is reversible. It becomes the sequence of language and appearance and is nothing more than a particular circumstance in the world sequence. Thought is the factual, phenomenal part of the world and no longer has the privilege of being universal. It no longer has any privilege with regard to the incomparable event of the world, but it no doubt has the charm of singularity. In any case, it is irreducible to the conscience of the subject. In world disorder, thought as attribute and specific destiny of the species is too precious to be reduced to the conscience of the subject. There would

then be a game of exchanging thought and the world which would have nothing to do with the impossible exchange with truth – which would presume even that exchange to be impossible.

What could be exchanged with what I am thinking and writing here? Is there an equivalent of it, a standard or exchange value? Absolutely not. No exchange is possible. That inevitably reaches the failing of the world, and thought can only annihilate itself in the object that thinks it, just as it annihilates the object of its thinking. That is how thought escapes from truth. And we must escape from truth, if nothing else. In order to escape from truth, above all we must not have confidence in the subject. We have to rely on the object with its strange attraction and on the world with its definitive uncertainty.

The object/thought, now inhuman, is what presupposes the impossible exchange. It no longer seeks to transform the world nor to exchange it for ideas. It has chosen uncertainty and made it the rule of the game. It becomes the thought of the world which thinks us. In so doing, it changes the course of the world. For, if an equivalence of the world and thought is impossible, there is, on the other hand and beyond any critical point of view, a reversal of the game: a reciprocal alteration of matter and thought. The game is reversed if the subject has been able to cause a stir in the object world; today the object causes a stir in the subject world. If the irruption of conscience has caused a stir in the course of the world, today the world causes a stir in the course of conscience in so far as it now forms part of its material destiny, of the destiny of matter and therefore of its radical uncertainty.

Physical alteration of conscience by the world and metaphysical alteration of the world by conscience: no need to wonder where the alteration begins or 'who is thinking whom?' What is at stake on both sides is happening simultaneously and each side turns the other away from its aim. Has not man, with his innate conscience, his ambiguity, his symbolic order and his power of illusion ended up altering what is universal and affecting or infecting it with that same uncertainty which is his own? Has he not ended up contaminating the world – of which he is an integral part – by his non-being and his attitude of not-belonging-to-the-world?

That raises many questions regarding the objectivity of knowledge, and not only that of classical knowledge but also of quantum and random knowledge. Beyond the experimentation which alters its object by its very intervention – the scientific predicament which is now banal – it is man, as a whole and in all his varying degrees, who is dealing with a universe which he himself has altered and desta-

bilized through his thinking. If objective laws of the world exist, it is because of man that they are neither formulated nor functional. Instead of it being man who brings reason to a chaotic universe, it would be on the contrary man who would bring disorder, through his act of knowledge and thinking, and this constitutes an inconceivable bid for power: to lay down a point – even if only in simulation – outside the universe, from which the universe could be seen and thought about. If the universe has no duplicate, since nothing exists outside it, then the simple attempt to make this point exist outside it is tantamount to an attempt or a will to put an end to it.

This final solution, this perfect crime, cannot be countered by anything short of transferring to the world, to the happening of the world and to the appearance of the world, the responsibility of thinking us, instead of taking upon ourselves the responsibility of thinking the world. Human thought, too human in a hyper-space where correlations other than our own are involved, is transferred and defers to the impersonal thinking of the Other.

Thus is opened the perspective of an objective game of chance – which is nothing but a happy coincidence – where the world is the player and the player is the world. There is total complicity between the hazardous game of the world and that of thought – a supernatural consonance between the option of thought and that of an order in which you are helpless, but which seems effortlessly to beckon and obey you. There is no more room for accident, since it is the world which perceives us, the sequence is assured. No more volition either, since in a way everything is already willed. So nothing prohibits this paradoxical hypothesis: it is indeed our thought which rules the world on condition that first we think that it is the world which thinks us.

But then what of the connection between an object/thought and a world with no final reference or possible explanation? How would thought explain a world which it could no longer claim to represent?

It is in fact its 'éminence grise', its shadow. Thought follows the world like its shadow. Shadowing the world. Thought neither claims nor analyses, neither interprets nor transforms the world. Its destiny is to be the shadow which duplicates it and which, in following it, provides its secret destiny. Thought neither strives to expose some secret of the world nor to discover its hidden side. Thought is the hidden side of the world. It does not discover that the world has a double life: it is the double or parallel life of the world. Simply by appearing to obey its slightest movement, thought divests the world of its meaning, it predestines it to ends

other than those it gives itself. In following its traces, thought shows that behind its supposed ends, one end, in fact the world goes nowhere. The act of thinking is an act of seduction which aims to divert the world from its being and meaning, at the risk of being itself seduced and diverted.

This is what theory does with the multiple systems it analyses. It does not try to criticize them directly nor to fix limits for them in reality. Theory maximizes and exaggerates them in duplicating them and following their trace; it seduces them in pushing them to the limit. The objective of theory is to make a statement on the system which follows its internal logic to the end without adding anything, and also completely reverses it, revealing its hidden nonsense, the 'nothing' which haunts it, the emptiness at the core of the system and the shadow which duplicates it. That statement is at the same time a pure description of the system in real terms, and a radical prescription of this same system, demonstrating that it excludes reality and finally has no meaning.

To double the world is to respond to a world of no meaning with a theory which itself resembles nothing; to respond to an extreme world with a maximal theory. Most critics do not grasp this effect of radicalization and maximalization. The fact that this is neither an empirical refutation of these systems – refutation which would, in this case, partake of the same reality as the systems – nor pure fiction with no connection to them. Or rather, it is both at the same time – and that is the singularity of this theory. It is simultaneously the mirror of the world which is already at its limits and about which the theory has nothing to say, and also what pushes the world to its limits, the pinpointing of an implicit trend as well as the force which pushes it to its end. While such a theory recognizes that there is nothing to say about the world, that this world cannot be exchanged for anything, it simultaneously shows that this world is just as it is and can only be the way it is, without this exchange with theory.

That is why writing can go to the limit of its logic, knowing that at a certain point the world can but 'follow' and begin to resemble it. But this also means that writing is only able to go to that limit because writing itself follows the immanent order of the world. Predestination and reversibility are the dimensions of a thought which becomes the shadow of the world and its double. It repeats the world and the world does not exist without that repetition. It is only the symbol of the difference between the world and itself, and that difference could not be seen prior to the thought. The world lacks nothing before being written, but afterwards it can only be explained on that basis. What theory reveals and replaces is something

like 'nothing' – an absence which theory makes visible and conceals. This is the 'nothing' that theory both is and cannot be, even to the extent that it is.

Radical thought is at the violent intersection of meaning and nonsense, truth and untruth, continuity of the world and continuity of nothing. Contrary to the discussion on reality, which bets that there is something rather than nothing, and attempts to base itself on an objective, decipherable world, radical thought, for its part, backs the radical illusion of the world. It aspires to the status and power of illusion, reinstating the untruthfulness of facts and the meaninglessness of the world, and making the hypothesis that there is nothing rather than something – as well as tracking the nothing which prevails under the apparent continuity of things. It is understood that illusion is not what opposes reality, but is rather another, more subtle reality which envelops the first with the sign of its disappearance. Thought as illusion or seduction can be taken for deception. But neither is deception – and language itself is a deception – that which opposes truth: it is a more subtle truth which envelops reality with the sign of its obliteration.

Finally, what is the use of thought and of theory? What stands between thought and the world is 'the Other by Himself': definitive suspense, definitive reversibility between world and thought. Always bear in mind the three basic theorems: the world was given to us as enigmatic and unintelligible, and the task of radical thought is to make it, if possible, even more enigmatic and more unintelligible; since the world is evolving towards a frenzied state of affairs, we should hold a frenzied view of the world; and the player should never be greater than the game itself, nor the theoretician greater than the theory, nor the theory greater than the world itself.

Eduardo Portella

This itinerary depicted by Jean Baudrillard is quite evocative for those of us who have accompanied his intellectual path. It runs from the 'shadow of the silent majority', from the re-semanticization of the mirror, from 'seduction' and all the keys for open thinking, to the recognition of fatal strategies and even of the perfect crime. It seems to me that when he finally reaches the enigma, the enigma itself becomes a strategy. Recognition of the enigma or the possibility of admitting it, through this or that function or dysfunction, constitutes a radicalization of thought which should be confronted with everyday conversations whose concern is devoid of historical cover. It is precisely this very uncertain issue that we are trying to think

through, if it is at all possible, at the change of a millennium which has run out of thought.

Muniz Sodré

It is difficult to comment, without having prior knowledge of the text, on a discourse as full as that of Jean Baudrillard. Yet, behind the idea of 'world/thought' or 'object/thought', I can see a view on the crisis, indeed a thinking of crisis, as much as the crisis of thought or the crisis of possibilities of continuing to think in linear terms, in derivative terms and along continuous lines which allow for the creation, the making or the production of meaning.

In trying to produce a thought from an object, I can also see an indication of the crisis of the Western world. Each building and each house has what Monteiro Lobato called 'its stays and pillars' which support the foundations. In *Umbehagen der Kultur*, translated as 'Civilization and its Discontents', Freud very clearly defined the way Western civilization and thought are structured when he stated that the possibility of deciding at any time and in any place, in terms of our choosing – whether these are political or social choices, choices of thought or theoretical ones – is constructed around the ideals of cleanliness – combatting dirt at all costs – of beauty and order. It is this order, this quality of what is reliable and this stability of the principles of order which lead to what is called 'ontological safety', that is, the certainty which, to a great extent, directed Western identity and about which some Western thinkers have reservations. Freud had reservations with regard to the stability and certainty of conscience, while Marx had reservations with regard to the certainty of the economy. Others, like Jean Baudrillard, start from uncertainty as a principle.

I believe it is in this uncertainty that he tries to think through the hypertextual form which affords the possibility of permanently establishing misshapen, non-metaphorical correlations, in so far as the metaphor still takes the subject for granted. The crisis, crisis of thought and the difficulty of thinking are precisely the difficulty of 'how to think' by erasing distance and projecting beyond the position of subject/object distance. All critical thought and all ordered thought is secured by the distance between the subject and the object.

When that distance is reduced or when it no longer exists, ontological uncertainty and insecurity are installed. I do not know whether one can start from the object since that would still always presuppose the subject, and I do not see how

the object itself can be thought without also thinking of the subject category. The object is always managed by the subject. If he says 'the subject does not exist', my reply is 'neither does the object exist'. Starting to think from the object is, for me, the Western difficulty. If that is put in political terms, the question is how the West has been able to reconcile the abstract community, which is the state and political society, with the actual community which is life, the daily life of people – the way of life.

This relation between the duty-existence of the state and natural life in a contingency of people's customs, has always been guaranteed and brought about through controlled, ordered and set separation of the subject from the object. According to the Ancient Greeks, Zoë is still turned towards Bios.

I would say that modernity, the time in which we are living, has strived to overcome that and to neutralize the tensions of putting together subject and object. I conceive technology, trans-nationalization of capital and the justification of the unity of the world as an attempt to neutralize the tensions of bringing together subject and object, and even to cancel out the difference between them. So I see technology the way Jean Baudrillard called 'virtual', like an attempt to create another world, another sphere of the world, where this difficulty would be neutralized and would no longer be perceived as tension.

In *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle talks of the qualifications of life: he identifies the contemplative life of the philosophers which is *bios theoretikos*, political life which is *bios politikos*, and a life of pleasure, which is *apolaustikos*. I think that in this millennium and in this crisis of thought, we are trying to create a virtual *bios* which is a conjugation of technology and trade, towards which we might – through substitution and in a parallel way – create a world which neutralizes this growing difficulty of knowing how to move from 'I' to the Other, from 'I' to 'you', or from 'I' to the object. Thus I see thought coming from the object as the expression of that anguish. But I have not yet solved the difficulty of how to think of the object without the subject.

Rafael Argullol

It might be interesting from a didactic point of view to compare the end of the twentieth century with that of the nineteenth century. It seems to me that, at least in Western culture, we have lived the end of the twentieth century under the weight of hubris, whereas the end of the nineteenth century was clearly marked by the

force and even inertia of hubris. Thinking such as Nietzsche's, perfectly reflected the dominant symptoms of the time, not so much as philosophical thought but particularly as diagnosis of an era.

Without further delay I will now present three scenarios of hubris currently weighing us down. The first is the global change of the human being, which we could call the reproduction scenario, the possibility of reaching paradise through reproduction. The second is that of progress, and more specifically the myth of progress, the accession to paradise through scientific and technological progress – here it would be particularly appropriate to compare the comments and chronicles of the end of the nineteenth century with those of the twentieth century. The third is on a different qualitative plane, but is symptomatic: it is the creative or artistic scene.

The breaking forces and centrifugal forces which appeared at the end of the nineteenth century under the horizon of hubris or unbounded ambition are also implicitly analysed by Nietzsche, and found immediate expression at the end of the nineteenth century. These forces are also in the artistic avant-garde movements which boosted the renewal of humanism through art. In all these cases we can note a revolution, the renewing of paradise for humanism and, in this sense, hubris. What happened in the nineteenth century was no less a type of final spearhead, on the one hand 'Promethean', and on the other 'Mephistophelian' of what one could call humanist anthropocentrism, the anthropocentrism of Western humanism.

At the end of the twentieth century, when the dreams, promises and intuitions of the thinkers and artists of the end of the nineteenth century have made their final exit from the scene, which was often traumatic and sometimes grandiose, we are living haltingly, with an almost physical handicap. Where we placed revolution, we can also put Auschwitz or the Gulag. Where we found progress, we can add Hiroshima, the ecological disaster and some sections of spiritual creativity. We have become – and this is well illustrated by our art – a mutilated, limping giant.

On the one hand our scene shows great scientific and technological creativity which is indeed strongly criticized by the human sciences, yet it rouses society's expectations. Just think of the fields of medicine, genetics and, of course, astronomy. On the other hand, in what could be called the tradition of spiritual creativity, we have an impression of immobility and fossilization. In any case, our contemporary society does not expect much from that field. The strengths and hopes which it might have held at the end of the nineteenth century have departed.

Contemporary societies no longer trust art and creativity when it comes to the essence of man. From now on, the comparison we propose to set up leads us to take note of the weight this strong feeling of hubris has today on Western culture and through it, on culture world-wide. This means that humanity, at this final stage of human anthropocentrism which leads it to a simultaneous radicalization of 'Prometheism' and 'demonism', has reached the depths. So we must now distance ourselves from the dynamics which have led us to these depths. However, criticism of thought which transforms itself into other types of thought, or the criticism of certain 'truths' which can be equally easily changed into 'truth', I think, are part of the central horizon of that guilt feeling of hubris.

I have been following Jean Baudrillard's argument with the greatest attention and I think that it leads us to a whole series of formulations among which there is the disarticulation of hubris, a movement which seems to me to be completely illegitimate while being totally explicable. It would obviously be suicidal to continue or to reform or even renew 'hubristic' thoughts. But I think that almost always leads us to a sort of lacuna or break, the intellectual explanation of which is difficult. And that is the question Jean Baudrillard has just posed: how does the world perceive us? Again, it changes into theory. The object, in some way, becomes autonomous in relation to the subject. It is a non-thought which, in turn, is converted into thought. In a way Leopardi had already outlined such a position. So, to my mind, a vicious circle, although very difficult to break, is establishing itself. One of the questions which must be the focus of our attention is that of the conditions of realization of a categorical, generalized criticism of anthropocentrism. All the more, since this criticism must avoid denying that it is impossible for us as humans to completely renounce anthropocentric positions from the logical as well as linguistic point of view.

A possible solution would be a direct confrontation with this hubris, to which humanist anthropocentrism has finally brought us. In picking up again the concepts of Greek tragedy, it is possible to propose a measured culture in which we could effectively mix the criticism of anthropocentric ambition along with the intention of reaching a new relationship between nature and man and between the cosmos and the created being. We could thus propose a criticism of ideological hubris which led to totalitarianism, starting from the defence of a new relation between what we call 'the individual' and 'the community'. I would incline almost to a 'non-renouncement' of our origins, if it were not for certain aspects which are indirectly 'Promethean' and 'Mephistophelian'. However, despite these trails to be explored, when it is a question of the culture of the new millennium, we must

recognize the difficulty of dealing with and understanding the radical excessiveness with which the humanist anthropocentric project is ending.

Ronaldes de Melo e Souza

I should like to clarify the question we have before us of paradigmatic models. But first of all, I want to define a question which bothered me some years ago. It seems to me that we are reaching an end, but it is not simply the end of a history as might normally be thought.

It seems to me that during the first millennium before Jesus Christ, there was a radical change over the whole Earth, and that revolution developed religiously by the separation of the order of this world from the order of another world. The idea that a transcendental order exists was installed and developed, and that transcendental order became the model for each principle of behaviour on Earth: everything happened according to that model.

Moreover, the German philosopher, Karl Jaspers, raised the hypothesis of axial time, which is to say radical change. This question has been studied at length ever since and it seems to me that two cultures appeared religiously from this first revolution: a culture of integration and a culture of separation.

When we study the most ancient human culture, through mythology, we can see that there was a fundamental tendency towards interaction – an interaction of contrary elements, symmetrical and opposed, the unity being always dual. It was, therefore, a fundamentally dialogic, interactive culture. The separation of the sensible from the intelligible, introduced in Israel by the prophets, in Ancient Greece by the thinkers, in India by the priests and also in China, made possible the emergence of the clerical, priestly and intellectual culture. Already at that time there was an intellectual movement of planetary dimension. Globalization does not date from today. This religious revolution was spread in different domains.

On the philosophical plane, we notice that in Ancient Greece, Plato, one of the greatest philosophers of all time, applied a radical separation between the sensible and the intelligible, between being and becoming and between life and death which did not exist in an even older culture in Ancient Greece. It appears to me that Ancient Greek culture instituted the myth, a unique myth – that of man – in denying a whole series of other myths.

This myth of man is at the core of the problem of the subject. This man, who sees himself as the unique and exclusive protagonist of history, was veritably

canonized in modern times. It is this idea which is in crisis, the idea of separation, whether separation of contraries or of the sensible and intelligible. In another connection, atomic physics has admitted for some time now the principle of the complementarity of contraries and the principle of indetermination. And the separation between brain and mind is no longer accepted in neuro-biology. I have the impression that we are witnessing – in different spheres of knowledge, whether physics, biology or human sciences – a mutation of the culture of separation into a culture of interaction.

From now on the substitution of this epistemological correlation between subject and object, which is tributary from this separation, becomes viable. Before the subject and the object there exists a plan. If I modify the plan, this correlation disappears. So I think that the history-culture plan that we witness today radically refutes that possibility of a separation between subject and object or between any other contraries.

Emmanuel Carneiro Leão

What Professor Jean Baudrillard has just said beckons us to do away with the plans and models of thought in force in our everyday life and in our conscience. When he says so concisely 'we do not think, it is the world which thinks us', I wonder when we hear the word 'world', whether straightaway we haven't got the impression that it refers to the set of orders in which we live, orders which are currently dominated by technology and economy. That means that it is the world ordered by technology and by the economy which thinks us and ensures that we receive plans of behaviour susceptible to change.

In Catholic liturgy there is an affirmation which, in referring to God, means that when He sprinkles us with lustral water (hyssop), we come into the world and we become the world, in opposition to the un-world. What is the un-world? It is dirt; it is the Earth.

My question is therefore the following: is it not the Earth which makes the world think? Is it not the Earth which makes the world think in such a way that all the orders of transformation, whether technological, economic, political or ideological, are finally fixed and receive the strength of their transformation from the Earth itself?

Flávio Beno Siebenichler

My question is addressed to Rafael Argullol and also refers to what Jean Baudrillard has said. What is at issue here is not the question of modernity in itself but the question of hubris. So I wonder whether the thinker's best strategy consists in elaborating on the paths of thought and new possibilities, or whether it would not be more judicious to discuss another strategy aimed at transforming problems such as uncertainty into challenges to our thinking? I think, like Rafael Argullol, that it is not modernity which is in question, nor reason itself. We must now find a more adequate way of confronting the problems of our time.

How could we transform these problems into challenges? Uncertainty is a challenge and so is hubris. When I confront them as challenges, and not merely as questions in which I can implicate myself or not, I am – to use a rather banalized term – 'engaged'. I utilize all my energy to meet this challenge, this problem which has now become a challenge.

In my view, as the twentieth century ends, we must have a basis and this basis continues to be reason since there are other more extreme positions regarding it. If we do not have this basis, we will lose time, extremely precious time which history will not be giving us again.

Jean Baudrillard

To reply to your questions, I will return to the object. Choosing the object against the subject is an exercise which can be inscribed in a sort of rationality, a dialectic from which I would like to exit through the object taken, not as a corollary of the subject, but as what the subject invents to become subject of the world – a type of hubris or of imperialism aiming to reduce definitively to one single subject every possible object.

This is reflected today in a pervading imperialistic anthropology which can even be found under the label of Human Rights. It is about imposing on all species, on all races, on all animals and on nature, a subject future. Everything must become subject, under the label of Rights, itself an invention of the subject. Today I perceive an absolute hazard in such total imperialism. However it may be, our discussion is at a dead end since the terms of subject and object are discursive, rational terms. Outside these terms of reference, there is no way of saying what we would like to say. We need a new language.

The object means, etymologically, the problem. The object is the problem. It is neither a material being nor the world in its materiality. It is what

makes the objection, that is to say, what is in a position of challenge in relation to the subject. I should like this subject-object dialectic, in which the subject claims a master pole, to become a game, which would necessarily imply a dimension of challenge, but where no players hold the privileged position.

In a game, there are players and a set of rules which belong to no one. The relation between the players is one of open challenge, which will never be resolved with a position of superiority of one over the other. One wins or loses, but one plays. The possibility of playing is always open: the game is the only system which can be called open. It is always good to say ideologically that thinking must be open, in the sense that critical thinking must absorb all its contradictions and must be open to everything which is not already part of it. That is the humanistic form of thinking which I very well understand is being fought for.

The movement of the world, of things, is always a surface where things dilate and are open in all directions and where, at the same time, they contract and close up again in all directions. It is a movement without solution: one will not win over the other. There is a reversibility of movements. That is the way I would have it between subject and object, the latter being understood as that which puts an end to the division between the object and the subject. In the same way, for me, Evil is not a moral value opposed to Good. Evil is what puts an end to moral, ideological opposition between Evil and Good, which is beyond. I would even go further in saying that the feminine is not in opposition to the masculine in a rigid confrontation. The feminine is a principle which allows for the resolution of opposition between feminine and masculine, beyond sexual difference.

In today's world I think the risk of thought disappearing really does exist: the risk that thought may become – through artificial intelligence, etc. – a useless function. Books, thought and language are tending to become useless functions, because of the effective hegemony of systems and media networks, etc. This is a very real risk. What becomes a useless function is precisely the subject, the subject which thinks, or at least which pretends to think alone, which possesses thought and for which everything else is but object. The object will be rendered useless by artificial intelligence when the latter is capable of stocking everything it is possible to know and to memorize, etc. This subject, the only thinking subject, will disappear since it will become useless.

On the other hand, the subject which thinks while being thought, that is, which is in the reversibility of both of them, will not disappear. To my mind, the latter may possibly resist. One can fight against the disappearance of the subject-

subject and of the subject of unilateral thought. One can fight, all the same, to save this critical thought. But in my view that will be very difficult. Because what absolutely resists, even in the face of the artificial, informatics function, is what can perceive the world which thinks it. Reversibility is its core. Reason cannot impose itself on reversibility. Artificial intelligence is the extreme limit of reason, of a certain rationality. Numbers, figures and calculations represent the extreme limit of a reason. And nothing can escape that except what is caught in a reversible chain of forms which is thus effectively inexchangeable.

That is why, in my view, we must bet on the inexchangeable, on what cannot be thought without the subject's being thought in return by the object. In this case a game is established along with a rule. Of course we can make the retort that the computer and cybernetics give way to every game possible . . . but that is not true. Yes, we play and we can become anything; it is indeed a game with multidirectional possibilities. But it is no longer the philosophical subject which is supposed to know. It is the place of the subject which changes. The subject will have to become everything and modern techniques give it the means to become everything and anything. But there is no rule to the game.

That is probably the ultimate fate – fractal and random – of this subject. This subject changes nothing in the system. As Nietzsche had indicated, change is the constant on modernity's agenda. What we can observe in modern times – revolution and progress, etc. – is the subject's multiplication in the most problematical consonance. But then we must think of the becoming which is something we cannot change. There is a becoming 'subject' of the subject, a becoming 'object' of the subject, a becoming 'image' of the image, and these games are subject to rules. Now in the numerical world – and unfortunately that appears to be the fate of our neotechnological culture – there are no rules of the game. There are, of course, laws and procedures of protocol, but no rules of the game. Therefore, in the great game that I am imagining, this hypothesis which I think seems to resist this regeneralized exchange, indeed this generalized banalization of modernity, is something which can be played in terms of its own uselessness. There would be a thought of the subject which would become a useless function and perhaps give us the possibility of confronting the radical uselessness of irreversible thought, of challenge, etc., which is not made useless by the system in force. Because this is about a game. And a game has no transcendence. It has other ends.

I believe that the whole of our culture of change – frenzied and proliferous – is today opposed to this veritable becoming of forms. Today, even in art – and

that seems to me to be an essential question – becoming is linked to something inexchangeable. I think that thought is part of this inexchangeable question. And the question of what exists at the moment succumbs in fact to the technological potence of things.

Muniz Sodré

The question of criticism of this individual, of this interiorized subject which psychoanalysis examines and trusts so much, of the becoming subject and of subject thought, also supposes a criticism of the subject of conscience, a criticism of conscience, and of the idea of individual as an interiorized, specific and autonomous world. In our modern times we are witness to the development and consolidation of the idea of the human being as a subject of conscience, master of an interiorized world. We know how much this interiorization owes to Judaeo-Christian thought and to the subject philosophies. At this turning-point of the very idea of subject, of this opposition, of this complementarity and distance between subject and object, also taking form is the turning-point of the narrative of subjectivity; a turning-point in the possibilities of talking about the human being as we understand him from the subject and object conception and the distance between them.

If Jean Baudrillard's criticism with regard to the idea of subject also implies a criticism with regard to the idea of the human being, I wonder whether the word 'object', explained in that way, is still pertinent? Lately I have been thinking a great deal about Teilhard de Chardin, the thinker of my youth, who in a way preceded Marshal McLuhan. The theory which Teilhard de Chardin was putting forward was, as it were, 'mechanical philosophy'. He thought – with the radio, the telephone and means of communication – of a type of planetary conscience from whence could appear an ultra-human thing. In this planetary conscience, there was in fact neither subject nor object. There was a type of fringe or an ensemble of 'highly technical' fringes where even subjectivity disappeared and where the object disappeared in favour of something planetary and global which he called 'ultra-human'.

In listening to Jean Baudrillard explaining the idea of object, I wonder whether that super-action and reversibility is not surprising, even though it is not for us, here in Brazil. One only has to leave the West a while for it not to be surprising. When I knew Jean Baudrillard in the 1980s, I told him, much to his surprise, that his book, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, which I loved, was very close

to the *candomblé terreiros* of Brazil (see note 2, p. 110). In effect, put in less learned terms, the question of reversibility and symbolic exchange is the reality of the *candomblé* culture in Brazil. People here live permanently that reversibility between subject and object. If you leave the West for a while, you enter a sphere which is also sophisticated but in other ways.

So I also believe in this subject-object reversibility. But I wonder whether the word 'ultra-human' of Teilhard de Chardin accounts for the notion of the object as coming from the human being based on a subject/object correlation, in the subject/object range?

Rafael Argullol

Indeed, we must take into account the 'world' question when touching on the issue of criticism of radical humanist anthropocentrism – the need for which comes from twentieth-century history. There has been criticism of anthropocentrism from the Western point of view in modern times at least since Leopardi and Schopenhauer. Moreover, Leopardi as much as Schopenhauer, ended up with a philosophical non-system. In *Zibaldone*, Leopardi worked in depth on this problem. Being also a great poet, he came to realize, and at first he was very distressed about it, that it was impossible for him to advance in a philosophical system and that his thought, in order to exist, had therefore to be fragmentary. Then appeared the three points which have already been raised. Among them, the question of the division in the Western world between the area of ideas and that of sensations – world and otherworld, to use a different vocabulary – holds a central place. How can one perceive the world as an ultra-human instance, and what is this world that can be posed in theory? Is this phantasmagoria or an illusion? If we remind ourselves that in the East they say the world is the dream of a god, into what are we transforming it?

If, as humans, we push this anti-anthropocentric discussion to its extreme limit, it becomes cold, alien to any passion, emotion, solidarity, fraternity or harmony. That constitutes one of the paradoxes of the first Western approaches to Eastern theories. Even today it remains a great enigma, despite my cognizance. How can a culture like the Hindu, on the one hand, propose the deconstruction of all sensation and therefore renounce all sensation and emotion in order to attain extinction of the mind and, on the other, develop extremely erotic art? In other words, how can one simultaneously propose annulment and maximal eroticism? For Western thought, that remains very complex.

In Western metaphysical terms, how can the coldness of the idea and the heat of phenomena be proposed simultaneously and without any transition? When one is brought up with Western models and in the anthropocentrism we are talking about here, it can but remain a mystery. How can one end up in a position where there are the two elements of duality at the same time? From this point of view, all Western thinkers since the nineteenth century, who have tried to integrate Eastern discourse, have been faced with the problem of ice and cold. In effect, that discourse finally leads to a generalized disinterest in the three plans already indicated: nature, politics and intimacy of radicalized subjectivity. That is why, to tackle the problem of anthropocentric hubris – faced with the intellectual temptation of cold, only cold discourse – we must work towards the realization of a new setting for compassion, which is to say, shared passion. While accepting the most thorough critique possible of anthropocentrism, one can think of no way of thinking, nor of alternative thinking, to thought which is removed from the passional position. For this would lead to a discourse that is completely removed from us and, more broadly, from humanity, which would make us powerless with regard to any personal experience of disharmony. All these discourses are offensive when one is faced with a fatal illness, pain or the death of someone close. From a personal point of view, I can conceive of no thought, even alternative, which is not at the same time a link between thought and the fact of being. And I believe that it was the same in all schools of philosophy at the beginning of our Ancient Greek civilization, independently of its different tendencies, because they, in their turn, were heirs to other schools of thought. That is why, if our movements only existed to satisfy our intellectual colleagues, there would be neither paradox nor contradiction. I could devise magnificent theoretical constructions far from compassion and passion but they would crush me and be of no use to me. Their construction must therefore be refused. And if they already exist, then refuse to visit them.

The reasons of the West[1]

Rafael Argullol

'Thinking in the West' seems inseparable from 'thinking West'. Even if we leave aside the imposing difficulty which thinking presupposes, the almost insurmountable problem which is posed straightaway is that of coming to an agreement on the scenario to be thought. The West has implications as diffuse as a sunset gazed at through thick fog. We can be surprised that it might, on the contrary, appear so clear particularly to those who are so eager to proclaim the 'triumph of the West' like the outcome of a battle with a definitively sealed fate. Once the Western impulses – or, for the less prudent, values – have been imposed, they should be perfected and propagated on a global scale, through perpetual reform (always from a 'critical perspective') and tenacious proselytism (always marked 'liberal'). The aim? To place democratic rationality within everyone's reach; including, of course, those who are unaware of its convenience and those who are still barbaric.

I think we need to retain the sense of 'end of battle', or triumph of the West, because of the significance conferred on it by an end of cycle. The fall of the Berlin Wall was seen by some as the symbolic event which implied both a goal and a point of departure. The goal was the draining out and the eradication of foreign bodies which had taken root in the guise of totalitarianism in Western history; the point of departure was the announcement of an obstruction-free route leading to an

1. This paper is followed by a debate which took place in Rio de Janeiro on 23 April 1999.

irreversible Westernization of the world, under the rule of reason or, on the political plane, of the democratic system. For the proclaimers of this 'new optimism', the great cycle of the conquest of freedom appeared extraordinarily clear: it goes from Pericles's victory of Athens over the ancient barbarians through to the victory of liberalism over the modern barbarians. Freedom or barbarism. Reason or barbarism. And from now on, market economy or barbarism.

If the tone appears Manichean, it is because the new optimism is Manichean. Evil will have to be clearly identified in order to seize the good on which their optimism is based. There is no need to dwell on this good, to which proponents of the 'triumph of the West' so often refer. It is far too well known. However, we should note their reckless tendency of putting together rationalist, enlightened 'good' conscience products (Human Rights, well-being, progress) with 'bad' conscience ones (capitalism). Such an operation often requires some dose of pragmatic cynicism which usually leads on to justification, just as optimistic, of the realm of the 'less bad'; we live in the least bad of worlds and we vote for the least bad system. Besides, everything which is not the 'least bad' is indubitably the worst.

It is more pertinent to try to understand the ills affecting Western civilization, the ills against which what is good in Western civilization, that is, Western values, have been structured. It is interesting to note the recent unfolding of a double genealogy of the evils denounced in the West. Or rather, if you prefer, a double genealogy of barbarism. Parallel to the famous external barbarism, the new optimists, intent on the re-examination of history, have uncovered an interior barbarism.

The genealogy of external barbarism is easier and less painful. It just means continuing with the traditional game of oppositions. History has gone on redrawing the frontier line behind which the fortress of the West was protecting itself. The outcome is a twisting line separating 'ours' from 'theirs': Ancient Greece from the Persians, the Roman Empire from the Barbarians, Christianity from Islam, Europe from the uncivilized, and the West from the East. One cannot deny the value of frontiers which have created the sedimentation of certain traits of identity. And yet we cannot forget that frontiers are not only drawn but they are also invented. It was in drawing the Persian frontier – for strategic reasons – that the Ancient Greeks invented the East and, therefore, without intending to, the West. And to this invention they added another, and even more powerful one if we take into account what Aeschylus wrote in *The Persians*: the claim of order over disorder, cosmos against chaos.

Naturally, Persian literature makes the same observation in reverse, as does all 'other' literature in relation to 'ours'. In this regard, one of the greatest endeavours of modern culture – apparently unknown to many today – was to think of going beyond antagonism between 'us' and 'others' through a redefinition of spiritual geography. Radical criticism of historically and anthropologically determined concepts such as 'uncivilized', 'primitive' or 'barbarian' has produced, through incursions at different levels of 'otherness', a will for a global outlook, even if, with regard to thought, these incursions were not enough to eliminate the endogenous, traditional, Western frame of mind. But the negative or, at least restrictive, nature of this frame of mind, described by the most lucid interpreters of the modern world, was metamorphosed into something positive by the apostles of the 'triumph of the West'. In celebrating the new rites of cultural endogamy, they exorcize on the one hand the dark, barbarian danger and exalt, on the other, the virtues of the civilizing domination attained.

That attitude, which to a great extent dissolves the critical potential accumulated in modern culture, is linked to a hazardous, almost suicidal operation. In the short term, however, it engendered a genealogy of internal barbarity, of an internal frontier which symbolically disintegrated with the fall of the Berlin Wall.

In short, and on the most spectacular of levels, totalitarian states constituted the 'fifth column' which, even if acting within the fortress of the West, was fundamentally foreign to its way of thinking. The exalting of Western democratic rationality calls for a cleansing of the West's biography which is, all at once, hazardous and crude. Stalin, Lenin and Marx, in that order, are seen as progressively 'Asian', just as Hitler is revealed as 'demoniac'. The latter was extra-human, and the former extra-Western. Therefore, they were all strangers to the Western frame of mind.

The end of Communism is the end of the last contamination owing, among other things, to the 'Persian' that Marx was. The 'barbarian' (demoniac) Hitler was also a mighty contaminator even if, in his case, the genealogy was interrupted and kept on perpetual hold so as not to compromise the suspect position of German romanticism and idealism. It would be dangerous to pull indefinitely on that thread. From the perspective of his Communist contamination, Lukács wanted to do it in *The Destruction of Reason*, and a number of emblematic figures were pilloried. Schelling and Schopenhauer led to Hitler, just as Marx led to Stalin. Little by little, many other figures could be debunked, and clearly as far back as Plato, ever

liable to be accused. If we admit that irrationality is dangerous, no less is the game which aims to preserve from its contaminators the 'blood purity' (democratic rationality) of the West.

New optimists play this game but not right to the end. To do that we would have to part with a great deal of Western tradition. That is why they limit the genealogy of internal barbarity to a few exogenous elements which, in their opinion, most obviously attack the Western thrust for freedom and particularly market freedom. According to the new optimists, once internal barbarity has been destroyed and external barbarity has been dominated, nothing will stop market freedom from definitively imposing its rule.

There is another way of seeing things: the affirmation of the 'triumph of the West' thesis implies, in some way, the defeat of the West, at least of the living core of its traditional thought. Thus, the a-critical exaltation of 'Western values' runs the risk of being expressed through a flat encephalogram revealing only the absence of values, with perhaps one rather unproductive exception: self-satisfaction.

Yet the liberal new optimists are monopolizing 'democratic rationality' – the great Western product, which, as with any other product, they ought to export. They are also detracting from the meanings of reason and freedom which, in the absence of spiritual tension, and, far from inspiring the laws of reality, are becoming but servile emanations of reality. That is the 'realism' of the new optimists and their realist justification of freedom and reason: since ideologies are dead, reality must be taken care of. However, that attention suggests another even more gigantic ideology which confers prestige and a capital 'R' on reality.

That ideology tends to be the most pernicious. Those who conform to it say 'that is the way it is', but they also infer that 'that's the deal' so as not to risk saying 'it cannot be otherwise'. It is easy to understand that from there, there is only one step to 'it must not be otherwise'. That attitude leads us to the roots of a decisive reversal of views on recent developments in the world and, notably, in the Western world. What a fair section of modern thought has been able to look at in a critical way, because 'it should be otherwise', including because 'it could be otherwise', becomes a positive acceptance of the 'having been' and inexorably gives shape to 'what is'.

One might have thought scepticism would succeed the disappearance of utopian horizons, but instead it is the exalting of *topos*, a new faith which could be qualified in almost religious terms as the idolatry of reality. This demands that together we revere 'morally good' idols, such as the democratic system or Human

Rights, and 'morally inevitable' idols like economic depredation or the reduction of the human condition to consumerism and stupidity. They all end up being mixed together. 'Western values' are merely fetishes.

With that type of fetishism of reality, freedom wears a strait-jacket, and reason is sclerotic. Any spiritual tension tends to be obliterated. New optimistic thought, pragmatic in the strict sense of the term, is thus a decidedly 'dis-tended' movement. It is therefore barely thought or, at most, it constitutes an intellectual 'follow-up' to reality.

Despite the idols and fetishes it maintains, the cult of reality carries with it, as it were, a resolutely monotheistic vision of reason. Yet the oneness of a dogmatic, preclusive reason, from which one claims the right to raise an accusing finger against the supposed irrationalities of whoever refuses to share that vision, is constantly exposed to the risk of changing into 'poverty of reason'. Confronted with the latter, it becomes essential to oppose the plural or polytheistic image of reason as the ultimate conquest of modern thought which should not be abandoned.

The 'polytheism' of reason suggests an orientation for thinking which in no way corresponds to the aspirations of the idolaters of reality. It also suggests a more flexible capability for questioning within the contradictory organism of what we call Western tradition. In instigating a plural comprehension of reality – with no capital letters – the plural vision of reason moreover supposes the destruction or the attempted destruction (the thinking of its conditions) of both the external and internal frontiers proclaimed by the inquisitors who judge from the height of the self-legalized tribunal of Western reason.

At the heart of this pluralistic vision, the modern 're-vision' of the antagonism between 'ours' and 'others' therefore remains in force. But we should go further according to a lesson which can no longer be forgotten: any civilizing tradition which is not capable of 'leaving its country of origin of its own accord' to forge itself in the trial of extra-territoriality, falls into solipsism and ankylosis. Then the fortress spirit appears. Its inhabitants announce their intention of colonizing the planet while remaining prey to a spiritual, asphyxiating stasis.

The fortress spirit is just as harmful when it takes on the guise of persecution of the inner enemy. There is no rational, democratic 'pure breed' nor are there exogenous contaminators in Western tradition. There is only a tradition full of impurities of which the best moments, or at least the most fruitful, coincide with the conscience of such impurities. To name the conscience of impurity – tension

between insufficiency and ambition, servitude and freedom, knowledge and enigma – I would employ an expression which is, as is any expression, partly worn out, but it retains a strength of unequalled evocation: the 'tragic conscience'. Greek tragedy is first and foremost a consciousness of impurity, just as Western tragic thought only sets forth the profoundly impure nature of the tension between human impotence and its power to intuit the brightness of a noble humanity. Tragic conscience today is still enough of an antidote to the emptiness of optimistic thought. More precisely, when confronted with the easy-going unilaterality of optimism, armoured against 'dis-tension', tragic thought, deep in the tension which gives it consciousness of impurity, remains an authentic optimism.

Liberal new optimists have forgotten one fundamental principle: individual self-satisfaction kills thought and collective self-satisfaction annihilates culture. They are in the middle, working like a driving-belt: they defend reason; therefore they 'hold' reason, and there is no other reason than that which they defend since, as they are always saying, they 'start from reality'.

Does one have to 'start from reality'? Until the opposite has been proved, whoever tries to think, does it starting from his reality – again with a small 'r'. And if he manages to do it, the accusation of unreality is, at the very least, ambiguous. This point remains a troubling question in the field of semantics. Every single person starts from the most Protean scenario. And yet, the insistence on realism reveals the person who insists. Reality is thus easily equated with news casting – and the latter is only the production of media events. The condition of 'starting from reality' can change into an obligation to produce informational current events.

If that is the way it is, it poses a thorny problem when thought is confused with information production. The latter can be legitimate or not, depending on the view of the person who judges it, but in no case should it wield a peremptory authority over thought. It is perhaps towards this conflict that the hazy profile of the 'intellectual' – the one we address for a constant conciliation of thought and event – should turn. The most appropriate route for reaching this conciliation – I am thinking here along the lines of the neo-optimists – is fusion: thinking means producing events. However, it seems to me equally necessary to claim an 'a-temporality' for thought as it is to plead for tragic tension confronted with spiritual 'dis-tension'. If tragic pessimism is not to be confused with impotent 'pathos', then neither must the a-temporality of thought be assimilated with the hermit's escapism. On the contrary: if the one entails – as I maintain – the only optimism, then the other is the necessary scrutiny for confronting the profoundness of the present.

Distance in relation to current events – or to their production – does not necessarily lead to anti-information. It leads in fact to distance. Awareness of impurity is also an awareness of distance. Distance allows us to stand apart from the most immediately obvious and to try to see the present far and from afar, not in its topical camouflage but in all its depths. Unlike the horizontal questioning which is often flat, and supposes confidence in information, the distance which thought demands of itself draws us nearer to the present's vertical wounds. It is from there that we try to reach their core, to disengage them and to reveal them.

'Thinking in the West' should include 'expatriation from oneself': thinking through the point of tension and at a distance. In order to do that, the 'fortress spirit' has to be demythologized and the double frontier which the liberal optimists have set up between civilization and barbarity broken down. If the fortress and the frontier can be used to produce current events, they do not allow for thinking the present from this consciousness of impurity in which even tradition is activated. Those who are spared the diktats of the tribunal of Western reason need not be recluses or mystics, let alone metaphysicians in disguise. The image for which I would opt is that of a surgeon who scrutinizes the anatomy of our time to discover, study and, perhaps – only perhaps – reduce illness. Far beneath the skin, he finds blood, nerves, muscles, health and decay. Through constant work, while responding to the most urgent case, he is conduced to wonder about what he doesn't know. Thinking is perhaps merely surgery carried through to its final consequences.

Rafael Argullol

On this subject, I find it difficult to ignore an event which, I believe, has marked the final year of the twentieth century in a decisive and significant way. I am talking about the recent war in former Yugoslavia. This is an event of prime importance in real as well as symbolic terms. I think that it combines the characteristics which clearly define our era, characteristics which escape the image modernity had of itself.

For a long time, a so-called 'civilizing' Darwinism structured the speeches and representations of modernity. According to that historical logic, modernity was perceived as an heir to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and each stage of civilization was seen as leaving behind its preceding stages. Nevertheless, one of the most visible aspects of the fracture of modern discourse is precisely that this civilizing Darwinism is not verified in the effective evolution of the world. We see

repeated, suddenly, in the very heart of Europe and the modern Western world, what that evolutionism of civilization had relegated to the past. Conflict, not only local but also spiritual, moral and psychological, conflict which we thought belonged to the past, has again broken out. The past has resurfaced dressed up as the future.

What is happening at the moment in Europe is representative of another factor: the difficulty of expressing in a critical way and of thinking with a certain capacity for resistance what is given in a reality which is increasingly confused – with information and its production centres. I have the impression that the unanimity of technological communication is now so strong and the difficulty of expressing a critical opinion which could denounce the dual barbarity so great that this can hardly be criticized. We are led to an immediate conclusion. At the turn of the twentieth to the twenty-first century, we observe a loss of parameters, sometimes essential ones, and this has placed thought in an extraordinarily uncomfortable situation when it comes to expressing itself in terms of resistance. I am not talking about resistance as something solemn or heroic. By this word I mean an attempt to establish a fairly rigorous criterion on what we interpret, in a continuous way, as pertaining to reality. Politicians, economists, communication media, all talk to us of responding to reality. From this point of view, reality becomes a type of monotheistic, mouthless goddess. From the point of view of thought, however, it seems to me that we have never been further from connecting to reality the least rigorous resistance.

So for me, this is one of the decisive aspects which point, along with the themes dealt with by Jean Baudrillard, to a group of problems on which we should focus in this transition scenario. In the exchange with Jean Baudrillard, in defending the criticism of anthropocentrism or particularly of hubris, of the tragic excess to which the 'Promethean' anthropocentrism of humanistic origin has brought us in the twentieth century, I attempted to delineate these difficulties. But let me put another question, equally relevant to our discussions. We find ourselves at a point where, even if it is normal not to expect adhesion to complements to collective thought, it has apparently become extremely difficult to construct or approach a position on reality which can incorporate a sense of resistance, even as that reality becomes a divinity – the monotheistic divinity of our time.

Márcio Tavares d'Amaral

In Rafael Argullol's observation on the failure of social and cultural Darwinism as a forecast, one can see a resistance to a certain naturalization of the cultural movement of production of subjectivity and of what is collective and what is conscience. This resistance is unreactive and unfelt, and neither a type of neo-something nor a post-something, but rather an enquiry into whether criticism is still a possibility from the intellectual and the ethical points of view. Neo-Darwinists and neo-cognitivists – and it is amazing how they proliferate in contemporary thought – would tell us that criticism can only take place in re-activity, given that for them, everything happens in the order of evolution.

So here, we want to open a way for a criticism that brings into play the reference to otherness which, in the accelerated movement of globalization and 'uni-dimensionalization' of thought and culture that we observe, would impose an ethical slowness on the person who takes time to reflect . This slowness would include a waiting for whatever might happen, and I wonder if that could mean new hope for a thought that would linger between optimism and pessimism?

A second point which seemed salient in Rafael Argullol's paper is the definition of evil as organizing principle of what is contemporary. The movement is actually ordinary and not even very original. If one defines evil as being the Other – he referred to 'Persian' Karl Marx – it becomes easy to define good as the opposite of the Other. From there, the Other can be defined as what can die when confronted with good, and then a step further – a small step but a difficult one – leads us to say that 'if it can, then it should die'. Having banished otherness, the good which organizes contemporary culture in a flat, uni-dimensionality, becomes complacent. How can one not be self-satisfied when the Other no longer has to be confronted in order to be oneself?

Lastly, the third theme to remember is that of the position of reality. Through the centuries, indeed millennia, we have become used to thinking about the order of being, and of power and duty according to a grid of positive reading. Perhaps, within the cultural practices of our post-modern Western societies, we are now discovering the being's negative vision, power and duty, a passage towards a duty of non-being. Since we cannot be the Other, as the Other is inhuman and inhumanity is evil, this passage towards non-being, this fetishistic 'dysontology' of the market, produces an anti-pluralistic oneness and implies a sort of end to such a reference. The entire narrative becomes unanimous by the absence of the Other. The fortress mind to which Rafael Argullol refers tallies in a way with seeing the

world as a laboratory, that is, in a basically simple way, devoid of complexity and therefore of any complication. All variables, variations and varieties are subject to the purifying control of instrumental reason. Everything is operational with no mixing. The world becomes one-dimensional, pure, smooth, flat, bare and difficult to put up with. Here we come to the question of the possibility of resistance mentioned by Rafael Argullol, that is, the question of the possibility of an ethos, of an experience of the human way of living where we have to live.

Whatever its name – world, planet or other – this is an effective or potential resistance experience and an eminently ethical experience, since it is neither reactive nor felt and we cannot go forward if we are looking backwards, that is supposing that we are moving towards a future which is as yet unplanned, and a future which is in fact only an image already passed by in some bend of the road which no longer creates anything and which, for lack of a more adequate term, we call the history of the West.

From the etymological point of view, the West is in fact the assassin: the one who kills the sun every day. We witness the daily repetition of this killing. It is not by mere chance that we are afraid the sun will set one day and not rise again the next. From this fear comes the need to resist, in an unfelt, non-reactive way, and to search again for a dimension that is particular to critical thought and has its own tension, its own chaos, its hubris and also its harmony, equilibrium and justice. These are only the movements to which it seems we were accustomed some thousands of years ago, and to which we have grown unaccustomed, perhaps in a radical way. And that is the question which was posed over the course of the last century, very violently over recent decades and, in an extremely pointed way, these past few weeks with the current situation in ex-Yugoslavia. The whole of time has precipitated into one event which is taking place in the centre of Europe, whence comes a substantial part of our culture and whence it may not come again.

Eduardo Prado Coelho

Indeed, I think it is important to start from the event of the war in ex-Yugoslavia, taking into consideration both the actual fact and its symbolic effect, just as the Euro arrives and a certain idea of Europe is consecrated just prior to its enlargement. The Euro – which has already arrived with no major consequences for the average citizen – came about just as European countries were proving their utter

inability to define an autonomous, political position. It is not easy to think of this bloodshed beyond a paradoxical, binary diagram. But looking at it in a more global way, this war poses a symbolic question: that of the erosion of the concept of politics in Europe.

The question of the line of resistance seems to me important. I am not sure that one can say we are living in unidimensional thought. One could indeed think that from the economic point of view, unidimensional thought is regally imposed. Yet, although this last year has not been very favourable, the trend is towards a plurality of points of view. Other positions have made themselves apparent. Denunciations of unanimous thought are so numerous that in the end we can believe that thought is not so unanimous.

What I find interesting here is not the fact that the thought of resistance exists today. In Spain, France, Italy and Portugal, intellectual interventions on the war go along with that. What I find interesting is how difficult it is to find historical subjects which would be the protagonists of that resistance. The mere thought of resistance is rendered pretty useless and visionary by the absence of that connection. Indeed, contrary to certain periods of the past, when things seemed more straightforward, the lines of resistance today change according to the problems and are, therefore, further from coinciding.

So the questions which are asked with regard to that line of resistance are linked to a style of thought which has gone through a change with the loss of a certain tragic sentiment of existence. This is very apparent in Portugal where, for generations, there have been French, Spanish and Germanic influences which are sensitive to this tragic dimension of thought. But there is also an English-speaking generation which is often marked by a certain analytical or cognitive philosophy. While the preceding generations were inflationist and dramatizing, the latter is deflationist and de-dramatizing.

I am thinking of the destruction of the subject idea which comes from the thinking-machine idea and of the annulment of the conscience arena whose origin is Cartesian. In this reversal, the subject is more or less a mechanical type of strategy. The destruction of the subject developed particularly during the 1970s. But there already existed at that time a sort of placidity or apathy, whereas the destruction of the subject in the 1960s had a tragic, vertiginous and emphatic dimension. We have thus witnessed a noticeable switch, in terms of sensitivity, to a veritable conflict to which contemporary thought is the principal heir. That has had consequences on the idea we had of the type of participation in the political sphere or yet

on the means of finding investments for certain causes which are perceived with interest but without passion.

It is obvious that modern means of communication, particularly visual ones, function on an emotional basis and provoke passion. Thus it is possible, in certain circumstances, to mobilize people for one cause or another through the medium of television. For a whole evening, cheques pour in. But then interest wanes until it finally disappears altogether. That illustrates the somewhat spasmodic side of politics, which is lived and exercised without consequence, and is therefore present today without consequence in what could be the drain of critical thought.

Márcio Tavares d'Amaral

There are three points I should like to stress which seem to me very important for contemporary debate. I often find this debate obscure and there is usually something uncomfortable about it – as though what is at stake holds something else that is hidden.

One of these points is the question of language simulation, communication and means of communication as simulation machines. The manipulation and production of simulation systems are an indication of the infamous failure of truth. Truth apparently died last century. We have at least three death certificates: from Auguste Comte, Marx and Nietzsche. Here and there, truth survived. But it would seem that now, if not dying, it is at least out of the running. Truth is still alive somewhere, probably where it hurts – and simulation is perhaps the pain of truth – but when we no longer see it. This manipulation game in which we take part is as old as war, of which it is said that truth was the first victim. But looking at the whole of our late modern civilization, we might perhaps think that simulation does not go particularly well with falsehood, error, cheating – or something like a perverse return to sophism – but rather with a wish for verisimilitude. Thus, simulation could be positively understood, starting from its productivity point, as despairing of truth in a thought system which strives to keep truth away. So I think that this monotheistic goddess to which Rafael Argullol has already referred, this simulation position, and the fact of making the position positive – while it is productive, in the sense of producing reality – is a theme which should be studied further.

Another recurring point is resistance. Eduardo Prado Coelho has developed this along two lines: resistance as thought and resistance as action with

the historical subjects missing. There appears to be another interesting question here: one of trying to understand what thought is in the historical dimension, when the fact of thinking can be, by itself, a form of action and not a concept of action to be carried out later by historical agents, as would have been the case for that great thought of resistance: the idea of revolution, a concept of resistance which needs historical agents in order to be enacted.

The question is therefore: in the dimension of the culture of images – news and information, virtual and contemporary – what can thought be in the historical dimension? What can thought be without these historical subjects which led it to the motive force of 'classical' action when thought was just that, and action was action, and where the relation between the two was an appropriate one? If this was not the case, then things went wrong, as for example, the Paris Commune and the Russian Revolution.

Eduardo Prado Coelho said that lines of resistance do not coincide and that there exist several examples of consolidation and dissolution of groupings around specific points of resistance. I think this is where we can find the problem outlined above. When things were simpler, we always spoke of the structural dimension of problems. In the case of the revolutions which marked the last century, the choice was easy: either the bourgeoisie or the proletariat, there was no third way. But now, however, we find ourselves in an increasingly complex predicament because it is a shifting one. With conjuncture, the possibility of the plurality of new, collective and individual organizations, of new systems of individualization and of subjectivity, has a new motive force, doubtless greater than that provided by the structural dimension which is slower, more sedimental and less changeable. There again, comes the question of the speed of multiplication of resistance possible in this new dimension. We must ascertain whether a non-reactive, unfelt resistance is still possible.

Another point that has been raised is contemporary apathy. This is not an affected apathy – as advocated by the Ancient Greek sceptics – but an apathy which, in a way, has swooped down on us and made us dispirited to such an extent that we accept what is offered as though this is the way things should be and could not be otherwise. We seem to have a strange relationship with time. It used to be that the future presented almost unlimited possibilities from which it was desirable and even necessary to choose. The essential thing is for choice to be possible when faced with future possibilities. Perhaps we have moved, or are in the process of moving, towards a relation with the future where the latter appears, in imaginary

fashion, as though it had happened, and that it was bound to happen. It weighs on the present as an inevitability, like the imaginary order of the future can function in our information and virtual universe, as a condition of possibility, or even as a cause of the real order of the present. I remember a case reported in an American medical magazine of a young girl of nineteen. A member of her family had suffered from breast cancer. Having read an article on oncology, she felt surrounded by the illness and therefore a virtual carrier of a real cancer. In order not to die of a cancer which she did not have, she had both her breasts amputated. That is a dramatic and tragic way of understanding how the future determines, in the virtual and imaginary order, an action which is present in the real order – and now we no longer know what is real, what is virtual, what is imaginary or what is actual. This generates a type of apathy, since in any case, whatever we might do, the future will arrive. It will arrive through technological hyper-acceleration which, in making it virtual, renders it present in the present, and in fact even a cause of the present. This effect was inconceivable fifty years ago when we were still modern.

Milagros del Corral

I should like to pose the question of press freedom – a matter we have always considered as the prime expression of freedom of speech in the field of Human Rights – to assess how it might possibly act counter to the freedom of thought. Indeed, the space which we have been able to leave to a thought of resistance around this problem seems to be almost inexistent, despite the multiplicity of channels and means of analysis at the disposal of the intellectuals. Thus, if the intellectuals have not been listened to sufficiently because they have not found a vector for it, how is this idea of freedom of expression presented vis-à-vis freedom of thought? Does this mean that ultimately these two freedoms could be contradictory?

Rafael Argullol

This question calls for an avalanche of questions rather than a reply. I was referring particularly to what is being said about war. We are certainly not there, so we cannot know precisely what the internal changes in circumstances are. All we know is, in fact, no more than the story we are told. What attracts my attention in the narration – apart from the suffering – is what I have referred to as 'self-satisfaction', meaning armed self-satisfaction. The unanimity of the account is proof of self-

satisfaction which, in this specific case, is armed self-satisfaction. Moreover, in the account of the war in Yugoslavia, they use an expression which speaks of compassion: 'humanitarian war'.[2]

The images of deportation indeed produce a compassionate reaction. But unlike the suffering which has a direct effect on me, the images do not prevent me from thinking of something else after a couple of hours. The media began to talk of 'humanitarian catastrophes' and went on to use the term 'humanitarian war'. The expression 'humanitarian catastrophe' is already a contradiction: a catastrophe may be human but it cannot be humanitarian. Humanitarian is a condition of humanism. Making a war humanitarian would be to consider the opposing force as being demoniac or inhuman. Instead of a war between Christians and Muslims, for example, we would appear to be witnessing an even more vital confrontation between human and inhuman. Intellectual analysis becomes endangered precisely because of such use of the 'demoniac' stamp which casts us into a contemporary version of the holy wars. We run the risk of getting involved once again in very artificial, byzantine discussions, of no interest to our deliberations, unless we tackle the problem of narration, questions of unanimity, 'self-satisfaction', 'humanitarian war' and of a return to a principle of un-reason which is that of the confrontation between 'human' and 'demoniac'.

We must not forget the nub of the question which perhaps represents the core of the immediate future: in a unanimous narration, reference is made not to a problem of democratic right, but purely to a problem of policing. Because, if I am certain I possess justice for humanity, I can send in the police so that they will guarantee a certain justice for humanity whenever I want them to. The problem is knowing how, at any given moment, Western civilization with all its sophistication, can arrive at such primitive reasoning which consists of pitting 'human' against 'demoniac'.

Antonio Maura

With regard to the narration of war, it seems to me that this debate cannot ignore an unfortunately very European reality at this precise moment. Alongside this flat information, as you call it, there is also the heavy silence of the people. In addition,

2. Translator's note: 'humanitarian' means 'philanthropic' or something which 'promotes human welfare' – it can hardly be ascribed to a war.

there is the problem posed by the rise of nationalism in a theoretically united Europe claiming to seek unity. I wonder whether the failure of diplomacy, of which war is the symbol, does not also represent the failure of European intellectuals when faced with this reality. What then, is the role of the intellectual? Would it be merely to recount the war?

Rafael Argullol

After the Gulf War, together with philosopher Eugenio Trias, I wrote a book entitled *El cansancio del occidente* [The Weariness of the West]. The idea came from a concern related to the question previously posed on freedom of expression in the media. Indeed, this book developed from the following question: can the extreme freedom of expression which we have in Western Europe coexist alongside mechanisms which might be termed self-censorship?

The conclusion we came to in the book was that if, at first, expression can be formally free, it is, however, possible to develop tacit or explicit mechanisms of self-censorship that appear to be social or which operate in an internal sphere. Among all the subjects evoked at the time, there was one central theme: finding out how mechanisms which lead to supporting a moment of freedom can arouse phenomena of self-censorship, thus making freedom of thought more difficult. Doubtless this is related to the disappearance of that extravagant character in this time of the ending of ideologies: the 'morally committed intellectual'. And yet I get the impression that in some European countries at least, the loss of freedom of thought had already been both understood and anticipated by the morally committed intellectual. During recent discussions which took place in Spain, we came to realize that not only did these intellectuals have a very small readership but in addition they were becoming far fewer as it was increasingly impossible for them to express themselves. This brings to mind *Reflections of an apolitician*, a literary text by Thomas Mann, written in 1918 at the end of the First World War. This work shows the author's evolution from very conservative positions to far more progressive and even socialist ones; that is, from the intellectual state of the artist as writer, or thinker enjoying a certain global freedom of thought, to that of the ideological intellectual.

In Europe after the First World War, the *polis* asked intellectuals to produce not ideas but adherences in one direction or another. For a long time, these 'morally committed intellectuals' were classified by the ideological paradigms we

are familiar with. A few years ago, if someone said 'red', he remained shut inside the red paradigm. But now that these paradigms are disappearing, the previously morally committed intellectual is no longer in a position to practice free thinking. When these models no longer exist, there is no possible protection. I think the 'morally committed intellectual' is a figure who, in some way, has lost his capacity to think because he belongs to a historical time when the *polis* demanded an ideological adherence.

Eduardo Prado Coelho

Press relations have also undergone extremely significant changes. Let us take the example of Portugal which is becoming increasingly like Spain. Portugal is a country which has had censorship and, although this has now ceased, everything to do with it remains socially sensitive. As a result, we are witnessing an acceleration of press concentration brought about through multiple mergers. This phenomenon of concentration in specific economic groups concerns both press and publishing houses. Let me give you the example of a Portuguese publishing house bought two years ago by a Spanish group and just recently taken over by a French group. In the domain of the press, the dynamics are such that television channels, newspapers, production companies, radio stations and other forms of media are now in the hands of only two or three people. Alongside this situation, the political tone previously associated with certain newspapers, magazines, radio stations or television channels has become less pronounced. The only ideology known to the economic bosses is business. If they believe the number of deaths in Iraq is a selling point, then the information is transmitted and broadcast. But if they do not believe it to be commercially viable, the information is not published. If they consider that a way of thinking or a group of the extreme Left can increase profits, then in that case no censorship is applied. Ideas do not scare them. This should encourage us to reflect on the effectiveness of ideas.

It is, therefore, interesting to try to understand not merely the press and various means of communication as ideologies outside the media, but the ideology of the workings of the press itself, emerging from the economic imperative as reflected by audience measurement. This is a parody of a well-known philosophical phrase, a 'criticism of journalistic reasoning'. 'Journalistic reasoning' has a specific internal structure, and journalists, whether they are on the Right or the Left, function very much in the same way. They act indiscriminately, according to what

seems important to them, what they want to underline and questions they want to put to politicians. This 'criticism of journalistic reasoning' brings us to the fact that many journalists belong to the 1960s generation. Most of them were sympathisers with the Left who have become converted to a particular sphere of business. This leads them to behave in an invariably hostile way towards power and the State whether these positions are held by the Left or the Right. This hostile relationship with power and the State demonstrates a rather convincing adherance to neo-liberalism.

We should take a look at how a thinker can go through the conditioning network set up by this specific economic and ideological system. This can be done with harsh criticism of the media. The most obvious example is Pierre Bourdieu who became a media phenomenon while persistently attacking the system. So the question is: what is the logic of the system and, indeed, what is the effectiveness of such a denunciation?

There is obvious apathy, although we have to admit public opinion has an immediate reaction when there are victims. When there are no victims, an extremely open, intellectual debate can ensue; information can even be given in a pejorative way but the public will distance itself from it and receive the information passively.

Difference in thinking today

The beginning of History[1]

Eduardo Portella

The opening up of routes, the discovery of new passages or tracks of reflection leading into the third millennium calls for a renunciation of apocalyptic prophecies and a more consequential – yet less categorical – radicalization of the will to think. This is a long journey which could begin with a parody. In one of his *Theses on Feuerbach*, a master of modern thought and maker of history recorded a maxim which has since remained engraved in our minds. It conveyed the idea that, having interpreted, having thought the world, we should really be changing it. I believe this affirmation should now be reversed. We have been, for some time now, changing the world. It is high time we thought about it, overcoming, if possible, the pervasive dichotomy between thought and action, in order to reflect actively or reflectively act upon it.

This argument should be developed as a question and kept within a philosophical framework on condition that it does not take its lead from great 'untouchable' principles. If, when faced with a known interpretation, we concede that philosophy is dead, then 'long live thought!' Evidently, the difficulties posed by such open ground cannot be ignored. Whereas this reflective 'doing' has already been deemed 'philosophically incorrect', we would be well-advised to avoid the provocation which tends to go with inflexibility. Contrary to the bearers of truth,

1. This paper is followed by a debate which took place in Paris, 10–11 February 1999.

those who heed this invitation have but the certainty of uncertainty – a possible and, for several reasons, promising way for reflection to stand up with dignity to the new millennium. Appropriation must give way to emancipation.

Let us thus abandon unswerving, objective, firm convictions and let versatility lead us to replace the idea of the end of history by a hypothesis that history is about to begin. This beginning would set out from a non-complacent evaluation which would allow us to identify what is stressed or inert along the way, and to decipher the signals, tracks and remainders of paths which have perhaps begun to open up. If we forgo the idea of continuity, if we are ready to recognize and respect the equal trade of men and objects, subject and object, conscience and non-conscience, we will have arrived at the beginning of history. But what history is that? At the moment we have only a few clues. One of them is language. Taking the place of the subject, language induces a de-territorialization which offers fertile grounds for the renegotiation of a questioned inheritance. Thinking thus corresponds to letting go of the fixed place. The place of this operation has already been termed 'post-metaphysical'. And its time is the time that it takes for an ethos of 'living together' to come to fruition.

These encounters bring doubt together with hope. They are never a repeated assembly of truth and certainty. In *Post-Metaphysical Thinking*, Jürgen Habermas reminds us that sceptical concepts have had a therapeutic effect on philosophy. But that is not to say that doubt is unquestionable. We must protect ourselves from the accusations of irrationality which any reconstructive effort is likely to elicit.

Everyone knows that reflection, reason or thought have been confined within the walls of instrumental reductionism. That rationality, placed at the service of an ambition to totality by the modern mind in its most absolute moments, is the one which we now feel the need to avoid. The reason imposed by modernity has been assimilated to an instrumental, repressive and calculating rationality that is jealously guarded by ethnocentric controls. In drawing up its strategy, it has amassed a stock of paradigms whose task is to narrow the scope of our vision.

The other reflectiveness, endowed with no power or supremacy, but only with memory, oblivion and hope, might be referred to as interpretation. In order to refine the tools of reflectiveness, interpretation must be radicalized; but in a sense that is opposite to Anthony Giddens's reflexive appropriation of knowledge. In that sociological, albeit multi-disciplinary, viewpoint, there are limits to reflective freedom which the social sciences have had difficulty perceiving.

The radicalization of reflexivity of Giddens's *The Consequences of Modernity* appears difficult to follow, as it is precisely the weakening of the strong lines of modernity which produces the drop in reflective temperature. Such are the contradictions of early modernity which oblige us, among other things, to go along unplanned routes, particularly when a late, or declining, modernity is but reproducing – or reducing – the lifestyles of successive modernities. The metaphysical function concentrated in solid convention makes for a strange pathological constellation. How, then, should the areas of darkness be interpreted? Gianni Vattimo's hermeneutic astuteness is to read them further on: *Beyond Interpretation*.

The ontological lag of our late modern era is largely explained by its factual, historical and virtual advances. It should be recalled that objective metaphysics has rendered invaluable services to the business of violence. It is difficult to say which is the more destructive: arms or ideas? Late modernity has something of late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages, including contradictions. Can we suppose that the arms of the rising modern era can be silenced in these times of modernity's decline?

We no longer have all the references which enforced security. We used to be less complicated, indeed perhaps a little naïve. But evil, apparently more than good, has taught us a great deal. The arrival of complexity, speed and harsh competition has made life less beautiful and more dangerous. Among our cumulated losses we can identify what was once the reassuring concept of the all which could do all. The crumbling of totality – of that same totality which produced the total State – brings about the total crisis. The mission of the start determines the strategy of the end. The terminally ill refuse nothing and accept anything: paradisiac promises, esoterism, ready-made religions, self-help literature and superstition of every ilk. 'Termination' confers no right to choose. The space previously held by thought is invaded by prestidigitation.

This somewhat millenarist turn of millennium is doubtlessly beset with a series of intolerable deficiencies or shortages, and not just a succession of gradually cumulated losses: paradise, illusions and certainties alike. What is now particularly open to question and debate is the growing effacement of an age-old propensity: the capacity or the will to think.

Whether or not it is true that this secular propensity is skidding out of control on the improvised highways of a twilight modernity, it is time to start over and learn or re-learn how to think. It is perhaps along these hazardous routes that we must carry our burden of doubts, taking care not to yield to the latest artificial

paradise extolled by neo-liberal euphoria. Development that excludes, and indeed exterminates, is being succeeded by neo-liberalism, which claims to be not only the last, but also the only, chapter of history. The transition from objective metaphysics to unidimensional thought is disturbingly coherent. The one-way, 'post-historic world' which promises 'the best possible solution to the problem of mankind' in Francis Fukuyama's prematurely aged *The End of History* and the *Last Man* would appear questionable from the pluralistic perspective of Anthony Giddens's most recent work, *The Third Way*.

We have reasons to suppose that experiments and inventions, whatever the uncertainty and daring they involve, in so far as they avoid the mystique of the intrinsic nature of man and things, should be able to prevail over finalization: our inventory of acquired resources and the downward curve that we observe.

A history that espouses a paradigmatic dynamics is necessarily impositive. Power is its referential paradigm and all power is total. Hegel, the thinker of the Empire, was the first to speak on behalf of this self-centred model, destined to totalization. Even the then emerging idea of fragmentation was absorbed by the all-encompassing hegemonic model. In politics, democratic idealizations never failed to magnanimously recognize the crucial role of minorities – even if, in the dynamics of totality, minorities never failed to be the workforce. Fragmentation was cleverly reassembled in the artistic domain as well, and the opera was confirmed as the total work of art: full literature, grandiose music, spellbinding drama, the whole set in a telling background, melodramatic and hyperbolic.

The time has certainly come to talk about the beginning of history. Not the history of the sun, in the Renaissance style , nor the 'illuminating' history willed by the Enlightenment, both of which are annihilating. From Walter Benjamin to Miguel Léon-Portilla, from the illuminating system of imperial reason to the ruins of the sun-drenched empire of the Aztecs, each in his way conducted his dialogue with the history of victors.

The beginning of history can only be discerned from beyond the monotonous dichotomy between victor and vanquished, freed from the history of power this dichotomy has been reproducing. Are we able to imagine a history without power, to conjugate knowledge with hope? Can we envisage a history which is faithfully negotiated?

I think these questions are present in the chronicle of a birth foretold: the ethics of negotiation. It is up to us to create styles of negotiation and renegotiation, not forgetting that what is new is on the whole surprising. Beginnings are made of

questions. To begin is not to know. What conditions the beginning as such is never the end. It is the individuality which is no longer the individual's total instance: indications, historical experiences, individual lives, untold and perplexing.

Our high-voltage horoscope is showing signs of transition. We are going through a change of principles. We are living in the twilight of an era. This passage is rendered all the more trying by the lack of momentum, the disenchantment and the critical demobilization that well up, just as we question the presuppositions of bygone millennia. For we continue, paradoxically, to nourish an already consumed creativity.

An era at its twilight shows itself as a time of accumulation and emptiness. Every conquest, activity or task, relationship or institution, group and individual – everything – is protected, promoted or favoured. Yet freedom is mortgaged and creativity paralysed. What is supportive turns out to be subjugating. An emptiness filled with a dependence on what we already have and what we want to have pushes on all sides. In turn, the grandeur of being mobilizes its forces. The propensity to change intensifies and so do the efforts to push through. In twilight times, man is not only temporary, but transient as well. The structure of time goes out of balance. Contradictions prevail: oblivion mingles with a perverse sort of futurology; an unhealthy preoccupation with the present, a 'presentism' that is all at once inflationary and short-sighted, makes itself increasingly felt.

Nietzsche regarded the creation of thought as a feast. A feast is drawing to an end and we already feel its after-effects. It is too soon to say whether there will be another feast. In this transition, the void of invention is so vast. As at the end of every feast, there is a reckoning – the costs are assessed, the fortuitous pleasures and crushed illusions inventoried. And the final evaluation must do without systematization, since what is collapsing is precisely the strength and the power of systems. In an historical transition, evaluation is limited to multiplying the questions and probing strangeness. We are moving over to something else without knowing exactly what it is, and we feel the need to do without our will to control everything: past, present and future. Experiments involving tensions and impulse come with risk and improvisation. The brief duration of largely unpredictable intervals elapses. In intervals of time, anxiety exceeds the faculty of prediction. From there arises the sense of an ending cycle. 'Presentism' reveals all its frailty. Feelings of insecurity, hesitation and worry are mingled with the sense of daring, adventure and fascination as only a journey of real transformation can elicit. That is the meaning that Nietzsche has given to Zarathustra's words: 'What is great in man is that he is a

bridge and not a goal: what is lovable in man is that he is an over-going and a down-going.'

The foreboding which surrounds a new dawn of history is concentrated in the ambivalence and ambiguity of every contestation. A resistance to any paradigm or model is reaffirmed. Yet contestations are not alone in being ambiguous and growing. The expectations of change and transformation also grow larger. They fill the impatient wait with hope.

We must learn to live with foreboding, ambivalence and denial. Man – that project damaged, but still living – has the priority mission of writing a script for this full-length film. The energing millennium will better survive the lack of support and the uncontrollable control, the greater its inclination, openness, and welcome towards strangeness. This is not a 'doomsday' but simply a working hypothesis, animated by the will to think. We just have to wait and see.

Eduardo Portella

Some people say we have come to a dead end in thinking; others talk of opting out, of denial or of the empty space of thought. I propose we examine that space with our memory, with oblivion and above all with enduring hope. There is a text of Kant's which touches on one of UNESCO's priority themes. It is a text on perpetual peace, commemorated two hundred years later by Jürgen Habermas. This text is written in metaphysical form with the logic of exclusion. And still today, we speak of peace with the logic of war. Now, if we cannot talk of a logic of peace, perhaps we should be speaking of an ontology of peace. But that cannot come from ready made routes, only from hypotheses, traces and alternatives.

Georges Kutukdjian

Eduardo Portella's paper makes me think of *holzwege*, paths taken for gathering but not leading to any specific place, according to an English definition of Heidegger's term, not easily translatable from the German. It invites us to see how we can build bridges linking thoughts which seem to be foreign to each other, and between the parallel worlds Pavese talks about which never touch each other. How can we think the unthinkable, try to get out of the strait-jacket of logic and deduction which has imposed itself for so long, while we know that all thought is impudent thought and has no need to prove itself? Indeed, his paper invites us to seek the last bulwark of

thinking which must account for itself in order to try and reconstruct new radical thought that is not, to paraphrase Sartre, 'alone, unjustifiable and without excuse'.

José Vidal-Beneyto

I think we should try not to lose too much time in asking ourselves what thinking is. But rather we should be asking about non-objective determination which can be objective in the exercise of 'thinking'. We are all agreed that there has been an autophagy of philosophy – even Bouveresse, one of the most prestigious philosophers, is asking that philosophy become a profession – perhaps because it has become more and more impossible. The prestige attached to 'thinker' is determined these days with regard to the social status of those who work among the intelligentsia.

Today's great thinkers are scientists whose knowledge is objective, particularly those who have received the Nobel prize for various important discoveries. When an institution wants to create a convincing striking force in a particular sphere of knowledge, it does not call on current trends of reflection and thought but on Nobel laureates. There happens to be no Nobel prize for the social and human sciences. These have disappeared as we can see from the place allotted to them in any bookshop: on shelves way behind those holding 'literature' and 'history'. Even the most established social sciences – sociology and demography – have been debunked with regard to science and rendered commonplace. Why? Is it because they have renounced exactness? But today only non-parametrical statistics have meaning. We are dealing with a social, human reality and we cannot say that all forms of measure are identical. And yet we have all spoken of the need to use more refined measuring implements.

In this statement on the situation of the social and human sciences, we should avoid making value judgements or adopting an overly radical position. We are opening up a whole new area of questions. One of the main questions today is to ascertain whether we have found substitutes and far more efficient replacements for the social function assigned to us. These substitutes – which I shall refer to as 'leaders of opinion' – appear to fulfil that function both for public opinion as well as for the decision-makers. Finally, is the essential role of the thinker today to be a 'leader of opinion'?

What is it like, this landscape where we want to open up these traces of thought? There exist today commonplace, obvious resolves: the role of power, mass conditioning of all individual and collective behaviour, media definition, redundancy,

ephemerality and immediacy. If deconstructionism has become neo-pragmatism in the hands of the most eminent thinkers, then the one important thing is not to close down a reflection which has been from the outset very open.

Michel Maffesoli

I remember scenes from Goethe's *Faust* where he says he has 'a thousand volumes read' yet 'contentment wells no longer from my breast'. He opens the gospel of Saint John and reads 'In the beginning was the Word' and then he exclaims:

> *It is impossible, the Word so high to prize,*
> *I must translate it otherwise . . .*
> *In the beginning was the Deed!*

Modernity, our way of being and thinking is based on the word which becomes deed. Are we now supposed to find a word to replace 'deed', just as 'deed' once replaced 'word'?

Eduardo Portella put the question: 'Can there be history without power?' Until now, power has had a rigid hold over history, rather like the predictable or potentially steady, close relationship of an old married couple. It is this history, tightly linked to power, which is going to determine the meaning, and that meaning, in its original polysemic sense, refers to both finality and meaning. Hence the idea of a 'developmental' world which is far-reaching, towards a goal. Our whole conception of the power of history is an eminently Judaeo-Christian, therefore ethnocentric, point of view. It has a steady, linear aspect which in the end profanes the idea of paradise and brings it down to earth.

Can there be history without power? Yes: we can visualize other cultures, other times and other human histories where we are no longer confronted by history with a capital 'H' but by histories with a small 'h'. History predominates when it has consequences for man, society and nature. Predictable power goes with action. At other times, inexplicably, there is a prevalence of histories – local, spontaneous and limited to one territory. The *terreiro*[2] of Afro-Brazilian cults, for example, harks back to a history whose strength is embodied in its roots and which is opposed to power. There is perhaps no history without power, but there are

2. The *terreiro* is where Afro-Brazilian cults are practised, particularly *candomblé* and *macumba* which are derived from it. *Candomblé* is the cult practised by the Yoruba people of Bahia, originally from West Africa.

histories with no power. They do not have that finalized meaning which refers to the beyond. They have something which is embodied. Instead of 'reaching out towards', they correspond to something 'intensive' as in the Latin *intendere*. They reflect everyday life at the grass roots of society.

The saturation of the 'great plan of action is not catastrophic'. The end of a world is not the end of the world. We could mention the end of the great reference narratives and the great ways of thinking, whether Marxist, Freudian or positivist. But in the new sociality in the making, there is vitality and generosity. There is still real solidarity. And yet this has no connection with power, no finalized meaning or effect on the rest of the world.

If 'in the beginning was the word', now we must find the least offensive possible. And I mean words, not concepts. The concept, from the Latin *concepire*, by its very construction *confines*. That confining aspect is not pertinent when everything is in movement, passing through or unstable. When Nietzsche said we should 'philosophize with a hammer', he was emphasizing the destructive side of philosophy. I think we should get rid of a whole series of words which get in the way and are no longer pertinent. There are words of modernity that run the risk of filtering between what we have to say and what is actually experienced. These are spellbinding words. I am not sure if words such as 'democracy', 'freedom' and 'social contract' are still pertinent.

We should look for an intellectual organic idea – a type of thought which would be deeply rooted and involved in society. We can keep on, like a machine, with spellbinding nineteenth-century philosophy, but it will become more and more out of kilter. The current crisis comes from the gap between those who enjoy the power of words and deeds, and those who are simply living their everyday lives. In that gap can lodge the language of hate, xenophobia and racism.

Deductive reasoning is power reasoning; it comes from the top, from the power-knowledge link, whereas fundamental thinking would be deeply rooted and inductive. It would come from strength and grow along the way. I do not think one has to be an 'opinion leader' or 'presidential adviser' but rather the opposite. Perhaps we should come back to this lengthy labour on thinking when it has been cleared of all cumbersome pretensions and when it agrees to fit into the mould of humility which semantically draws closer the words 'human' and 'humus' and which bring us to the roots. Humus integrates us with human: not just with the light of reason but also with passion.

Rafael Gutierrez Girardot

For Hispanics and Latin Americans, the word 'thinker' refers to someone who is independent of any discipline, and at a stage prior to philosophical discipline. I wonder whether the thought of this 'thinker' corresponds to the chaos of knowledge described by Husserl in terms difficult to translate from the German 'nebulous Germanics'. The thinker is the equivalent of the wise man who, according to Husserl, has no need to be precise. I would say Octavio Paz is a well-known example of this. On the other hand, Husserl stressed philosophy as having a role which still seems to me to be essential – that of changing chaos and obscurity into order and clarity.

So then, with regard to contemporary problems, what meaning should be given to a description of the thinker we are bound to come across sooner or later? For Heidegger, thinking cannot conform to objective conditions, so the route that has to be reopened has a final limit. This implies, notably, a return to the philosophical tradition in order to destroy – as Heidegger did – the preconceptions that have reached their limits, points from which thinking is no longer possible. I think we should start a new debate on this basis, free from preconceived ideas and from incorrect French interpretations of Heidegger. We should find out about the conditions which brought Heidegger to those limits. In *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, Heidegger touched on one of today's basic themes already worked on by Hegel. He stated that boredom and frivolity indicate that something very serious and very important is happening. In my view, this route would get us to the anthropological and sociological questions.

Another apparently very interesting theme is thinking which leads to war. According to the interpretation of Adorno's and Horckheimer's theories on the Enlightenment, using reason obviously led to war. Whether this was a mistake which has since been corrected, given the application of reason, remains an essential question as the Kosovo events show. We could place this theme against political perception as presented by Carl Schmitt in 1932 in *The Concept of Politics*. This perception was taken for an assumption and was, therefore, the subject of much debate. But in fact it was debate on the idea that what is political comes down to the difference between friend and enemy. We can conclude that the contemporary problem of democracy is still there as a sort of conclusion, residue and dread of the lack of debate on what was a European catastrophe. Similarly, the Latin American Borges, confronted with Europe and the theories of Baudrillard, Lyotard or Vattimo, is astonished to find so little debate in Europe on the causes of the First

World War. The debate is only beginning now, fifty years after the Second World War. After 1945, there was silence, like a 'loss of history'.

If contemporary thought is based on a European perspective and addresses pluralism, then it is essential to question European thinking continually. It becomes impossible to conceive of European thought, including the modern plan, as something definitive, or as dogmatism. The problem of thinking, when it appears as a problem of thought itself, is not only a philosophical problem but also an artistic one. I remember a comment of Borges when he said that music despairs of music just as marble despairs of marble. Literature and art can flourish by calling themselves into question. The current of general, non-intellectual thought has a certain obligatory humility. This does not mean denying the existence of truth – as Nietzsche would have it. Obviously, with the death of God, the theocratic idea of the world has disappeared, as has the concept of causality linked to it. But this is not what we are discussing. In fact, it is thanks to Heidegger that thought has been able to approach a certain humility. And there lies the question of the thinker in relation to the philosopher. The philosopher may be arrogant but the thinker is simply the one who must think.

Henri Lopes

I do not consider myself a thinker. I am a novelist. The writer who puts too much thought into his work of fiction runs the risk of being boring. A good novel does not think much. At most it touches on an idea which is often not even a great one. A writer seeks above all to captivate – sometimes the emotions and sometimes the mind of the reader. A writer is someone who feels. His feelings can be right or wrong. If his feelings are right, then bravo! He interests all those who want to indulge themselves. I do not write in order to teach something and I have no model to propose. I write because I don't know. My writing is perpetual questioning.

The question of the millennium is very much in vogue. Cocteau said the very essence of fashion was to become out of fashion. The millennium will become out of fashion. But I wonder to what extent these milestones have any meaning. Having looked at my diary, I see that the millennium will begin on a Saturday. On Monday 3 January 2000, when the long, end-of-century weekend will be over, what will have changed? Everyone will be thinking of their tax returns, their children's schooling, their ulcers, the fatal illness of someone close to them, and they will all have the impression that everything is beginning over again. Maybe the millennium

began with the construction of the Concorde or with informatics. Maybe it has not yet begun. Perhaps – if we are talking about the next century – there will be several changes of 'thought'.

To what extent have thinkers really been able to integrate their ideas into everyday public opinion? When I came to France fifty years ago, existentialists were not only philosophers but also people who dressed and danced in a particular way and in particular places. One could say that for a certain time Sartre succeeded in grafting his philosophy into the everyday life of society. Was seventeenth-century France Cartesian? Was German society in the nineteenth century Nietzschean or Hegelian? Have we got the right to consider we can generalize in such a way, and not just with regard to a society but to a whole era? How many people are aware that the philosophical thought of their contemporaries does have an echo? With today's means of communication, it might be estimated that thought has far more reverberation with those we refer to as 'ordinary'. Is African society today that of Senghor or Cheikh Anta Diop? Or is it living utterly outside the reflections of those two thinkers? To what extent do the thoughts of thinkers embody everyday views?

Who are the African thinkers? My grandmother was illiterate and yet when I spoke to her in Lingala, I suddenly had the impression it was I who was illiterate and she was Socrates; but a Socrates who left no written trace of dialogues with her disciples. What impact do such philosophers leave on a society that lives differently, is becoming literate and beginning to think?

My continual questioning is addressed to Africa in relation to the points of reference I acquired in Europe, and also to Europe on what I notice in Africa. Was I right to let myself become Europeanized? Are Europeans right to marvel at everything that happens in Africa and to erase with their broad mindedness the cruelty which is still there? Has this cruelty any similarity with that found in Europe? Here we come to a theme which both Eduardo Portella and I enjoy discussing: hybridization. Would this be the solution? Would it be too easy a solution, a way of diluting reality into an ambiguity I cherish?

Victor Massuh

We are living in a fragmented culture. This is why I should like to look at the connections of our fragmented culture with regard to totalization and to look at the way the fragment becomes de-virtualized from the point at which it is itself de-totalized. I propose doing this from Eduardo Portella's analysis of the

connections of the fragment with totality, and from Michel Maffesoli's reflections on the connection between the act of thinking and the notion of destruction.

This fragmented culture is altogether quite recent. It began with Nietzsche and grew steadily over the past forty years, through deconstruction and hermeneutic nihilism which are in fact ways of 'thinking with a hammer'. The philosophy of that culture justified itself as being a reaction to totalizing reason, clothed in the ultimate meaning, the ordering of history and matched with a substantialist, homogeneous theory of reality – an expression which is still 'exclusivist' for a religion or religious belief.

The fragment claimed it exploded oppressive norms, hegemonic finality and the arrogance of reason of the Enlightenment. In one tremendous blaze, the parts revolted against the whole: difference, function, particles, the individual, information, instruments, trends, impulses, desire and thus escaped repression. Throughout the past forty years we have witnessed the growing intensity of the disjunction of particularisms that Nietzsche had set in motion.

This task, at its outset productive and liberating, gives a whole new meaning to the effort thinking is now trying to make. It is a matter of facing up to the after-effects of a fragmentation which contributed to the spreading of a nihilistic philosophy founded on the negation of any basis, and based on relativism, equalization, the liberating rapture of lack of defined meaning, the idea of a history ordered by chance, appearance which replaces reality and the substitution of immediate experience by the generalized use of technology.

With this perspective, it should be recalled that nothing – whether in nature, the human being or in historical time – is an isolated fragment. Whatever the ground we are covering, it seems to me essential not to lose sight of a new horizon of totality. I use the word 'horizon' because this totality would be unable to hide any type of violence or objective imposition. Yet, how can we come down to the humble particle, the fine detail and particularism, if not from the starting point of totality?

I would be only slightly surprised if future thought came to question contemporary nihilism simply because reason cannot cohabit with chaos for long. We accept it when conceptual order is an empty system, rigid and lifeless. But then, reason sets off towards a new totality, another creation, adventure or coherent hermeneutics. I do not see how to shed light on the fragment and accede to legitimately provisional truths unless it is from the perspective and secret ambition of a quest for lasting results. One cannot think in an adequate manner from a perspective of absolute fragility or transitory repetition. That is why it is difficult to think

of the human being as a fragment or isolated particle, an orphan with no recognizable affiliation. I prefer to think we are the living part of a cosmic and natural whole, of earth and landscape, with a collective history and language – a living whole.

It would be fascinating to rethink the belonging of the individual to these successive wholes. But reason cannot be totalizing again unless it joins with imagination, myth, mysticism and knowledge, as well as with politics and economics. Such reason would, of course, lose its attractive purity of a non-ruling queen. It would lower itself to the level of the market and touch on areas formerly the preserve of specialists. Such reason would have to go on looking for other cultures, other blood, other traditions and languages and promote the inter-fertilization which constitutes the major adventure of our time.

In relation to time, we are neither fragments nor are we coexisting spatially and unvaryingly in time's dimensions of past, present and future. Thirty years ago, the word which gave meaning to time, and order to the historical process was still 'the future'. With that viewpoint were aligned Utopia, belief in progress, the cult of revolution, the philosophy of history, ideologies, technological creativity and domination over nature. This futurism, so favourable to hope and illusion, was abandoned despite the efforts of the modernity theory which brought a new vision for the future.

It is true that time changes direction and doubles back on the past. Today's key word is memory. A good number of the most significant scientific discoveries are eminently retrospective. Physics is looking at the expansion of the universe and listening to the sounds of 'the big bang' which created the universe fifteen million years ago. Cosmology is contemplating the historical past and discovering that the stars were our real ancestors. Research on the history of the human being goes far beyond prehistory thanks to unprecedentedly refined instruments. Species which became extinct over thousands of years are existing again with the help of an incredible evocation within the austere field of science. Contemporary culture, literature, thought, science, art and religion are being assimilated into one vast exercise in memory. Historical meaning is felt in each of the disciplines. Discovery of origins, whether of a concept, an architectural style, a religious belief, a literary form or a political institution, frequently replaces creative work in the corresponding discipline. Literature has rarely been so full of historical allusions. Narrative often amounts to evocation of the past. Recent horrors and horrors of long ago constantly reappear on the agenda. We remember and commemorate genocide and xenophobia. The barbarity of earlier times is reappearing indirectly through ethics

which send the guilty to be tried, thus one way or another producing either justice or vengeance. Memory makes the present prisoner of the past.

This experience of time accentuating the dimension of the past has a decisive aspect in that it connects the creative condition of man to the exercise of total memory; not just to one fragment of earlier times, but to the whole of human history, including the precedence of cosmic solitude and sidereal night which preceded the emergence of life. At the end of that trajectory of successive complexities there is progressively outlined an idea of the human being as heir to a total past and also as responsible for its continuity in the future. If we think of a new idea of temporality, perhaps it would be timely to conceive of the human being as citizen of all time.

In that case we would have to restore the experience of the future as adventure, uncertainty and hope. The picture of the future is doubtless very misled by the urgency of a present that spreads apocalyptic visions which are frightening and make the human mind seek refuge in nostalgia. A fair amount of cultural creativity tends towards the retrospective rather than launching itself into the exploration of new routes.

Doubtless the present is also a way of forgetting the future. With the magic of technology, the present multiplies original forms of pleasure and leisure which it tries to defend against any threat. The alliance of pleasure and fear nowadays leads to the expression of egoistic hedonism and blocks any yearning for the future. We should open the gates of the future in respect of ideas. This is not about the end of history, nor is it one-way, nor macro-economic Utopias, nor ideologies nor other millenarian prophecies. It is simply about asking how the future is, looking after it and wanting it to exist. The whole of the present should be swamped with images of the future. The present should get used to looking at the horizon of the future, even if the hands of time are on the immediate. Little does it matter if these visions are catastrophic or disturbing. What matters is that visions of the future are juxtaposed and that they correct each other; that the future is omnipresent and that it circulates in our present moments so that in the most basic daily routine we can feel the immediacy of the remote.

Zaki Laïdi

I am very pleased about what Victor Massuh has just said. He has placed emphasis on a dimension to which I am very sensitive – time. The central element of our reflection is the restoration of the future.

On that point and with regard to what Eduardo Portella has said, I do not think I am deforming his thoughts in stating that he does not want to reflect on the new millennium in millenarian terms. The millennium is a point in time that allows us to try to describe time and the moment we are living but for which we have no exact definition. So I see this reflection on the millennium as a point in the time we are living. I believe that if the twentieth century began in 1914, it finished in 1989.

In Eduardo Portella's text, I found his reference to the term 'beginning' most interesting. I think the problem is knowing how to begin again, why and what for. The question of beginning or beginning again seems to me fundamental as it appears to correspond with the conquest of man situated in a future perspective. Man who begins or begins again is the anthropological experience of historical man in relation to man who was merely rehearsing. The ability to begin or begin again is the ability of historical man. The ability to begin or begin again is an act of freedom.

The idea of beginning again seems to me very important and obviously linked to the notion of history since it was while you were talking about the beginning of history that you began and ended your text. In relation to this idea of the end of history, I would just like to raise one question. Fukuyama certainly showed great neo-liberal naïveté in his book. But I think he stressed one fundamental element: the end of teleological history. I interpret his argument as being philosophical and not political. In that respect he was philosophically pertinent. The end of the twentieth century consecrates the death of teleological history. That is why I have always thought the end of the Cold War was an important event which put an end to two centuries of Enlightenment. The end of history is not historical stagnation, as has been thought, but the absence of a narrative capable of helping us to think of the future. This absence of narratives does not only concern politics. It also concerns art, as Arthur Danto has shown. The end of art is not the disappearance of artistic creation but the disappearance of any criterion capable of determining what is art and what is not, and what is beautiful and what is not so beautiful. From this comes a certain relativism which is also a sign of pluralism. There is no longer any authority capable of directing individual opinion.

Obviously, problems arise with regard to the idea of beginning or beginning again. The first problem is the substructure. We have just spoken about this idea of a philosophy not having to account for itself, on its own, unjustifiable and with no apologies. This is precisely what Descartes tried. But we are up against this problem of knowing on what to base this new beginning. This seems to me to be an

important point. The second point, linked to the idea of beginning again, concerns the notion of promise. It is now clear that we have broken with teleological history and with a happy vision of the future. But I believe we should rethink the future in promise mode, without resorting to *telos* or teleology. The answer is not a type of fascination with the present on the pretext that history disappointed us. I think man is the future because it is his ability to anticipate the future which distinguishes him from other mammals. All who call for living in the immediate or in a state of urgency should bear this essential point in mind. Loss of confidence in the future means, to my mind, a return of our expectations to the present and an overloading of exceptional constraints.

The real problem of such an injunction on the memory which is developing in some societies comes precisely from the fear of being able to transmit. After all, Primo Levi's definition of memory is specifically linked to the loss of oblivion. Recent arguments of some historians in France reveal an additional problem: confronting memory with history, and saying that the injunction and the over-valorization of memory is the negation of history. This is why I see several problems arising.

Eduardo Lourenço

Kant's well-known questions on the meaning of our being, our mind and what we should hope for, still remain. But I think their validity and their truth came out of a type of universality both real and abstract, which should be taken up again today and in some way relativized. From the moment these questions appeared on the horizon, which itself was the very idea of history, an expression or a shape was drawn for the first time like a natural horizon within which man had to try to work out his destiny. For the first time humanity was presented with the idea of a universal history.

I think we neither place ourselves in relation to universal history constructed and strengthened during the nineteenth century and on a higher plane than the particular histories of peoples, nor do we place ourselves in relation to historicity. Today we are faced with the idea of a history where we feel obliged to place discussion on the subject of the present, the past and the future in such a way as to have an idea of what man is – a notion which has almost collapsed. We are therefore orphans of that history.

In this sense, the image of twilight corresponds very well to the moment we are living and not only because of the illusions created by all the confrontations

with the end of the century, of the millennium and even of two millennia. Mythically, we find it difficult to grasp how this millennium constitutes a concrete entity. Obviously, we know the events which can punctuate this plan. But on the other hand, if we say it is the end of the second millennium, that is another matter. Because then we could suggest it is a historical time, perfectly determined a long while ago and with a Western or Christian civilization that shares the temporality of the Christian era. If this second millennium has any meaning, it is in relation to zero hour from when we calculate Western time.

To try to distinguish how European civilization differs from others, we used to say it was a historian's civilization. I am not sure it is lived as such at the moment. I think that for the first time, the strength of the present contains almost all times simultaneously, or at least the ability to travel within this present in one direction or another: memory of the past and virtuality of the future. We were not only a history but we were history – for the first time this assurance is not the same as it was.

On the other hand, it has become clear that the very concept of universal history is a Western concept. And what we call philosophies of history came into being within the idea of universal history. But what is the subject of this universal history? 'It is the whole of humanity', said Western thinkers and historians, while busying themselves with the history of others. Indeed, Europe brought peoples out of non-history like those of Egypt, Syria, China and India, people who did not think of history in the same terms as we did. Thus Europe appropriated all the histories of other regions, including them in its own, which has become the model of universality.

What is happening now is that civilizations – as Paul Valéry said – have finished. Universal history, in the European sense of the term, is over. It has finished, as stories do, without ever ending. And in its finity it must confront the finity or infinity of the others. I think it is in this sense that Eduardo Portella reversed Marx's famous phrase. We are only in prehistory. We are entering into history. In a way we are always in the prehistory of something. We are always entering into history. But now we are entering in a more interesting way, in a dramaturgical relation with the way we have of inserting ourselves in time and of thinking time.

I would say that it is the end of history as universal European history or of history where Europe is the centre. This does not mean we are entering into all the dilemmas of a relativistic vision, or that all the great cultural eras and particular histories we have lived, with particular times, are going to be radically relativized

against each other to such an extent that there will be no more history anywhere. There will be history, but in another form. It will be a history whose subject will not be only the human subject, general, not supposed and implicit in our conception of universal history. It will be a history in which each culture, each memory and each history will have to recuperate the subject it had lost or been denied. Now is a time of upheaval and the twilight of the period when we, the Europeans, were the lords of history. We are no longer the lords of history. We realize that there is no longer coincidence between power and history. Power is elsewhere. The lords of power will write the universal history, including our own, from their point of view. In American films, the hero of the new universal history is the President of the United States, well demonstrated by good screen heroes who at the last minute convoke history – theirs – and, since it is a democratic country, the history of others. Of course, since the Americans have almost all histories in their country, it is easier for them to take on this role. But this does not mean we are entering empirically into a history that is both more than American or simply American. Anyway, it would be just the continuation of our own, with the same hegemony and the same illusions. We will be entering into a relationship with both history and time which is not the same as we have known until now through the intermediary of the myth that is history.

Francine Fournier

Renouncing the future threatens particularly today's society. But if our relationship with history in Western-style university terms is harshly called into question by thinkers, I wonder whether it is the same for the leaders. I attended a meeting recently on democracy and development. It was not a meeting of philosophers but of decision-makers and social scientists. We were discussing how best to stop the slide towards xenophobia and anti-democracy. I also feel we should rethink the words making up the language we defend and with which we live. But does that necessarily mean we must abandon them?

José Vidal-Beneyto

Indeed, I think we should take another look at the meaning of words, and also at what has been said about them by nominalists and sophists. We know today that words in themselves have no meaning beyond their syntactic context. We have gone

very far in neuro-physiology and the cognitive sciences regarding the contribution of syntactical contexts to the definition of these words. For an epistemologist it is difficult to hear it said that anything can be put under the terms 'democracy' or 'identity'. We do it, but that does not mean to say we can.

The great difference between social and human sciences and physical sciences, or even life sciences, is that when molecular biologists speak about a cell, they are not saying the same thing as cellular biologists when they talk about a cell. But at least they know what they mean by 'cell'.

There is a conceptual typology of democracy, and we should be frank enough to refer to the type of democracy to which we are alluding. There is 'organic democracy' for fascists, for example, as well as popular democracy, republics, Communist régimes, representative democracy, etc. The word 'democracy' is used with adjectives and epithets. We cannot 'throw out the baby with the bath water' in the social and human sciences. We know what everything means, even identity, which Alain Finkelkraut caricatured in his book *The Defeat of Thought*. What has recently been popularized in *Murderous Identities*, was already clear in Lévi-Strauss's seminars: identity cannot be an ensemble of uniform, identical, permanent components, etc. We know pretty well what we want to say when we use a term.

Michel Maffesoli

Of course it is essential that words be put into context. But now, a certain number of terms are out of context. When the terms 'political' or 'democratic ideal' were inscribed under the great values of modernity, they were in context. In using the word 'political' for example, one could make up a periphrasis such as 'he who lets the city be managed. . . .' Today it is no longer possible to make that type of periphrasis. Words as they are used become an antiphrase in the strict sense of the term. The words we use have gradually become worn out and over used. We should use them carefully because, although to us they may appear to be obvious, they are in fact disconnected.

At the moment this critical attitude seems dangerous to me. It is precisely this attitude of criticism which makes us judge or standardize according to what was a great modern idea. It is the fact of saying no to what is, according to what should be, or to say no to what is there, according to what should be universal. This critical view of 'no' comes from our old, Western, Judaeo-Christian tradition. For Saint Augustine, the world is a state of natural aversion in relation to God. For

Freud, the intellectual is 'the knight of hatred'. Lukács spoke of the 'infamy of existence'. It is on those attitudes that the 'no' thought is based. With a Nietzschean, Simmelian or vitalist perspective, could we not think in 'yes' terms and not constantly say 'no' with regard to the universal, according to the famous logic of 'should be' as demonstrated by Max Weber? Whether we want it or not, something else is replacing the Westernization of the world. Could we learn from Schopenhauer or from Eastern philosophy to say 'yes' to life; and try to think 'thus' as it is, neither to canonize it nor to say such would be the value, but to make the statement?

In order to make a statement, it is important to be rid of any critical attitude. This does not mean that ultimately we must not reach new critical thought. Making a statement means finding the context. We should stop this paranoia which makes us think of 'everything' in etymological terms. From now on we should find out what is and what could be interesting. The present is not inertia. The present is primarily a statement. It so happens that empirically, the child's experience is placed there. Instead of thinking what is, according to what should be – morality, judiciary, standardization – we should state what is there. From this point of view we can imagine that within current multiculturalism, relativism would not necessarily be a negation of thought but rather the placing of connections of things as per Simmel's meaning. From there, thinking of the present is no longer thinking in universal terms; it is finding out whether connections exist.

Zaki Laïdi

I am pretty much in agreement with what José Vidal-Beneyto has said. But besides that, we have to measure the degree of advances and actual progress that has been made regarding the questions of democracy and identity. The social sciences have made enormous progress in the interpretation of these concepts. But I do not think they have resolved everything – far from it. Before throwing out the baby with the bath water, as José Vidal-Beneyto put it, we would get ahead if we took into consideration what is being done.

Katerina Stenou

I want to recall *holzwege*. Our professor did not say they were paths that lead nowhere, but paths which take us to extraordinary clearings in forests, where one

can see unexpected, beautiful things. The problem is we can no longer find these paths so we cannot revisit those wonderful places.

At UNESCO, we have always defended the ideas of pluralism and diversity, particularly as a reaction to everything that happened during the Second World War and in order to give dignity and voice to those cultures not previously listened to. Following this awareness and thanks to the mutual appreciation of values between East and West, we came to a clearer idea – that we should try to show what has been borrowed between different cultures, as this is not known. As Eduardo Lourenço has said, the West has fed on all other cultures, showing them as it wanted to show them, but particularly taking away from them everything to do with civilization. Globalization now imposes standardization at the global level and fragmentation at the local level. We have had to accept the diversity of objects and ideas in the name of plurality and we have had to become more exacting. We not only deal with ideas and concepts but also with subjects conveying different ideas. The local is the part the global must contain in order to work out a new universality, not as abstract as in the eighteenth century, but which could contain each particularity.

The question of the Other as constituent of Oneself needs further development. I would say simply that the word 'symbol' in the original Greek *symbolon* has a meaning other cultures are unaware of. It is 'an object shared between two people'. Each time we see a symbol, we are faced with meaningless signs. I can hold a coin without knowing its meaning. It has to be both – the meaning and the signs – which come together. The Other only has meaning in the Same, and the Same can only find meaning in the Other.

Françoise Rivière

I can see some lines converging from the different points of view that have been expressed. This dawning history, evoked by the sub-title of Eduardo Portella's presentation, means the end of universal history, or of European thought as universal pretension. The latter can no longer capture reality. What needs to be done is to try to re-learn how to think of man, time and particularly the future in which we can no longer project ourselves, and even the past, so overloaded with memory that we cannot 'historify' it any more. This explains the overloading of the present where we are confined and which creates a feeling of unease, crisis and almost anxiety. With this feeling of urgency facing us, it is important that we react in order to take back our destiny and our thought.

As Eduardo Lourenço said, perhaps this ending of universal history corresponds to the beginning of a new history where each person can retake possession of his thought, his time, his history and that of others and, indeed, try to reinvent a history. We are moving from an abstract universality – therefore unique and monopolistic – to a concrete universality, incorporated and therefore plural. Our reflection should be focused on this theme of plurality which will certainly be a *leitmotiv* of the twenty-first century, and seen as an advantage instead of a disadvantage. Within this plurality we should be looking for factors that will enable us to draw on the full potential.

We have also spoken of the need for rethinking, undoing or taking a new look at our ideas. Among the principal ideas which formed the framework of Western thought, we have talked about democracy; we could also talk about dignity. Perhaps the best way of taking a new look at these concepts would be to confront them with the perception or the definition of them given by other cultures.

As José Vidal-Beneyto specified, we have organized definitions of democracy. But I do not think these definitions are complete. We could define democracy and add some adjectives but I am not sure whether the list of adjectives has been used up. I believe if we cannot find others, it is because we are in the process of describing the reality we know. There exist surely other forms of democracy, perhaps not to be invented but to be formalized and described, by adding other epithets and dialoguing with other cultures. In identifying certain key polysemic concepts with vague outlines – because they are lived or appropriated differently by different cultures – perhaps we could make an inventory of the most basic ones in order to perceive the reality of the contemporary world.

Another track touched on is bridges that are being set up between scientific and metaphysical thought – even poetic thought – because in poetic metaphor there is something close to metaphysical thought. For example, when one speaks of the plural universe, one is also speaking of a masculine and feminine universe. The 'universe' of the Enlightenment was masculine. We are beginning to see that the fact of being a woman is not a specificity as the American 'political correctness' would have it, but a fundamental difference which structures the whole human species. In affirming feminine thought and in women's understanding of realities, can perhaps be found one of the sources of renewal, one of the forms of dialogue, and one of the bridges to be established.

Rafael Gutierrez Girardot

An interesting fact from the point of view of contemporary literature is if late modernity or post-modernity begins with Nietzsche, then it begins at the same time as romanticism. Romantic poetry is universal and progressive in that it puts the fragments together and tries to bring life and literature into society, uniting different literary genres. In the fragment it tries to find a totality capable of saving universality from a scission which, according to Hegel, was the origin of philosophy in the sense of a finity of totality that was the harmonic basis of the ancient world and the Middle Ages.

The rationalization of the world put an end to that totality. Fragmentation is closely linked to bourgeois society whose very principle is the concept of egoism. The human being becomes the means of an end of the human being. There ensues constant movement. At the time of the French Revolution, the vitalization of bourgeois society and capitalism had, and still has, a clear influence on literature. In engaging a permanent mobilization of the individual, this vitality prohibits any permanence or fixity. With Nietzsche, what is called fragmentation is reaffirmed even more radically. The death of God is not only a profession of atheism but also the death of causality as God is the *causa sui*. Once the death of *causa sui* has been decreed, the whole philosophical construction, built on causality, collapses. In one of his first essays on pre-Socratic philosophy, Nietzsche states that the backdrop is fading, the rule of evolution presents a contradiction, and the game of necessity constitutes a second one. Nietzsche affirms that the modern world begins with a void. But for him, the void is not as empty as one might think. Let us remember the parable of the angry man. The death of God, deplored even by Nietzsche, is irreversible. He claims we killed Him by the emergence of an autonomous subject. There is a prevalence of romanticism with Nietzsche. The whole problem of the death of God is closely linked to a German theological-philosophical interpretation of the radical social transformation incurred by the French Revolution.

If we remember fragmentation begins at the borders of Goethe's poetry, we could imagine that positivism – which we are living – corresponds to the form of de-romanticized romanticism prefigured by circular thought or labyrinthine thought represented in Jorge Luis Borges's narratives. Rather than talking about an end of philosophy, Heidegger talks about the end of art. In a prosaic society such as ours, art has nothing to say. It no longer plays the part it played in a poetic society. If we think of this vicious circle, we can see the culmination of a certain form of philosophy as a degeneration of philosophy in the most elementary sense. I want to

refer again to the very bad laminal terminological interpretations of Heidegger by the French. Because Heidegger's question is 'what is the meaning of *to be* when one says "this is a table"?' It is not a substitute for God but something utterly elementary and present. When Foucault and Lyotard, among others, talk of Heidegger with much pathos and begin to use inverted commas and play on words, one thinks of the capacity of German thought to create words – a capacity Heidegger himself used.

Well before Fukuyama, Hegel had already foreseen the end of philosophy, and Marx had precisely stated that after the conversion of the world by a total philosophy, the latter would finish itself off in the proletarian revolution. When we reflect on the present, we reflect against the past. But we must not forget the fundamental, philosophical past. It is the only way to face up to this negation. Heidegger's negation of philosophy plainly differs from the negation practised by those who followed him.

Another tendency that has been evoked is the notion of present. This 'presentism', if we look at European history, comes from a guilty conscience, notably with regard to the Holocaust. The end of history and the loss of the historical conscience are because of that guilty conscience. I have already had occasion to say that since 1945 there has been what might be termed a loss of historical memory. No one wanted to refer to a past which some people – particularly North Americans – had condemned. Germany has seen itself condemned from the time of Luther up to those responsible for the ideologies of National Socialism. So the interpretation of the end of metaphysics is accompanied – as in Vattimo's case and others' – with a radical democratic obsession and aspirations for radicalized democracy, indeed, for anarchic thought and a philosophical concern which is no longer historical. The shadow of the past weighs heavily on Europe. This obsession with the present is a way of avoiding a fundamental discussion of the tradition being denied. This presentism becomes a way of avoiding philosophy. The media, means of production and publishing companies all contribute to that avoidance. The speed of intellectual production demanded by the latter is highly prejudicial to intellectual exigency.

José Vidal-Beneyto

In proposing we make a statement, I began by asking of whom do we think when we say 'thinker'? I want to continue this statement by talking in objectival determinations of modalities of form and content of thought today. So what are the modal determinations of form and content?

Referring to Rafael Gutierrez Girardot's observations, I agree with the comments of Victor Massuh concerning the abusive use of memory. But this abusive use is made in the service of the domination of the present and not at all regarding memory. I would say that in Spain – I am Spanish – but this could also apply to Argentina or Portugal, the burying of memory is complete, because it is contrary to the usage of domination of the present. I would even say that in France, where they still live with the cult of memory, it is a memory which is functionally integrated into the domination of the present.

I also think Zaki Laïdi would agree that Fukuyama talks about the end of history as the end of the history of progress. For Fukuyama, progress comes at a culminating point when no further progress is possible. And this can be explained by the fact that progress is a function of the present. In our current situation, only self-regulation and endogenous functioning of the current condition are capable of producing progress. In a beyond we cannot think of the progress of the present. What Fukuyama denies, therefore, is the open future. Of course, there is a future, but that future is within current society where it is precisely the self-regulation mechanism which is translated in governance and elsewhere as a specific formulation capable of producing progress. Progress cannot therefore be outside the present. The future is already completely contained in the present. This corresponds to Zaki Laïdi's statement with regard to the overloading of the present. The present is not only bearer of its present but it is also bearer of its future. What should be underlined in Fukuyama's thinking is the total elimination and cancellation of the breach. In Francis Fukuyama's thinking, breaches are no longer possible. It is the same for Samuel P. Huntington, apart from terrible conflicts with unforeseeable consequences.

Rafael Gutierrez Girardot

Marx implicitly criticizes the end of progress. This is about things which have already been said but stressed differently, and with a different terminological approach. That does not mean to say they are any more precise.

Zaki Laïdi

Indeed, Fukuyama only reread Hegel and that was through the intermediary of Kojève. The interpretation Kojève gives of the end of history is certainly questionable. Koyré has an interpretation which is far more prudent. There is anyway

in Hegelianism an absolute contradiction between the end of history and dialectic of history. But what seems to me fundamental is the collapse of the matrix of progress.

Loss of confidence in linear progress is not simply ideological. We can see the collapse of linearity in all fields – not only in history or the social sciences. If we look at the organization of the productive system, post-Fordism – the dominant model of the time we are living in – is itself founded precisely on the obliteration of linearity to the advantage of far more iterative logics like the ones we have today in the great economic and social organization models. This seems to me to present a certain consistency with the restoration of the idea of progress on the plane of philosophy of history.

Attention should also be drawn to the considerable development of the problematics of risk which have become dominant, and replaced progress. In the most efficient organization systems on the material plane, efficiency is no longer thought according to the linearity model. All this makes for breaches and profound changes in how we think of the future.

It would be interesting to see, in comparison with other historical periods, if we are living in a type of isolation in relation to a past we cannot manage to render present. Today's logic, which we might describe as radical modernity or post-modernity, rests on the idea of breach. All predominating discussions on globalization call for a breach: breach with an order, breach with the past, and impossibility or difficulty to continue what had been done in the past. Hence the enormous problem of transmission. Memory is there, of course. We can see clearly how memory can be given value. But when the whole of the past becomes memory, we forbid ourselves from using that past for the present.

On the other hand, we have this incapacity to imagine the future. Pragmatism gives the reply that one cannot think of hope without knowing very precisely what it means. That is even the title of Richard Rorty's work, which says that one has no need to know the end in order to live with hope. I am not so sure, because we can see that the collapse of teleology has historically coincided with the collapse of promise. How can a hope or a promise be formed in a way which is not the same as the realization of an end?

Since the societies we live in are no longer teleological societies, they become deontological and procedural, aiming to eliminate the question of common good by seeking an 'overlapping consensus of divergent interests', to borrow John Rawls's formula.

The question I am asking is the following: rather than oppose teleology to deontology, could we not imagine a way, a method or metaphors to reconcile them? Deontological experience, deliberation, debate on problems and the fixing of a certain number of procedural rules are without doubt fundamental to democratic society. Rather than opposing teleology, I wonder whether we cannot use this experience to think together of our finality. Deontology could be seen as a condition for the rehabilitation of the finality of the project and not of its negation.

Victor Massuh

I agree with German romanticism's use of the fragmentation concept and the way Hegel presents it. But it must be understood that in German romantic thought or German idealism, the assertion of fragmentation and also of division and alienation, are linked to a context of totality whether present or future. In the case of German romanticism it is a present context. The fragmentation idea is there at the very basis, linked to totality or unity. In contrast, with regard to Hegel, the context which gives unity or totality to fragmentation is in the order of the future and the overlapping of alienation in an absolute form.

In post-modern thought and in deconstruction thought, fragmentation is understood as being an assertion of plurality and a valorization of particularisms. Such a reading seems to me to be quite full and legitimate. Yet in its valorization of the different duties, functions, relationships, 'identities' and, finally, diverse pluralities, there are no references to totalization, totality or the unity that encompasses or contains fragmentation. I hesitate to use the term 'totality' – which implies totalization – even when it could justify or complete the debate on fragmentation. It seems we have to specify that the fragment loses its nature of particle, isolated from the social context or from the other, only when it is interpreted in relation to an encompassing context liable to integrate it into a family, a context and, in the end, to an other.

Rafael Gutierrez Girardot

Indeed, in romantic thought, as long as there is fragmentation, there is an implicit reference to totality. Through another route, absolutization of the fragment ends in a sort of super-valorization of totality which becomes untouchable and impossible.

What we understand today by totality is something quite different. The vocabulary of the German romantics and Hegelian totality are not comprehensible

in this context. The fragment, like any modern phenomenon, has undergone transformation and detotalization. Hannah Arendt's words 'The real is the non-total' is quite critical in this respect. The context should be recognized when totality is cited. With deconstruction, acceptance of a context is quite simply nominal.

When speaking of fragment, one forgets the history of the fragment. We forget that the fragment was, at first, a point of departure from integration and on the dialectical plane, it was totality. What is left of it is fragmentation deprived of its points of reference. That is why I spoke of 'de-romanticized romanticism'.

José Vidal-Beneyto

In effect, fragmentation does not have the same meaning today as it had in the nineteenth century. But the two fragments have in common the problem of intelligibility which is of particular interest with regard to multiculturalism. How can multiculturalism be intelligible if there is no common framework making the fragment or plurality intelligible? You stated, rightly, that the fragment necessarily implies totality, since the condition of its intelligibility is the common framework.

Rafael Gutierrez Girardot

But then what does pluralism mean? There are types of multiculturalism in America and types of pluralism in Europe. All of that is not criticized; it is all taboo. An essential function of thought is abandoned. In the United States, multiculturalism becomes racism in reverse. Those who claim multiculturalism is indispensable have recognized the pertinence, politically, of thinking of totality. But to whose advantage? To the advantage of multinational economic interests or government interests, it seems to me. From all angles, we can see permanent fragmentation in Latin America. The Europeans are not capable of understanding a totality which is totally foreign to them. American intellectuals say it is in the fragment. But I wonder for whose benefit this fragmentation exists?

Rafael Argullol

When we try to discover on what stage we are evolving in this passage to a new millennium to find new paths of thought, we must understand that we have a tendency to focus on certain intellectual positions whose social prestige was lost at the end of

the last century. With regard to creativity, the loss of influence or social weight of what might be called 'traditional thought' and what we might call 'art' is clearly evident. I could refer to an enquiry carried out by the Arts Faculty of my university which revealed a total lack of confidence on the part of the students with regard to their chosen disciplines. They believe the influence of contemporary art is nil and they have more confidence in the sciences than in the humanities.

Contemporary artistic creativity is proportionately less important than, for example, at the time of avant-garde beginnings. As with the philosophical connection, today it is far less important than at the beginning of the twentieth century, particularly with regard to the phenomenon of collective ideologies in the West. The interrelation of the philosopher and the ideologist, the relation between breach and artistic subversion, and breach and ideological subversion, were far greater at the end of the nineteenth century and in the first third of the twentieth century than they are today. The possibility of these philosophical ideas not being organizing ones, but simply accessories, disappears. One of the greatest disadvantages in the artistic world is just that. The situation is the same in the philosophical world.

The conclusions I am led to draw are beyond our terminology – modernity, post-modernity, late modernity. In fact, I have never been very convinced by the term 'post-modernity'. It was used to designate breaches in the structure of modernity. But post-modernity as a positive programme of art, literature, architecture and philosophy, has been somewhat disappointing.

Our surroundings are, above all, marked by an event which we Europeans, with our European archetypes of education, have difficulty in integrating. It is the radical breaking with understanding the world. And I would go further: while the Cold War lasted, and until the fall of the Berlin Wall, understanding the world was relatively easy. We still had some certainties.

Progress is a fairly recent European parameter. It was not asserted before the eighteenth century. It did not exist at the time of the Renaissance. There was no concept of progress until the 'enlightened' century. A historical journey, doubtless linked to a teleological one which joined with our Judaeo-Christian heritage, has often been confused with the eschatology of our own tradition. When the myths of progress and social emancipation and translations of our historicist, teleological and eschatological tradition had to diversify in modernity, their substance did not change. The regenerating myths of modern civilization are part of the hierarchical changes which began taking place in the eighteenth century. Understanding the world then came within relatively simple, easy parameters. In any case, we are

talking about European products. It is very interesting to see the disastrous historical experience of Russia, an almost non-European territory, bordering Europe, with respect to the European conception of the world. Yet here, a Hegelian-Marxist European conception was transposed, overlapping with the eschatological Jewish tradition.

It is not only modernity, nor the play between totality and fragmentation, which entered into a deep state of crisis in the twentieth century. This dialectic between fragmentation and totality has existed throughout modernity. Think of the paradise of Marx, eternal Utopia and Hegel's anguish. But let us not forget that Baudelaire, one of the first to represent modernity in an explicit way, tended to defend an anti-historicist conception of modernity. We are celebrating the 250th anniversary of the birth of Goethe and we could, as an example of non-teleological, open modernity, refer to the end of the second Faust. That Faust, contrary to the first Faust who wanted to have totality, evoked the existence of a beautiful Utopia open, not closed and humanity entirely surrounded by peace and danger. A double perspective of modernity emerged in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The catastrophic outcome of those dreams transformed into nightmares, the consequences of Hiroshima, the gulags and Auschwitz, weigh down on us today. But if we identify them entirely with modernity, they are only one part of it.

Today, the expansion *ad infinitum* of understanding the world is disconcerting. The problem is that the future seems to wear the mask of the past. When we are able to ask the question about the reconversion of our view of the future, we should ask ourselves about the view we have of our past, that is, what we call identity. Basically, we are in an Oedipus situation. We are collectively living his situation. Just like him, we realize we have an alternative. What is our choice? Personally, I would opt for absorbing the perplexity, but this is increased by the fact that I can only absorb it with my European weapons.

The assumption of multiculturalism and plurality happens therefore through a thorough criticism of its own route and, among others, of modernity. There is the obvious danger – already apparent – of falling into the worst danger, that is, mass communication. Ten years ago, multiculturalism seemed subversive. Today, it is 'politically correct'. In Spain, at least, the large firms and the leading authorities, use solidarity and NGOs – all the great themes of the new fraternity. Consequently, the best we can do would be on the one hand to try to grasp this new, disconcerting understanding of the world and, on the other, proceed with a thorough self-criticism of this modernity. Not from the point of view of

post-modernity, but simply from what we call 'modernity', because I consider that we are – perhaps to a differing degree – still immersed in it. All sorts of elements are inconsistently cast into modernity and they constitute the only means we have. For the rest, regarding universal nihilism, it happens to be at the bottom, underneath the intellectual dictatorship of the multinationals and the media.

Zaki Laïdi

I agree with what Rafael Argullol has just said about modernity. We have not left modernity. I must say that the apparently damning results of your survey of university arts students, which shows they have more confidence in the sciences than in the arts and the humanities, does not impress me. What is striking in our societies is that the whole problematic of risk is also based on a loss of confidence in the sciences. This problematic of risk puts forward an element of doubt and of growing reflection with regard to scientific discoveries. I am sure that if you ask the science students, their doubts would be very great, including with regard to scientific disciplines.

Today, the influence of philosophy, if we take its immediate influence, does indeed appear to be very weak. But the world we live in is steeped in ideas. It is extremely standardized and founded on values whether implicit or not, and we cannot avoid their conditioning and their implications even though we may have the impression that philosophically we are not exerting any influence. For we can easily deem that pre-subjectively, the influence of a philosophical thought of individualism on individuals is worthless. But the influence of an individualist philosophy is extremely strong on the lives of individuals. Everyone lives implicitly within meaningful systems, even though some people may not be aware of them. I do not think one has to recognize a philosophical trend in order to be under its influence.

With regard to the influence of an artistic creation, I would say this is difficult to measure since it can only be done long-term. It is possible to be strongly influenced by forms of artistic creation without being aware that one is under such influence.

On the idea of progress, coming from the Western model, I am entirely in agreement with you in saying that despite its Judaeo-Christian heritage, it has taken a long time to get itself established. Even the idea of history and historical vision begins with Giambattista Vico, not before. The West has therefore lived with thought plans which we tend to consider as being ancient or eternal, but they are, historically, very recent.

Regarding the question of progress, however, it seems to me to be very difficult to differentiate between the Western world and the non-Western. Because although the West is the starting point for this problematic, it has spread it all over the world. It cannot be upheld that the ideology of progress is purely Western. The questioning of progress exists also in non-Western societies. The problem of points of reference, the question of meaning, the question of direction, the question of aims – all these are philosophical questions, originally Western, but today they exist in non-Western countries. In Japan, there is deep questioning on the evolution of society and on the capacity of that society to preserve its particularism in a globalized world. The questioning going on throughout the world today is extraordinarily similar, even though the systems to which the questioning refers are extremely different. We do not get very far by seeing the question of Western heritage as a purely Western problem. Non-Western societies also question themselves and their future.

Lastly, we have spoken of fraternity and solidarity. They seem to have become themes of common ground but that does not mean to say that their actual practise is communal. If there is one idea which has regressed in our societies, it is the idea of solidarity and the legitimacy of the notion of redistribution within the nation-state. For example, one sees particularist movements appearing, with secessionist tendencies which legitimize their claims on the negation of solidarity. Such is the line developed by the League of the North in Italy, similar to the one I heard from a Catalan politician who was fed up with 'paying for the under-developed of Andalusia'. The political argument used by the Flemish secessionist party also comes from the wish to cease redistributing the wealth of Flanders to the Walloons. In all these remarks is the idea of legitimizing the refusal of national solidarity and affirming a particularism of identity.

Indeed, one of the great common grounds of globalization is to say that it effaces particularisms. Globalization today – in Europe at least – is a fantastic adjuvant for particularism. And this is not, contrary to usual thinking, only through reaction to a process of uniformization. What makes these cases converge – whether Basque, Catalan or Scottish – is that these secessionist movements are all very European. Fifteen years ago the secessionist Scottish party was strongly anti-European; it has now become extremely pro-European. Why? Because we are in a European world where, in the end, the cost of particularist affirmation is very low. If Scotland became independent tomorrow, it would lose little but would gain a sense of identity which costs little.

All these themes – fraternity, solidarity – have perhaps become common ground but what about our definition of 'living together'? Why are we still together in a nation-state? What is it that makes Catalans or Basques want to live in Spain together or people in towns and suburbs want to live together? What is called into question in the nation-state is solidarity.

Rafael Gutierrez Girardot

The end of the influence and the social prestige of art and philosophy was announced at the beginning of the nineteenth century, in 1804 to be precise. It was said then that art was finished as it no longer represented the highest criteria of the mind. It was the beginning of the era of prose and of the bourgeoisie. The bourgeoisie did not want to give much importance to art. Hence Baudelaire's reaction in creating the 'dandy' character – the last hero of a decadent era – to show society's contempt for the artist.

We still live in decadent times where democracy is not really established. From being something interesting it has become an instrument of power – as the sociologist Niklas Luhmann said. This loss of prestige and of the social function of art and philosophy is also reflected in the will to transform universities into management schools, to do away with the creative mind and change philosophy into a translation school. Sociology posed a problem in 1968. So they tried to suppress it and society took it upon itself to make things unintelligible. In order to enter into the world of employment, the student trained in the social sciences has to retrain in biology, for example, or undergo nursing studies.

The prestige of philosophy is also waning because of the way it talks about itself and the initiated. If the philosopher speaks of ethical questions only in a language for the initiated, it is obvious that it will reach no one. The philosopher deprives himself of prestige because he speaks a very particular language. Philosophy has renounced its task of giving meaning. The philosopher's loss of prestige is doubtless worrying as it also shows that the measure of everything is profit or the absence of it. The essence of literature – free time – is lost, and that is where we become exposed to potential violence. Dramatic or artistic creation, which could constitute a counterweight to the progressive aggravation of the job market situation, is decreasing. The need for philosophy is therefore more and more urgent.

Fernando Ainsa

In this world where everything seems to be coming to an end, there is also talk of the end of Utopias. The word 'Utopia' has acquired a pejorative meaning. It is almost rejected in contemporary thinking. And yet I think that the rehabilitation of promise and plans does not go through Utopia as such, but rather the utopian function. It is this function which sets up the natural resistance of human beings to accept things as they are, or the tension between what they are and what they could be. Utopia is a way of facing the future. We have spoken about oppression but Utopia is still necessary. Despite all the risks involved in talking about Utopia, and even in integrating the failures of recent Utopias, it should be recognized that when faced with beliefs which have lost their strength, reflection on Utopia is essential.

With utopian thought there is a basic aporia because even if Utopia closes the future, it does open the field of the imagination. If it is beyond present reality, that is so as to improve the delimitation of a space, to settle directions and set up signs and signals. The human being needs fixed points of reference. He needs to set small marks which will be a sort of 'planning' for the future, a chronogram for us all. He also needs imagination.

How can Utopias be imagined now? They will obviously not be totalizing Utopias structured by five-year plans. In order to find a place in this fragile space of the possible, Utopias must first be designed from a sort of patchwork of fragments of cultures left over from the ideological feast this last century has given us, particularly after the 1960s.

Our starting point has to be 'putting things together'. It can no longer be the construction of engineering works or imaginary castles in Spain. We must put together and reassemble new cultures from phenomena like multiculturalism or hybridization – a word which I prefer rather than mixed race. The relics of today's world must strengthen affinities, integrate common problems and devise new collective plans. We are going to be living in an increasingly interdependent world. We will have to learn how to catalyze the different creative lines, and always with this growing tension. This is harmonization of the local with the global – 'think globally, act locally' – living in this world and referring to current technological development.

Henri Lopes

I find this debate challenging, because every day, when I am writing, I wonder for whom I am writing and what for? More and more my answer is: 'it doesn't matter'.

Yet why do I ask this question? I believe it is in relation to universalism, pluralism, the forgotten world and questions which have been raised here. I write for and about people who can barely read, about those who will not read my work – at least not in this generation – using models who are totally different from those of the world I come from.

To what extent does the thinker succeed in incorporating himself into the life of what we call common sense? With regard to religions, we can give a sure answer. The great books have been spread around the world, as well as the less great ones – in the form of sects. But we cannot say if there is more or less artistic creation today because, before now, we did not have the tools or the methods for finding out. We have never wondered what Maupassant's influence was on everyday French language. We have an idea and we imagine society to have been more cultured then. But we have no instrument to check if it really was.

This is rather like the French language today. The African that I am speaks French and declares everywhere that it is now his language. And I hear French people deploring the fact that their language is being lost. But we should simply ask who spoke French before? Certainly not all French people. Outside France, French was spoken a little, notably in the Court of Catherine II and in diplomatic circles, and that sufficed to say it was a universal language. If we base ourselves on the number of people who speak it today, it is clear that French has never been spoken by so many.

With regard to the artist or the intellectual, I do not see how it can be determined whether his influence was greater before and is less now. We could simply make a few comparisons. We can say that at the time of the Algerian war, intellectuals had great influence on French public life. Today it is particularly the big entertainment artists and sportsmen who express opinions and appear to be heard. Such lack of influence is apparent in this one example: all the work of American intellectuals to have the United States return to membership in UNESCO has so far been unsuccessful.

Victor Massuh

Many of us recognize how low the prestige of philosophers is in contemporary society. Their role is no longer a substantial one and they even suffer from being to a certain extent on the fringe of society. This loss of prestige cannot be explained by the absence or lack of great philosophers. I think philosophy has a cruel lack of

public because they are turning to entertainment, technological development, science and the magic of sport. Philosophy is becoming the voice crying in the desert. The philosopher is losing in flexibility and in ability to change. The real actor of change is no longer the philosopher but the scientific researcher. Today, life is shaped by a series of emergencies which beset the human being and seize his attention. Man is no longer searching for theories. He is beset by problems which overwhelm him.

We know the French Revolution was the work of philosophers. Since that was about understanding the world from a Utopian perspective, the fundamental role played by those of the Enlightenment must be recognized. American revolutionaries did not come from the political sphere but rather from the great liberal philosophical tradition of Locke and Hume. The Russian Revolution became possible through a philosophy. That is no longer true for our time. The changes in our society no longer come from philosophical sources. It should not be forgotten that the great philosophical works to have transformed humanity are books which are difficult to read. I think it would be right to reflect on a new profile of the philosopher. Let me refer to Mr Portella's words: we live in a changed world which demands that the philosopher thinks a reflective action or an active reflection.

Zaki Laïdi

You say a philosopher can no longer think of change. We no longer know what changing a society means. The problem is beyond the philosopher. We have no more theories for social change. We have no more perspectives or plans for social change and, basically, we no longer know what a society is or what is the basis for 'living together'. What is striking is the contrast between the statistical, technological instruments we have today for quantifying and carrying out surveys, and the extraordinary difficulty in interpreting all this data. We are effectively confronted with a problem of intelligibility. We no longer know the dynamics of society.

Now the difficulty of thinking about social change is a question the philosopher has to tackle. This is a paradox since the one thing we know how to change is man. We can change the genetic inheritance of man. But we no longer know how to change society. Hence the retraction of all general interpretations in favour of individual or genetic interpretations of behaviour. I could give the example of theories which explain violence by the existence of a gene of violence.

The problem lies in the difficulty of thinking about change. I believe we should think again about the question of Utopia, while knowing on what we are hanging the question of Utopia and why we are no longer able to think of ourselves in a utopian way. How can we get beyond incantation or the need for Utopia? Why is it that we have this need for Utopia and why does man have such difficulty in redesigning Utopia? In a society where the idea of planning is thoroughly questioned, to what type of collective plan should we turn?

Every enterprise today has a plan. But when you take a close look at things, you realise that the plan's conception – in Piero della Francesca's *Quattrocento* meaning of the term, of a distancing between conception and realization – is an idea which is called into question today, including with regard to the great system to which I was referring, the repetitive cycle notion. Why do we have such difficulty in thinking collectively? Because the notion of the common good poses a problem today. If we do not try to refound, in the ontological sense, that notion of planning, the call of Utopia risks being merely incantatory.

Françoise Rivière

I should like to pick out at least four statements on which there is agreement. These are remarks on aporia from which we could envisage a pragmatic approach both to form and content of current thinking.

The first statement is the end of the universal understanding of the univocal world by the projection of Western thinking with universal pretensions, both in the discovery of plurality and the existence of other interpretations, and in aporia: the incapacity of modern thought to understand complexity, social change and the future.

The second concerns the domination of the present. Societies are no longer teleological. They are no longer drawn by the future and can no longer conceive of constructing Utopias or even the remains of Utopia which would enable a patching together of the future. Having no plan, societies stay confined in the present where history itself is denied by the over-valorization of memory, with no possibility of future planning.

Thirdly, we are witnessing the wearing down of the matrix of progress. Not in Fukuyama's sense or within the framework of unique thought – according to which, progress, having reached its peak, can only repeat itself indefinitely, with no exogenous contributions, or that the future is already contained in the present –

but in the sense of the weakening of the linearity which used to characterize Western thought, at least for some centuries. This linearity is fading in favour of other systems of logic such as iterative logic which is at work in human, industrial and productive organization systems, and even a systemic logic which goes beyond traditional linear thought and implies the notion of rupture. What type of rupture is this and how should such ruptures be managed?

Fourthly, there is valorization, indeed over-valorization of the fragment in relation to totality. But today, valorization of the fragment occurs with no connection to the meaning of totality. The observation about contemporary philosophy can also be applied to political thought, as José Vidal-Beneyto has shown by linking fragmentation with the problem of multiculturalism's intelligibility. In this regard we should distinguish multiculturalism, which is an affirmation of diversity and what we at UNESCO call 'cultural pluralism' – a theoretical or political organization plan – from cultural diversity that gives multiculturalism its meaning of cohesion and richness.

At UNESCO the question of cultural pluralism has always been approached from a political standpoint. I think it would be good to tackle it from a more theoretical point of view, calling on philosophers as well as specialists of other disciplines, to try together to rethink the intelligibility of fragments faced with everything in a block. The question which has been posed several times is that of the definition of content or of the meaning of 'living together'. What content can be given to the definition of a collective project, anchored in a diversity which transcends itself to recover its meaning in totality? Taking another look at pluralism from a philosophical point of view corresponds with taking up the eternal theme of the specific and the universal, by trying to adapt it in a more concrete way to understanding and managing contemporary societies.

With regard to affirmations of aporia, these are rather negative. In order to give form and content to this thought, José Vidal-Beneyto suggests we start from an inventory of current types of thought in order to see to what extent they are going towards rupture and how they can be redirected and turned around.

José Vidal-Beneyto

Are we in a position to think of reality from our contemporaneity or current reality? Thought must not be an autistic exercise. If we conceive of it as an activity seeking results which we can call truth, there needs to be a relation between what we call

reality and what it must cover. But we are not equipped with good instruments to think this reality. There is a patent lack in the results of contemporary thinking.

Why is there such lack of thought today? First of all, we know current thinking is extremely pleonastic, not only with regard to the thematic whole, inspirations or the recourse which has been strongly underlined by our philosophers. There is an archaeological will which is calling for antecedents. But even more serious is the pleonasm of our thinkers. It is odd to see how our writers keep repeating themselves without having had one great idea. It is normal to develop an idea but not to reiterate it.

The decline of thought with all thinkers is even more serious. I used to be a great admirer of Lyotard. What happened to him? I remember *Symbolic Exchange and Death* which was a big breakthrough of Baudrillard's. Since then, there has been a decline. On the one hand there is pleonasm and on the other, decline.

The essay, conceived as a good piece of writing, today contributes to the types of thinking which are in modal perspective. Another perspective is that of literature. We can see to what extent there is a constant coming and going between the profession of philosopher or thinker and literary production. We have Rafael Argullol here with us. He is a philosopher and playwright. In France there is Alain Badiou who produces as many works of philosophy as he does of literature. More and more, thinkers in the social sciences are also creating fiction. There is a sort of circularity.

The production of current thought is also characterized by the determination of forms of advertising, which I would describe as provocation or 'slogans'. Let me mention Bernard-Henri Lévy, André Glucksmann, Alain Finkelkraut or Luc Ferry whose books are full of intelligent formulae such as 'to theorize is to terrorize'; Régis Debray, whose ideas are full of 'slogans' or metaphors which are often quite brilliant. Thinkers also want to be revealers. As an expression of this will to divulge, let me mention the Editions du Seuil, which have produced those forms of communication called 'For my son'. I myself write weekly articles for a paper and regularly take part in a broadcast.

Another characteristic claimed today is non-systematism, the non-systematics of thought. If the fragment can be systematized, non-systematization finds expression in a formless way, a more or less defined nebulosity, more or less confirmed, as Rafael Gutierrez Girardot has mentioned.

I am merely making a statement; I am not passing judgement. But there is also aetiology. Why do these things happen? The determinations that appear to me

to be dominant are 'mass behaviour' – understood as behaviour of the masses which comes from mass industry in the sense that we have an indeterminate, homogenous and limitless interlocutor – hyper-mediatization, ephemerality and urgency.

Now I come to the content of thought. In this content there are poles and nuclei. The first is rejection, apparently accepted by everyone, of the theory or model, which produces a sort of paradigmatic perplexity. I am not talking about the lack of values but this paradigmatic perplexity that is in philosophical thought as well as in the thinking of the social and human sciences and, indeed, in the 'hard' sciences. The complexity brought about by the multiplicity of possible routes and the absence of objective criteria to establish a hierarchy is very important because it places thought in the field of the undecidable. Today there is widespread acceptance of the undecidable. We have no criteria or points of reference founded on knowledge or reason which allow us to decide. We have no criteria of certainty any more. We find ourselves at a sort of paradigmatic level of perplexity, not to say a generalized pan-scepticism.

Ontology is broadly accepted as nucleus of thought. There is a very strong return to nihilism which, through reversal, we necessarily want to ontologize and render positive. All nihilistic reflection goes in this direction. A positivization of nihilism or an ontologization of nihilism is very widespread in contemporary thought.

The primacy of mediation constitutes another nucleus. Mediation has become one of the strongest poles of all thought. In particular, it can be seen through the formulation of language and communication. The second and third generations of the critical Frankfurt School cannot manage to disengage themselves from that reflection. The reconciliation of hermeneutics with analytical philosophy has a great deal to do with this primacy of mediation. Ricoeur's progression is an example of that obsession with mediation in terms of language, whether with regard to hermeneutic understanding, to the critical basis of dialogue or to the rejection of analytical philosophy.

Even Gadamer owes much to the problematic of mediation which he has understood through the hermeneutic category as well as in dialogue with analytical philosophy. In Germany, there is little mention of the importance of analytical philosophy in Gadamer's thinking. This is in line with Michel Maffesoli's reflections. When he rejects concepts in favour of words, his intention is to talk particularly of structures which are not categorically but verbally formalized. Today's polarization around mediation is a reflection of its importance for all thought processes.

One pole which has now been exhausted is complexity. I think it has shown its limitations to such an extent, it is at the point of becoming a philosophical object that can only be 'thought'. I am not talking about complexity as a structure for exploration as is the case in many other sciences, but as an analogous role to that of structuralism in the 1950s and 1960s. I believe complexity is losing its effect.

One of the main poles of content of thought today is security. All contemporary thought is of reassurance. We are all – as thinkers – reassurers. We want to avoid risk at all costs thus explaining why all thought that pushes us towards non-rupture and towards non-innovation is always essential. Today we are all walking a tightrope and we need a safety net to protect us.

How can we deduct these characteristics – form as well as content – to give back to thought not rigour but vigour? Because the most prestigious adjective today – and this is a sign of weak times – is 'strong': a strong thought, a strong advance. To get there, we must try to find other determinant objectives capable of replacing or at least of completing those we have today and thus finally discover new ways of thinking.

Rafael Argullol

It would be useful to get to the 'why' and to understand what has caused the words 'strong' or 'weak' to become prestigious. I think we could debate some of those reasons.

We find ourselves at the ebb of the disaster of the great myth of modernity and it fills us with mixed fears. We lack courage and daring needed for a great plan. But I think that all philosophy, ever since the time of Ancient Greece, has a utopian side. It is impossible to think of the world in purely empirical terms. The most ferocious pragmatist is a planner. He adds a few touches of Utopia. And yet today we are in contradiction with this need. Audacity of thought demands projection. The Stoics already placed themselves in the triple perspective of the cosmos, the *polis* and the Same. In spite of the difficulty of thinking with this triple aspect, the projection effect still remains despite everything. Thinking of the present corresponds to living and feeding off the very action of mutilation of the act of thinking. For a brief space of time everything therefore appears frozen. We are in the frozen state of projected thought in a mutilated context.

Furthermore, we feel out of phase in relation to the actual scene of modern thought because whether we want it or not, it is still Eurocentric. It is not universal and this perturbs our views.

Finally, we cannot forget the inferiority complex, the lack of strength and the disadvantageous position of traditional humanist thought with regard to trends in science, technology and the image.

A whole series of elements combines to make our seminars aporistic and any discussion on projective thought ends by becoming a sort of monologue on our own traditions and antecedents. This vicious circle must be broken. If a philosopher today were to publish twelve volumes he would be the laughing-stock of his contemporaries. Santayana puts his finger on the 'why?' Hegel himself is almost on the edge of the abyss because he arrives at conclusions which are the opposite to those of his public. Not thinking systematically does not mean not thinking methodically. It is possible to be methodical, starting from the fragment.

There is another modern Western procedure, another deviation, which consists in thinking we possess the totality of the system, not as Utopia but as our mental make-up.

Françoise Rivière

Everyone recognizes there is a need to break away. We should raise the problem of the fear of breaking away and the need for security which puts a brake on the audacity of thinking.

Henri Lopes

Many of you have said that philosophy and the human sciences are too tinged with Eurocentrism. But no one has gone any further. I think it would be good to remember not only Africa, but also Asia and particularly Latin America which, for us Africans, is a source of inspiration as it is a region of the world which has gone beyond colonization through assuming both colonization and ancient heritage. For our thinking to reach the level of the millennium theme we have already spoken about, we should be reflecting on the whole of humanity.

That European thought contributed to the intellectual life of Africa is something we tended to deny during the liberation years and those which followed, but we should now accept this and assume it with a great deal of intellectual honesty. In the 1950s and 1960s we extolled African thought, or rather, so-called 'traditional' thinking which was not the thinking of individuals but of communities, a culture and a civilization. Contrary to Western thinking, which is based upon

confrontation and debate through the centuries, African thought always seems to have enjoyed consensus. The whole community shares the same philosophy and the same way of seeing and interpreting the world.

Just before independence, there were thinkers who were not really philosophers. On the one hand there were leaders of opinion who advanced thoughts of political agitation, calling into question the way the West perceived us, and on the other hand a certain number of strategists. The leaders of opinion were, for the most part, scholars like Césaire and Senghor. Césaire, from the Antilles, was the first to affirm that the Antilles is a civilization of mixed race but, of all the components of that society, the one that was most ignored and the one on which was thrown a veil of shame was the Black. Whence his negritude theory which links him to Senghor. The difference between the two is that Césaire was far more for action, both in real life and in his writing, whereas Senghor wrote gentle poetry, often likened to Claudel's. To complete the list, I should also mention Cheikh Anta Diop, the thinker who, basing himself on historical fact, suddenly discovered that the Egyptians were black, a fact which Western history had always hidden.

In the 1960s, Frantz Fanon, in an intellectual way, summarized and built on a 'strategic thought in Africa'. In *The Wretched of the Earth* he wrote that in order to take in hand all fields – thought, development, conception of political life and organization of society – Africa had to turn its back on the West. Such thinking had a certain impact even outside Africa (notably in Asia). But it was followed by nothing else. Afterwards, there was silence.

One presenter of the thinking I shall meanly call 'rigid' was Amadou Hampaté Bâ, who developed his thought on Dogon philosophy from the part of African culture which is at the crossroads of animism and Islam.

Rafael Argullol

Why is there this silence on the part of African intellectuals?

Henri Lopes

I think African intellectuals were very presumptuous on the eve and immediately following independence. We were young and we represented the first generation who had benefited from higher education. We were completely cut off from the people for whom we wanted to think. In attending European universities, we often

completely lost touch with our traditional culture. We lived what Cheikh Amidou Kane called 'the ambiguous adventure' – ambiguous, meaning two possible understandings. In praxis we realised things were more difficult to change than we had imagined. It was one thing to have ideas but quite another to get them accepted. One example was given to us by South Africa where, immediately after the abolition of apartheid, we saw the people taking the law into their own hands, which goes to show that the élite and the leaders were overwhelmed by a conception of life and of society which was not theirs. In the case of South Africa, these outbursts were calmed thanks to the charisma of a man of Mandela's stature, but elsewhere we have been witness to a sort of impotence on the part of the African intelligentsia. At first, during the Cold War period, we attributed this weakness to imperialism or Communist tactics. Today, we realize such explanations are irrelevant. Now, we Africans even go so far as to ask Europe to help us build viable societies. So Africa's intelligentsia is in complete disarray. Perhaps something is ripening with a generation that has not yet yielded any fruit, but soon will.

Victor Massuh

For us Latin Americans, the question of Eurocentrism is of prime importance. We have always felt ourselves to be European, but only on the very edge, on the borders of Europe. We were influenced by the presence of the Spanish and then by ideas we called indigenous, including African, to cope with the Spanish presence during the time of independence.

In this regard it should be remembered that during the time of independence, the different countries of Latin America had to oppose Spain with European ideas. The Libertadores, the liberators of the continent, said they were fighting against Spain to be Europeans. Spain's presence was such that this large conglomeration of countries felt itself to be Spanish for almost four hundred years. Paradoxically, independence was gained with the influence of French ideas. The result was a calling into question of Europe and notably of Spain. European culture then became synonymous with barbarism to the extent that it came from colonialist Spain. A fact that should not be forgotten is that Latin American identity comes from a long and complex stratification of cultures. The African component was decisive in a large number of our countries and this should be added to the indigenous presence making up the foundations on which the Ibero-American world is built. And finally, there is the contribution of immigration. At the end of the nineteenth

century and at the beginning of the twentieth, Latin America received a peaceful wave of immigrants from different parts of the world. Thus Latin America was built, feeling itself to be basically European but, I repeat, European on the borderline of the West and Europe, since it is a melting-pot, a crucible of cultures and traditions. Latin American culture is therefore founded on an ethnic and cultural *métissage*. Cultural *métissage* constitutes the richness of our Americas. It has given our culture the freedom to feel and live its relationship to numerous different cultures.

Henri Lopes

Do you think the facts we have established regarding thought in the West can also be applied to the Latin America of today?

Victor Massuh

I think the themes we have already touched on have relevance for Latin America since they are philosophical and therefore universal and general. The philosophers of Brazil, Argentina and Mexico, etc. know Heidegger and are trained in European thought. The universalist dimension of thought we talked about yesterday, also exists in Latin America. As we have had to drink from cultural fountains very different from the Spanish one, as far as we are concerned a German philosopher is as good as an Italian philosopher. But perhaps it is not the same for a European: German thought and European thought are often characterized by very narrow provincialism. So in Germany for instance, it is difficult to find German writers who know and recognize the works of their Spanish or French colleagues. I think the situation is the same in Spain or France. But in Latin America, cosmopolitanism is elementary and, for the historical reasons mentioned above, fundamental.

Eurocentrism is not just a way for Europeans to show their superiority but it reflects their incapacity to approach the world in its universality. There is enough material to write a veritable dictionary of preconceptions on the view Europeans have of Latin America. To give just one example, Hegel had a strange view of Amerindians: he said the latter were so incapable that the Spanish monks had to ring a bell at midnight in order to remind them of their conjugal duties. Such naïve images show an enduring incapacity on the part of Europeans to recognize that they inherited a new world and a new culture.

Henri Lopes

I wrote a text about my three identities – original identity, international identity and personal identity – in which I said 'It was for me that Montaigne became Amerindian and Montesquieu Persian'. Was I wrong to say that since, according to you, Europe is incapable of going towards the outside? And yet I, who am not European, would go so far as to say Europe helped me become who I am.

Michel Maffesoli

There are different cultural centres we must understand if we want to give the term *métissage* its full meaning. I believe *métissage* is one of the great old ideas, not belonging to any one country but to all cultures from their beginning. Thus, the European culture at its beginning, was expressed through the immense movement of men and ideas around the Mediterranean. This is why we have to be 'wanderers' of thought, in order to go beyond dogma and come closer to the cultural and societal wandering which is ours today.

Rafael Argullol

Our debate on Eurocentrism struck me by its similarity to Dino Buzatti's novel *The Desert of the Tartars*, in which the hero waits for years for the arrival of the Tartars, that is, the Barbarians. The Europeans who suffered the backlash of twentieth-century catastrophies – the fall of imperialism, colonialism and Utopias – began to realise that the world was multicentred and multicultural. But no one came, no one sprang from the 'desert of the Tartars'. Even today, we question the silence. African intellectuals go back to the Africa of forty years ago and integrate that past, outdated context. At the present time, intellectual, creative and active production is barely perceptible: there is no philosophical fountain; we are at a dead end. We Europeans are in the desert. We are waiting for the Tartars but no one is coming. We are presented with a whole series of scenarios. Unfortunately, words turn into dried-up clichés: we talk of pluricentrism and multiculturalism. In reality it is the steppe and the desert.

When we talk about totality or 'fragmentization' of polyhedral thought, we do it from the preconception of a unitary thought or unicity of thought. We Europeans speak of Eurocentrism without really having the tools to do so. We talk about fragmentary thought and knowledge using tools which are no longer

adequate. Fundamental self-criticism would be to analyse the present by seeing how we should apply this centrifugal, fragmented and dispersed access to the world.

Similarly, in the philosophical field, the steppe reigns – or as Eduardo Portella puts it, prestidigitation reigns. We have come into a period of dispersed and pluricentric imagination which is perfectly reflected by current literature. Latin American literature of the second half of the twentieth century is vested with exemplarity and merits close study. The imagination now carries with it elements we used to call 'philosophical'. Philosophy no longer provides us with that dose of the imaginary.

To go back to what Professor Maffesoli was saying, Latin America, Africa and Asia today constitute the true laboratories of ideas – laboratories which go beyond the traditional academic lines of European thought. Among the urban specialists are specialists on land development or other disciplines totally outside our traditional academic fields. They are proof of the existence of ideas infinitely more innovative.

I am convinced that the outlines of certain South American cities represent future models for Europe. Each time I go back to Paris, I get the impression the city is becoming more like São Paulo and other Latin American cities. It is exactly the reverse of what happened in the nineteenth century. It is not Latin America that is learning from Europe, but Europe as a human, cultural conglomeration is becoming more like the great mixed-race megalopolis of Latin America.

I think that the ways of thinking towards the third millennium must necessarily break with our traditional language. This rupture will not be attained if we only start off from criticism of a tradition or of Eurocentrism. We are in a sort of dead end, a void. We are riding a roundabout. We criticize Eurocentrism and pluricentrism but that does not help us organize a debate.

Eduardo Lourenço

We are never in the particular and in the difference. We are always, whether we want it or not, in the universal. In one of his short stories, Borges tells of Barbarians laying siege to Ravenna. They enter the town, gaze at its splendours and in the end decide to stay inside the fortress which they had originally wanted to destroy. I am very critical of certain hegemonic, imperialist talk coming from Europe and broadcast to other regions. But I go into the Europe fortress like the last of the Barbarians

to uphold that same barbarism because I have had enough of this continual destruction. Indeed, Europe is a culture which self-destructs all the time. European culture is a continual deconstruction of its own topos. It is a deconstruction which began in Ancient Greece and has never ended. Of course, there have been periods of consolidation when philosophy and religion reflected one another like mirrors. Such was the case in the Middle Ages – although the Middle Ages was a schizophrenic period of continual polemics.

Nevertheless, it is recognized that the tendency of European culture for self-criticism had its limits. Europe was really born when it discovered the New World. That is when it became the Old World. Another historical time began because something else was discovered. When Montaigne, in order to criticize the workings of European thought through other writings, became fascinated with the mythical Indian, he was at the same time both inside and outside the European thought he was relativizing and simultaneously rendering universal. Universalization happens through the recognition of the Other. In the same way, when Montesquieu wrote *The Persian Letters*, he led European thought to convince itself that it was Universal thought because it gave speech to the Other. In *The Philosophy of History*, Hegel wrote a few pages about America which he knew only from other writings. From nature to society, according to him, it was all unfinished. He even went so far as to say that the rivers of Latin America were not real ones.

I also want to raise another question about South American culture and identity. Who is speaking for Latin America? Is it the Indian? Is it the black person we are beginning to hear through literature? As a daughter of Iberian colonization, Latin America's voice is one of rupture. And yet Brazilians are and remain, for the most part, Portuguese or displaced Europeans on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. And this is not only from the ethnic but also the cultural point of view. Borges's words are as universal as is possible. No European has been able to produce a view of the world like his. But at the same time, his words are as European as they can be.

We Europeans are not perceived by others as we perceive the Other from within ourselves. We no longer hold the monopoly on the plane of the imaginary. Thinking, and perceptions of the world, come to us from the world over. Cultural plurality has arrived. There is no need to do an analysis of Eurocentrism. Reality has already taken care of that. It is all summarized in the epistle of Saint Paul: 'There are no more Jews nor heathens. There is the human race.' I know of no basis for universality which does not follow this text.

Victor Massuh

Our Latin America has no real debate on the question of Eurocentrism. If there is one strong experience, it is a completely new one: the contacts being formed between our Latin American republics. Our contacts with Mexican companies have always been through the intermediary of Spanish publishers. It used to be easier to find one of Vattimo's or Baudrillard's books in Argentina than a book by a Mexican or Peruvian philosopher even though they are from neighbouring countries. There was no exchange or circulation of ideas between neighbouring countries sharing the same language. After independence, a real rupture occurred between countries which had been united both culturally and linguistically during the time of Spanish colonization. Over the past twenty years, however, there have been some really creative phenomena coming out of entities concerned only with the economy such as MERCOSUR, which have finally meant closer relations with regard to philosophy and culture. It is important to emphasize to what extent the presence of philosophical and theoretical thought is necessary in the setting-up of these unions because it is a matter of reflecting on current market problems, technical production and cultural contacts. This new experience is happening through very diverse participation. It is surprising to discover that during meetings of an entirely financial nature, philosophical types of problems are also raised. This reflects the closer relations I have already mentioned which exist between philosophy and the sciences. I do not think, of course, that contemporary philosophical creativity is the equivalent of that which existed thirty years ago. But it seems to me that a philosophical presence is expressed in our contemporary world through other languages coming from unexpected sources such as the economy, politics and science.

Michel Maffesoli

Europe has always been a cultural melting pot, because of intensive movements of populations and the mixture of races. And so I think we should stop attacking and trying to destroy Eurocentrism. In fact there are more and more empires, as in the second and third centuries A.D. The whole problem comes down to ensuring cohesion without confinement, from the quite different starting points of economics, philosophy and politics.

Alongside official logic from Aristotle to Hegel, there has always been a minor logic like that of Nicolas de Cusa: the famous logic of *coïncidentia oppositorum*, where each element or fragment remains specific but manages to join together.

This brings to mind a neologism put forward by a French physicist, Stéphane Lupasco: 'contradictorial', meaning a contradiction which does not go beyond its synthesis. It means a balance which is not based on the resolution of problems but on the tension of heterogeneity. The different elements of heterogeneity weigh on one another and thus constitute an entity. So I think that the 'contradictorial' corresponds to the logic of this new language which has to account for a new reality made of different empires and cultures that are not reduced to a unity. In my opinion, this goes beyond the projective Platonist thought we find in Adorno, when he talks about 'Zweck Rationalität'. Along with Nicolas de Cusa's *coïncidentia oppositorum*, may I remind you that there was also *ratio seminalis* philosophical thought, internal reasoning whose attribute was to integrate very different elements. The impertinent thinking we have evoked would be precisely thinking which would integrate its opposite. It is what I call a 'sensitive reason'. Thus it would be important to reach the point of holding together what is in the domain of reason and its opposite. The French Utopian, Charles Fourier, talked of 'hyper-rationalism', meaning a rationalism embellished with the imaginary, with dreams and with games. Impertinent thought should, in my view, integrate the different elements left aside by classical logic that a 'contradictorial' logic would be capable of combining. So we must call for some capricious thinking!

Gianni Vattimo

When I come back from South America where post-modernity raises much interest, my Italian friends ask me what is post-modern there? I think Latin America's post-modern inclination comes from the fact that the region is indeed a place where contamination is less tense and more flexible between the residual of current European thinking and local thinking. Indeed, one can see in certain countries like Mexico, an attachment to a more local tradition sometimes encouraged by very controversial currents running against Eurocentrism. But there as well, we can see the endeavours to bring together European tradition and endogenous dynamics. The literature of authors like García Márquez well illustrates this contaminating exportation – and there is a certain demystification of a particular European spirit which sees itself being renewed in quite another region. It would be interesting to see whether in Latin American philosophy there is something comparable to the literature of writers such as García Márquez, or Octavio Paz who combines literature, philosophy and poetry.

If Paris was the cultural capital of the nineteenth century, I would be tempted to say that the more naturally mixed cultures and peoples in South America are likely to present the twenty-first century with a new culture far beyond the 'steel cage' of Max Weber's Europe. But this hypothesis has its limits as well. It is difficult to attain unity of new thinking if the starting point is in this Latin world and integrates the contribution of South America, because that supposes a capacity of synthesis of the European tradition (from a somewhat greater distance than in Europe itself) with the contribution of a certain, as it were, endogenous culture.

My Italian and European experience makes me feel a lack of what we call in Italy – in polemics against me, for example – 'strong values'. I took part in a debate recently on Italian television, on the problems of artificial insemination of de facto couples married in a civil ceremony. And the only argument that was thrown back at me was the one based on the hypothesis that people are returning to the strong values represented by the Church and religious traditions in general. In a similar situation in France, we recently saw a large public demonstration against the PACS,[3] with the participation of all religious persuasions. In the televised debate in which I took part, conservative Members of Parliament of the Italian neo-Fascist party were united in their defence of family values. And yet for all that is there a real movement of public opinion on this question? What is the public really thinking? I remember the great referendum we had twenty years ago in Italy on divorce and abortion. Everyone predicted that the Italian Catholic majority would vote against both projects and in the end the opposite happened. Today if we read sociological surveys on the behaviour of Italian practising Catholics, the findings show that they don't really take religious doctrine on the family and sexuality seriously. We realise that the speeches of Italian Members of Parliament who, for electoral purposes want to be seen as identifying with the Church, are reactionary compared with the majority of the country's Catholics.

3. The Civil Solidarity Pact, adopted by the French National Assembly on 9 December 1998, gives two people whether of the same or of different sex, not of the same family but cohabiting, the legal possibility to organize their cohabitation with regard to property or inheritance. On their joint written declaration submitted to the Office of the Clerk of the Court, that text recognizes concubinage and, in particular, the right of homosexuals to cohabit as a couple and for the existence of that couple to be accepted by society. The PACS gave rise to much social debate on, among other things, fundamental questions such as reproduction in the justification of the existence of the couple, the value and meaning of marriage and, obviously, the social status of homosexuals.

Does all this alternative logic Michel Maffesoli was talking about, this 'contradictorial', capricious logic that we might as well term 'post-modern', exist de facto in society, or are we imagining a post-modern society which does not yet exist? Does a demonstration like the one that took place in Paris against the PACS mean there is a silent majority? Is it not more a question of a half-silent majority, a multiple post-modern majority, indeed one that is a little more open to subjective experience?

We notice that there is currently a decline in psychoanalysis because people are taking more and more pills. Why spend years lying on a couch when pills can help you out of depression? Thus we can see unexpected alliances forming. Psychoanalysts unite with priests to declare that psychological problems and mental illness cannot be cured with pills but require long years of sacrifice, suffering and a veritable internal conversion. We might go so far as to say that Freud was to some extent an heir to Catholic morals. With my university students, I get the impression they are more like Musil and have a less religious attitude with regard to subjectivity. Theirs is an attitude less centred on the so-called 'strong' values and less 'psychoanalysing'. They are in favour of vaguer, more elastic experience. But there, we should call on sociologists to rate the pertinence of what are only my own impressions. I do not know if there is any research going on to confirm what I have just said.

In conclusion, therefore, I can see a Latin American way of post-modernity from which I am expecting a great deal but I have little documentation on it. At the same time, in Europe I find I am confronted with the conservative theory that tells us 'You are out of date because you still have a 1968 mental attitude, when people are now turning to the Pope and strong values'. However, the surveys indicate people feel far freer with regard to those values. It is true that deep-rooted demands are gradually appearing in post-modern Babel. But can one imagine 'valueless' cohesion, not necessarily fanatical, in the sense of total belief? Can one imagine a post-modern subjectivity, a non-authoritarian society sharing values that allow traffic on the roads with no police? Because the internalization of a certain number of values would allow us to live in society without systematically having recourse to the police. I get the impression that paradoxically the phenomenon of clandestine immigration, which creates so much rejection and reaction, will oblige us to rethink society. In Italy there is a great deal of opposition with regard to immigration. But we cannot put a policeman on every street corner. Just recently a Minister proposed granting residence

permits to a large number of foreigners 'without papers'. The situation is like the debate over prohibition and anti-prohibition: since we cannot manage to have very strict legality respected in an uncontrollable situation, we have to envisage a freer situation likely to lead to the reconstruction of a position of responsible freedom. I say 'responsible' because this would not be a freedom where everyone does whatever they want. A more elastic society must be built, based on truly responsible freedom. That is perhaps the only practical possibility for survival in this world.

Victor Massuh

I should like to tell you about an interesting experience relevant to this question of knowing whether or not we can expect a less authoritarian and less policed society. My country is currently prey to insecurity: the crime rate is soaring and, according to the police, two-thirds of crimes are committed by illegal immigrants from neighbouring countries. This information inevitably provoked strong feelings of xenophobia. Immigrants without valid residence permits represent 10% of the population. They number around 3.5 million. The state had just announced the adoption of a rigorous law with regard to the conditions for granting residence to foreigners in Argentina. What was interesting in the whole affair was the media campaign which preceded the adoption of that draft bill. On television they showed the reactions of immigrants without residence permits. Many of them recognized the fact that they had been mistaken in coming to Argentina where they are unable to find any work and where their situation is far from being the paradise of which they had dreamed. Against all expectations, the civil society listened to the immigrants' remarks and they then joined forces. Faced with such a movement of public opinion, the vote on the draft bill was postponed. To the extent that the immigrants were able to make themselves heard and raise a reaction from the general public, it can be deemed that democracy works: the intervention of the civil society contributes to limiting that of the state.

Michel Maffesoli

Let me come back to the question of strength versus power. On the one hand there is power to act and power to speak, represented by the intelligentsia and, on the other hand, there is basic strength which happens to be the more powerful. The

latter is fundamentally post-modern: it no longer sees itself reflected either in left-wing or right-wing speeches, nor even in the speeches of institutions. With regard to sexual behaviour, it is clear that young people are not at all obsessed but quite simply lively. We are witnessing something which is not sexual liberation but rather what I would call the 'interstitial' freedoms of experienced liberation. With regard to violence, in France there are numerous discussions on insecurity. This is a false problem. There is no more violence today than there was in the Middle Ages. Thus, false problems are portrayed as being primary problems. In reality and in a more general manner, certain values are far more in the range of experience than of thought. At its origin, scientific thought was set against the *doxa* and against opinions. But I am convinced that today our scientific thinking has become *doxa*. So there is a de-connection between agreed thinking, *doxa*, and basic reality which is far freer, healthier and lively. Many things are experienced. Now it is a question of thinking about them. That is what has to be done now with these new languages and new ways of thinking: deep-rooted thinking, linked to experience. Suitable terms must be found which ring truest with regard to experience.

Eduardo Lourenço

We have yet to tackle the question of knowing where we are exactly in our Western, Judaeo-Christian civilization. We might think we are still – on the phantasmagoric and practical planes – slotted into that defined horizon called religion. But perhaps, at this turn of century, we are witnessing the beginning of a new kind of civilization, not only on the practical plane but also, if God is dead, in the domain of thought. I think an atomic or a post-Christian era is beginning. Current religious practices have almost nothing to do with those of my childhood. The modern way of life is like an organized entertainment day and night, totally in opposition to the ascetic vision that Christian religion had, until then, imposed as an unavoidable 'horizon'. If we look at Malraux's prophetic words 'the next century will be religious or will not be', I recognize that there is still a certain type of religiosity, like a 'horizon' of meaning. But its form has changed. There is a certain fashion for Buddhism that is gaining enormous interest both with philosophers and with the general public. Something is happening which can be seen in the fantastic, universal success of writers like Paulo Coelho whose books carry a soothing message of happiness while the traditional message of the Church is no longer believable. These books answer a need to see life through rose-tinted glasses and they become

a kind of universal Evangelism. Are we on our way to a century when Paulo Coelho will be hailed as the new Muhammad?

Rafael Argullol

It seems unavoidable for me to agree with Gianni Vattimo's arguments, faced as we are with this catastrophe of high modernity we have been talking about. A weaker modernity, more heterogenous and far more contradictory, is doubtless more attractive. Modernity has not learned its lesson but continues to defend fundamentalist positions in joining the most fanatical Churches. There is a catastrophic side to this. There must be an end to dogma and powerful truths. We should take what life has to offer and benefit from its multiplicity.

We have already spoken about dead-end culture. The most democratic attitude today is to seek the multiplicity of life's nuances in such a way as to understand really and live it without going through a new Prometheism which would lead to the constitution of new dogma. I think it indispensable, from the starting point of our philosophical thought on unicist logic, to develop a radical criticism of this logic. However, once this statement has been made, we will find ourselves again at a dead end. We cannot shut ourselves up permanently in this acceptance of the *doxa* of learning from life. In Spain, for example, even the Conservatives who call themselves liberal and who pretend to be in the centre, want to put an end to forceful ideas and propose dismantling the social state on the pretext that it constitutes a baneful consequence of modernity.

Plurality and the diversity of projects on which today's thinking works, should acquire a certain projective pertinence. When I face my students I need projective resources. I cannot tell them 'You will learn everything from life; you are in a period of responsibility-free extended adolescence'. If it were enough to learn from life, that would be marvellous. It would be a sort of modern Buddhism which one could learn direct but without any clash with reality. Doubtless that would enable us to get closer to a hypothetical happiness but be totally disconnected from reality. What we need is projective.

Michel Maffesoli

What strikes me in this whimsical discussion touching on the question of religion, as Eduardo Lourenço said, is the conviction that we all know there is a time-lag

between what is lived and what is thought. In France, for example, I notice a real 'de-connection' between the intelligentsia and the civil society. There is apparently more tolerance in the basic strength than in the speeches which are supposed to explain it. Newspapers like *Le Monde* or *Libération* appear to me to be no more than parochial bulletins: they carry very stiff pieces and are run by clerks. They do not therefore relate social reality but rather the *doxa* or unique thought. A certain number of post-modernity themes can apparently return to triumphant liberalism or to what would appear to be contemporary globalization. But I think this is about something totally and structurally different.

Modern thought, multiple and diverse as it is, is a throw-back to basic society, to what is lived, to kinds of 'putting together', to take up Claude Lévi-Strauss's term, to types of solidarity and generosity. These forms exist but it is difficult for us to take them into consideration because our theoretical and methodological tools are like a large-meshed net which can only hold bulky, thick things and lets through the small, fine ones. Yet it is this 'putting together' and those forms of *a priori* insignificant solidarity and generosity that we must think of today.

I think the project idea is a modern one. In Latin, *projectum* is translated as the far-off goal one is aiming for. Our thinking – official, established thinking – is projective thinking, in the Latin sense of the term *extendere*, extended towards, whereas the 'putting together' is now no longer extensive. It corresponds rather more to the logic of *intendere* which I mentioned before, meaning what is 'extended in'. Juvenile practices are far less 'extended towards' a goal than 'extended in', meaning towards what is consumed in the act. It is an Aristotelian idea to live *in actu*. We note a social energy which does not project itself towards the future but lives in the present. We have difficulty in thinking like that since all our logic is extensive logic. Let us take the word *sens*. In French, as in the other Latin languages, the word *sens* refers both to the notion of finality and to that of meaning. And yet we tend to consider as meaningless that which has no meaning, that is to say what is not directed towards something. Thus, such juvenile practice is considered as meaningless because it is not projective. For my part, I consider all contemporary practices to be non-projective practices, but which have meaning. The whole problem is thinking of the meaning of practices that have no direction.

We are entering into a tragic era but not a dramatic one. If it were dramatic, a solution and a resolution would be found and it would be projective through dialectic, whereas tragic, aporian thought is lived in the present and has no solution. And yet it can be jubilant. There can be a kind of joy in that type of non-

solution. The present thus encloses an intensity that is not projective but which can be very strong.

Rafael Argullol

In Spain, the people's party, the old liberalism, which would seem to me to have more chance of becoming a liberalism open to life, does not dare propose anything. The liberal right proposes cultural policies based on the end of ideas central to modernity which it has 'vampirized'. I am not saying there is conscious 'vampirism', but there is 'vampirism'. What we are proposing here is so out of phase with the workings of economic and political logic that we cannot find where we are.

Eduardo Portella

There is, of course, a will and an attempt to reconstruct a strong thought in order to come out of what Gianni Vattimo calls the '*pensiero debole*', weak thought. I would be more in favour of the idea of complicating the life of the 'enlightened despot'. In that way, Gianni Vattimo's thinking plays a fundamental role since it allows us to penetrate a less authoritative space.

In my capacity as teacher, I too notice that students ask me for more than the simple criticism of authoritarianisms, the demonstrations of totalitarianism. They ask me for something beyond deconstruction. We have had enough of deconstruction; for forty years we have been groaning under its yoke. Perhaps we should go back to what was happening before 1968. If we draw up a balance sheet today, we would have to ask: what can we put in place of deconstruction? Barely consensual reconstruction as Habermas would wish? Or barely free consensus since it would be a pre-fabricated consensus? How can we answer our students who are asking for more and asking us to show them a direction and a way?

Rafael Gutierrez Girardot

All projective thought is preceded by destructive thought, because if we only project without ever destroying, we are just ensuring continuity. But can weak thought contain the setting up of a police state faced with certain social problems like immigration? If weak thought presents itself as an early warning signal of a state becoming more and more of a police state, then Christian democracy in Germany, for example,

turns out to be the inheritor of Fascism but under another name. As proof, there is the demagogic mobilization of a Fascist nature which can currently be seen through the results of surveys and opinion polls carried out in Germany. The same situation exists in the Spanish-speaking world. In several countries state terrorism continues in the guise of liberalism. I think that in the very short term – five or ten years from now – we will have to reflect on the destructive interpretation of such weak thinking.

Gianni Vattimo

In Italy, the development of the 'weak thought' concept accompanies the political situation in a specular way. At the beginning of the 1970s, I began putting forward extreme-Left Nietzschean ideas inspired by Heidegger. The philosophy of the post-ultra-Marxism of 1968 saw itself as a Marxism nourished by Nietzsche, in the sense intended by Marx, that is, not only the transformation of power (because power was still exercised in the same way in Russia), but also the transformation of subjectivity foreseen and encouraged by Nietzsche, in the sense of Marcuse. Later, in Italy, we saw the drift of those revolutionary hopes in the Red Brigades of the 1970s. It came to be understood that the idea of revolution leads to Leninism. One group, an 'enlightened' minority, took on themselves the responsibility of transforming society for others. Then I interpreted one of Gramsci's theories, the idea of hegemony, taken up by the Italian Communist Party in the 1950s and 1960s, according to which one cannot seize power through violence because it does not last. A broad social consensus has to be built up, with the help of the Church, as stated in the Lateran agreements installing a privileged relationship between the Italian State and the Catholic Church.

At that time, I was thinking that a somewhat capricious movement had to be made, like the knight's in a game of chess. My idea was for an autonomy of marginal communities – this has, in fact, now been taken up – in varying forms, like 'ethical banks' or banks with a social focus. This illustrates the construction of an alternative system within the traditional one. The history of the Italian Communist Party shows the same evolution. The ICP has become a left-wing democratic party which tries to practise reformist politics instead of extremist revolutionary politics because it does not produce anything. No one wants twenty years of guerilla warfare followed by forty years of Stalinism.

Yes, I am a post-modern philosopher, meaning that I do not invent anything but I listen to 'the call of the being' as Heidegger put it. I am extremely wary

of theories that claim to be founded in a rigorous, logical-metaphysical way and show themselves as being more enlightened than they really are. The sense I refuse to give to modernity is that of a time governed by the 'enlightened prince' inspired by the intellectual. That definition is perhaps more suited to the time of Voltaire and Frederick II. But today there is no link left at all between an intellectual, enlightened minority and the people who have to be directed.

With regard to the usefulness and the destiny of philosophy in our contemporary culture, it seems to me important to rethink the connection with religious traditions. When I was last studying, I realised that the Catholic Church as a basic community is very different from the Catholic Church as authority. Indeed, in Italy, there is a well-known saying: 'Thank God I'm an atheist!' As far as I am concerned, I can say 'thanks to Christianity I'm anti-clerical'. It is precisely because I am Christian that I want to be both a modern and a post-modern democrat.

Rorty says to me sometimes 'But why do you insist on talking about the history of being? It means a hundred-odd books read by roughly only a thousand people world-wide.' It is true that if I give a lecture on post-metaphysics, there will only be about ten people in the room, whereas if I organize a conference on the relation of weak thought to Christian tradition, I can be sure crowds will turn up. And this is not just a question of marketing. As thinkers, we should be more in tune with people's interests if we do not want to condemn ourselves to uselessness in a world where leaders no longer listen to us because they are democrats and no longer need us to tell them what to do.

The question of dismantling the welfare state, which could find a rationale in weak or post-metaphysical thinking, also troubles me. But that question is asked in a European society where a reformist political movement is steadily growing in place of the old distinction between the revolutionary left and the liberal conservatives. Is it possible to distinguish between a liberalism of the left and a liberalism of the right? Italian political tradition has two great thinkers: Gramsci and Gobetti. Gramsci's thinking is still very topical: the Italian Communist Party has Gramsci as its reference and he is still spoken about in France and elsewhere in the world. Gobetti was a great friend of Gramsci's. He was a liberal of the left in the 1920s. He died young. He spoke of the dangers of socialism; he himself was aiming to build a society without conflict and therefore without movement, a static society.

I realized recently that, as an ultimate goal, one can no longer imagine a totally reconciled society. There has to be the guarantee of the possibility of

conflict, not of forces but of projects. If someone were to ask me what I think the difference is between liberalism of the Right and liberalism of the Left, I would say the Right only registers natural differences. The freedom of the Left consists in putting everyone into the same starting position for – dare I say it – the fight. In this respect I think Nietzsche was right: there is a will for power which can be used mainly as a will for proposing and possibly imposing more acceptable interpretations of our world.

Left-wing liberalism is therefore a liberalism of projects, whereas Right-wing liberalism is one of force. This also implies the need for defining political structures capable of realizing that difference. In this, Rafael Argullol's questioning is correct. In our philosophical-political perspectives, is there a political project which has not simply been abandoned to basic forces or to market forces? I am against the abolition of the welfare state. But I wonder whether it is possible to install a welfare state which is not paralysing from the point of view of the economic development of societies. In my country, the Right say that Italy is the last surviving example of socialism. We may in fact have a very large union force, but it only represents the workers of the large factories. Small-time marginal work remains undeclared so it evades taxes and misses out on social protection.

I wonder, from a philosophical point of view, to what extent the invention of Left-wing liberalism – not just the freedom of market liberalism – is not hindered and delayed by the survival of prejudices of a strong, projective kind? Until when will liberal Left-wing intellectuals continue to think that the ideal state is a socialist state and that the mistake of the Russians was not to have set it up but, on the contrary, not to have truly realized it?

You probably know *Achieving Our Country*, a small, political-philosophical book which Rorty published recently. It is a criticism of the new American Left, done in the name of the liberal, more traditional Left. I am often reproached by my American colleagues, who are far more radical in linguistic deconstruction of literature, for being too far to the Right. But they do nothing with regard to politics. They spend their time criticizing Eurocentrism. Rorty, on the other hand, is very aware of this problem. He even tries to convince his colleagues to throw themselves into the unions' political activity.

As it is no longer listened to by the state, philosophy should perhaps lean more towards *praxis*. Moreover, even in hermeneutics, there is a practical side which has to become concrete. I find myself projected into reality, not when I theorize but

when I undertake practical initiatives, with my students, for example. Theory loses its credibility when it becomes *doxa*.

Henri Lopes

In listening to you, I have come to realize that you share my questioning with regard to Eurocentrism. Indeed, there is the recurring theme of immigration in your different presentations. This is not a new phenomenon. The novelty lies in the fact that for the first time, immigration is not from Europe to the rest of the world, but from the rest of the world to Europe. The *extra urbi* world is now coming to the city. I consider myself to be like one of those Barbarians who went into the city, even when I am home in Brazzaville.

Georges Kutukdjian

If we compile an inventory, we may perhaps realize that philosophy has been drawn towards logic, epistemology and mathematical logic, as well as – roughly in the same movement – towards the human sciences, anthropology, history, linguistics and, in some respects, psychoanalysis. So we should now be asking: what identity does philosophy have in the contemporary world? Since we are talking about the dawning millennium, how can we restore philosophy to its rightful place in the contemporary culture of the twenty-first century?

Rafael Gutierrez Girardot

Talking about the end of philosophy does not mean philosophy is finished – nor art for that matter – but quite simply, philosophy no longer holds the role it had for centuries. As Hermann Brohre said, philosophy lost that role by reducing itself to ordinary language. Philosophy – as understood by Heidegger, in the sense that along the way it leaves traces on thought – continues to exercise a function which is now hidden, heroic, even perhaps anarchic or frankly blasphemous. In fact, it lays doubt in a permanent way – and that is its function – on everything that happens.

In this regard we might recall Heidegger's words 'Science does not think'. Scientists considered this statement to be offensive because they took it literally. In fact, science does not think in the sense that it does not practise doubt. It practises experiments in reality, whereas philosophy always has the task of saying 'no' to

almost everything. Its way of saying 'no' to almost everything obliges it initially to define this 'almost everything' to which it will say 'no'. Philosophy thus plays a fundamental role which neither the economic sciences, nor communication, nor any discipline other than philosophy can play.

I think, therefore, that post-Nietzschean philosophy continues – notably thanks to Nietzsche – to carry out a destructive task which itself is construction here and now. For those who are used to viewing philosophy as a sort of consolation and for those who believe philosophy will help direct the law, it is worth specifying – to take up Borges's formulation again – that from now on, far more than before, we must 'analyse, think and invent because this is not about anomalies but about the natural life of intelligence'. That is why philosophy is born, as it began, through astonishment. To be astonished about that astonishment or against that astonishment would make philosophy die. Of course, it would continue to function in the universities but more rigidly. For real philosophy to live, we must practise the heroism I was talking about. But such an attitude is rare. It is a permanent challenge. Whatever happens, we must continue to defend philosophy.

Rafael Argullol

I think Rafael Gutierrez Girardot is defending an aspect of philosophical practice which we could never gainsay or deny as a personal perspective of the activity to be philosophized. For those who want to think, or want to ask themselves questions philosophically, there is a whole range that is almost untimely and negative – even ironic, to use the word which found fame in the Western tradition – that allows distancing and astonishment. We are all agreed in saying that this view of philosophy does not have much to do with the teaching of philosophy or the congresses, symposia or even philosophy manuals. It is a very different activity which comes in fact from the authenticity of the deepest and most intimate thought.

However, I also think when we are together around a table and talking about thought today, we expect a certain complicity or at least an understanding with regard to coherence, the convergence of untimeliness and surprise. We expect a demand or a will to come out of this pure, negative, ironic way and together try to extricate the signs defining our world and the stage on which we are evolving. That capacity of irony, untimeliness and surprise, which must be the very approach of thinking, seems to me to be fundamental. But from the moment we accept to enter into a conversation on thought and on the very act of thinking, consensus

must be found – consensus is a word I do not like very much – and a certain effort must be made to reach a convergence.

I think this is where the question of philosophy's loss of prestige becomes pertinent, on the question of the absolutely fundamental role it used to play. I think that has something to do with a whole series of identifications of philosophy with elements of modernity which ended up appearing to be catastrophic. This is not calling into question the importance of Hegel or Heidegger as philosophers, even if Hegel, for example, is now slightly removed from our passions and even though we cannot refuse certain invisible responsibilities. This is not a question of asking for a moral accounting from the fathers of these ideas that were put into practice in the twentieth century. The reductionisms induced by the ways of modern civilization, like the reductionism Lenin put into operation from the starting point of Marx, tell us about a certain dwindling of philosophy's prestige: it should not be forgotten that modern philosophy often finds a sometimes dangerous corollary in ideology. The philosopher often takes on the guise of ideologist and all this is apparent in the shadow-play theatre of our modernity.

Moreover, I believe vampirism of philosophy by analytical philosophy, by a logical empiricism and by other schools, is accompanied by the very powerlessness of what has been called the 'central philosophical tradition' to confront some of the problems of the contemporary world beginning with those posed by science and technology. Because even if it is certain – if we are on literary ground – that Heidegger or Jünger managed to reflect on technology with a great deal of audacity, they never stopped talking about a last or last but one chapter of history. We can place ourselves prior to the Stalin disaster, prior to National Socialism, prior to Auschwitz, prior to all the phenomena which occurred over the last half-century like the tensions produced by colonialism and then by decolonization. And even if we take account of the great intellectual contributions, to talk about technology as Heidegger did and to talk about technology as we do today, are two quite distinct things. I believe great philosophy perceived in traditional manner – and I mean the great Western tradition – has remained rather in a state of forgetfulness, slightly on the outside in respect of the description of great phenomena. It is slightly off-centre with regard to the demand coming from today's society. That is why there is this question about the heightened prestige of science and technology in relation to philosophy. I am not the one giving them such prestige but that is the way they appear in the world we live in.

Let me come back to the area I tried to define with the metaphor from Dino Buzatti's *The Desert of the Tartars*. There is a dead-end situation, a situation

of frontiers and the steppe from where the Barbarians will emerge. We Europeans have criticized Eurocentrism but that does not mean the Tartars have arrived; they have not suddenly appeared on the horizon. They have not crossed the plain.

We all agree that deconstruction is one of the things of modernity most firmly taken for granted, one of the most spectacular and also the most dramatic. We should ask ourselves what new contributions could today's thinking bring. In this respect, it seems to me that one fundamental element is what Vattimo mentioned earlier. Even if we move away from political practice – in the sense understood in the greater part of the modern era – we must leave this purity of universities, Chairs and colloquia. We have to find new levels of intervention and convergence with the practical world and life in general. This appears to be absolutely indispensable, even if for the students themselves it would only be a very trivial way. In effect, we have given them forty years of doubt, suspicion and dislocation. So from now on, we should be proposing areas of convergence and new practices. Social reality itself is insistently inviting us to do so by proposing some of those forms.

Moreover, it seems to me utterly indispensable to tackle the subject of science and technology, not as they did in the 1930s but, as it should be, at the turn of the century, particularly after everything that happened in the twentieth century. Indeed, it seems to me indispensable to create a dialogue between the great philosophical tradition and new problems in what is commonly referred to as ecology, that is, the relation between man and nature, which raises problems totally different from those posed in the 1930s, problems that were obviously absent from the great tradition.

Finally, I believe we should tackle the question of plurality in a completely different way if we want to avoid it becoming irreversibly fossilized and transformed into a commonplace cliché as is already the case in our universities and reviews. Horizontal pluri- or polycentrism, that is to say geopolitics, seems to me to be the right answer. We could say – if we consider ourselves to be 'civilized' compared with the 'Barbarians' – that it is our turn to fulfil the function of the Barbarians waiting for other civilized people to arrive. I think such polycentrism could also acquire vertical characteristics, that is, characteristics where borders and outlines of logos or reason – as we have termed it in the West – could be broken, and thus we would arrive at the terms for another discussion. I believe we have moved forward a little in this domain. We have talked of possibly resorting to fiction and imagination and we have also raised the problem of religion and the problem in society of spontaneous forms of

everyday philosophy. These are issues which remained absent from modern Western philosophical tradition but were taken up again during the guerilla warfare that accompanied the deconstruction period. I believe it is more interesting to approach multiculturality through the polycentrism of reason which integrates imagination and the spontaneous functions of the philosopher into social life. In this way, there is an abatement in the struggle between the world of ideas and the world of sensation. Let us not forget that one of the great revolutions of modern Western art which, however, now seems to have worn itself out, was to reverse the traditional relation between knowledge and sensation. Traditionally, there was a difference between the world of ideas and the world of sensations. One of the advances of contemporary art – until it wore itself out – was to propose art as knowledge, that is, to bring the world of sensation closer to the world of ideas. So it seems to me polycentrism should go far further in that direction.

African and Asian cultural contributions to European art and music, in particular, illustrate this movement of bringing the world of sensation closer to the world of ideas. The other day, during a colloquium of contemporary composers, we noticed that classical music of Western origin radically regenerates itself, but not, as one might expect, by innovations of avant-garde contemporary music like dodecaphonics. It regenerates itself thanks to what we artificially call 'ethnic' or 'exotic' music. All the composers – there were seven or eight around the table – agreed we are witnessing a veritable revolution in the field of music where a highly unusual relationship has become established between radically different musical traditions. Thus, the expression 'ethnic music' is gradually disappearing from composers' language. There, it seems to me, is an excellent example of polycentrism.

Gianni Vattimo

Reasoning in a purely Heideggerian way, we can wonder whether Heidegger's 'the end of metaphysics' really happened or not. And if it did happened, did that change the role and social form of the exercise of philosophy? The philosopher as university professor or higher secondary school teacher is a novelty of the nineteenth century. This corresponded to a conception of philosophy as being a science with its own characteristics, but in spite of everything, it remained a science among others. The fact that we exercise our profession in faculties and, to be precise, in the faculty of human science, has more or less led us to conceive of philosophy as a principally philological and historiographical exercise.

Let me give you the example of philosophy teaching in Italian universities and secondary schools. Nowadays the teaching is mainly historical: history of philosophy. Since I myself am not a professor of the history of philosophy, I am at a disadvantage because in the universities it is the historians who have power and who lord it over the distribution of subventions, study grants and support for students. This is understandable because if one thinks of philosophy in scientific terms, obviously it is easier to control the scientific value of a study on a lesser known ancient philosopher than on the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In fact there are many people currently doing historical work on Kant. But if Kant were today to ask for a grant from the CNRS to write the *Critique of Pure Reason* or the *Critique of Practical Reason*, it would be extremely difficult for him to obtain one. I am not saying that I am Kant nor that I am better. But given the practical-social transformation of our society, the calling into question of a system of values which, until now, has been shared and based on authorities like the Church, the Academy and the University, the question now is to know whether philosophy, in the absence of that guaranteed system, should be reduced and become neutral to a 'doxography' of philosophical opinions of the past? I do not want a seminarist type of teaching instead of history teaching to be introduced into schools. But it is true that current teaching sometimes leads to dissatisfaction. Our pupils are particularly interested in the history of philosophy in so far as they find systems which they can accept as such and discuss against other systems. It does not interest them to know the history of ideas itself.

This crisis of philosophy as a science corresponds exactly to what Heidegger called 'the end of metaphysics'. It is an end of a social kind. Since we can no longer be Eurocentric, we can no longer think of one humanity with one system of principles. We are no longer authorized to think of philosophy as a science. We could, moreover, ask ourselves if it is possible to think of physics and biology as sciences? Recently, in Italy – a country which is a kind of laboratory of all heresies – a doctor announced he had found a cure for cancer. I thought then of Lacan when he began to theorize his psychoanalysis and everyone said he was a charlatan. And yet he structured and inspired a School and a whole current of thinking. Another example is Galileo who was 'lucky' to be opposed by the Church and excommunicated in that it turned him into the hero of secular, lay thinking. Perhaps others did not banish him merely because the Church condemned him, but because they thought he was wrong and really was a liar. I am not siding with the Italian doctor because unfortunately it would seem he has not discovered a cure for cancer. In any

case, it is true that for philosophy, despite the increasing number of manuals, the delegitimization of a single philosophy manual is more obvious and more visible.

Another phenomenon we observe in our society is the interest shown by non-technicians in philosophical debate. There again, my Italian nationality should be taken into consideration to the extent that Italy shows typically local historical characteristics. For example, the fact that in the nineteenth century the country was unified against the Papal State means that from the end of the nineteenth century until the 1920s we could not take part in politics without disobeying the precepts of the Pope since he had ordered Catholics not to take part in political life. Thus politics became enriched with ideological, religious or non-religious discussions. Ideology was at its peak in the post-war years: if one was Christian, one had to be a Christian Democrat; if one was Communist, one had to be Atheist and hold discussions on the existence of God at congresses and political meetings. For a long time, this was considered to be the limit of the Italian situation. But now it becomes interesting because it is true that without philosophical discussion on values, public interest in politics wanes. Democracies need strong debates of ideas and not only discussions on the advisability of building an atomic power-station. We notice nowadays in universities – and I believe this also applies to the United States – that those who are interested in the philosophers are neither professional philosophers nor philosophy students. In the United States there is also a local specificity because Anglo-Saxon philosophy has been particularly analytical and epistemological, etc. This means Hegel, Sartre and Heidegger are more talked about in Literature Departments and even in Departments of Positive Science than in the Philosophy Departments which have stayed with the typical philosophy of the 1930s.

All of this tends to modify the role of the philosopher in society and creates many problems. If a philosopher is too often seen to be taking part in discussions which reach the newspapers, or on television or in philosophy cafés, he immediately becomes suspect in the eyes of technical philosophers. Yet who is right? There are technical philosophers who have become so rigid. It is not as though public philosophers have the monopoly on foolishness. The fact is society demands that people be present during debates. We need to invent a kind of philosopher's presence which would not be linked to a specific discipline taught at university or in schools, but one that would allow him to play a role in society. I myself sometimes feel my role to be very similar to a priest's. Besides, even positivism ended with the foundation of a positivist Church with Sunday services and parochial meetings.

If we move away from the very academic and German – inherited from the nineteenth century – conception of philosophy as a precise academic science, and if we open up to the demands of society, we become more like priests and more able to dialogue with people in the sciences and hold discussions which go beyond the methodological pretensions of classical epistemological philosophers. Physicists do not let philosophers teach them methods. Newtonian science, when it existed, did not teach Newton how to 'do' science. That is precisely our problem, because it is also a matter of new participation in society. A provocative German philosopher said the praxis of philosophy should be opened up like walkways or offices where such and such a philosopher could give consultations from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m. I should like to do this because it would mean a great deal of independence. But I do not know if it would work. In any case, it is true there is a whole middle zone that technical philosophers regard with suspicion but which is a social requirement. Besides, I would say Socrates was more of a café philosopher than an academic philosopher. Of course, not all of us are Socrates. But I think we should imagine something similar on the social plane.

What does a philosopher do when he is no longer a man of science? He does not write about metaphysics any more and he no longer writes of the basic principles of science. He does what Foucault called 'the ontology of actuality' which has become a sort of obsession of mine. The ontology of actuality is the work I am still trying to write, as opposed to the other attitude which leans on the analysis of truth. The ontology of actuality is also a way, according to the gospel, of listening to 'the signs of the time'. Why? To judge them. And that is where it becomes necessary to go back to metaphysics because, if we must judge the signs of time, it has to be from a meta-temporal point of view; which again is metaphysics of basic principles. Today, hermeneutics could be defined as a criticism of the interior of the process itself, that is the idea of a rationality which does not claim to have immutable, immobile, eternal principles, and yet does not renounce being a critical discussion on what is happening. With regard to science, for example, it is interesting to see to what extent this is above all precisely the scientific experiment – not the methodology – that alters our way of considering reality. Here is an example of a philosophical task. Have quantum physics or technology altered the meaning of reality? Let us say that since it has become possible to manipulate DNA, even the idea of life is changed. Nature, as Vico used to say, was the way a person is born. Yet now, even before a being is born, we can alter him. This privilege is no longer just reserved for nature. Many discussions, including those outside the field of

bioethics, depend on the fact that we continue to think of nature as though it were something which begins entirely by itself. But where does it begin? The genome project and the mapping of all genes will change many things. Philosophy has a great deal to do with that.

Until now, I have had the impression that philosophy, precisely because of its links with its own humanistic history, with this – indeed, most respectable – heritage which I share and in which I have become myself, philosophy has always been wary of any renewal. Let me give the example of the reaction of those who considered scandalous Heidegger's letter on humanism, judging it to be the discourse of an 'old Nazi' against European humanism. Nowadays we think of anti-scientific and anti-technological resistance for the sake of an ideal of humanity. This is doubtless respectable but it was also, perhaps, the ideal of humanity in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. We should be more open in questioning science and technology's possible transformations of the human being.

How should we formulate a judgement of this problem? When we said we did indeed need a constructive horizon, I admit it made me think of the Christian idea of charity which is very close to the Kantian idea of respect for the Other. Thus, in this perspective of opening to transformations, we only refer to one value. I am willing to accept anything which does not violate my attitude of respect for the Other and my charitable attitude towards the Other. I know even charity could be argued against. Why must we love our neighbour? Certainly not because he is like me, because if that were the case I would not have an obligation to love him. I know myself very well, so my neighbour is as pitiable as I am. So why love him? Why respect him? It is true our tradition has swallowed many principles, yet not that one. It has been violated. Hitler violated it. While the idea of truth has been strongly contested, the idea of respect for the Other is far more resistant. Until now, we have no values other than that one. It is already a great deal.

I should like to open the philosophical discussion to a revision of the role of the philosopher in society; a revision linked to the end of metaphysics as a science of principles given once and for all. When I receive students in my office at the university, I feel as though I am half director of conscience and half inexpensive psychoanalyst. This is one of the consequences of the sliding of philosophy from a purely exact science vision to what Rorty had the courage to call 'edification'. I am very glad to be someone who has an 'edifying thought'. This also implies an openness of mind and a different attitude with regard to technology, science and particularly from the point of view of what can happen in our conception of being, of

existence and of reality. Does this conscience destroy everything? In our cultural tradition we find a value which has resisted and I want to take it seriously as long as it is not falsified. But I doubt if it ever will be, since it is a formal value. It is very close to the principle of Kantian ethics: 'Do what you will in a particular situation provided you respect the Other as an end and do not use him as a means.' This is the formality which saves the value of respect for the neighbour. I think we can discuss this subject in a fairly positive way and not only through a deconstructive approach.

Zaki Laïdi

I do not necessarily agree with everything that has been said but I believe we are witnessing – as Gianni Vattimo stated – a dilution of philosophy throughout society. In any case, in France this situation is very obvious. Although philosophy does not attract as a technique, it enjoys enormous success in questioning. From this point of view, actuality has never been so propitious for the social sciences. Having studied politics, I find myself more and more inclined to use philosophical questioning; political analysis comes up against a certain number of problems and risks to which only philosophy can respond – and not as a discipline or a technique, but as questioning. Incidentally, when speaking of philosophy, we should not forget political philosophy which is very present in social debates and incredibly connected to the issues discussed. I believe political philosophy – I am thinking of our debate on the good and the just, deontology and teleology – allows one to move from abstract or theoretical questioning to more concrete, empirical interpretations. I never find abstract or general philosophical questions respond to concrete needs such as they are today.

I think a discussion on aesthetics or art could help us enormously to define or rethink the question of universality in its plural form. In 1988, for example, an Oceanic art exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York wanted to show, implicitly or explicitly, the degree to which it conformed to Western art. The Museum's very ambiguous or ambivalent effort seemed to say 'You see, we think these people have things to say but only in relation to Western criteria. They somewhat resemble us, so we must take them seriously.' The following year, the exhibition 'Les magiciens de la terre', at the Georges Pompidou Centre in Paris, as a specific reaction to the previous exhibition, displayed artistic creations from different, non-Western regions, leaving aside the question of conformity with Western criteria.

I do not know if you are familiar with the argument set out by James Clifford in his book *Routes*. He goes along with the analyses developed in France by Henri Atlan on the way of rethinking the question of universality which corresponds with the interrogations of certain contemporary jurists. He touches on one very important aspect of reflection on universality: the idea that communication between societies and between cultures, on universal bases, is entirely possible – irrespective of the fact that it is desirable or supposes it is. We can find a core of convergent values on which to agree but agreement is only possible at the cost of respect for a 'misunderstanding'. This means that it is possible to come to an agreement on a certain number of points but this agreement must not exclude the fact that we may have deep disagreements on the reasons which compel us to seek such a compromise.

The argument Clifford develops in the field of art corresponds to the one developed by Atlan in the field of science. It can be applied, for example, to a question which seems to me to be exemplary from a methodological point of view: the question of excision. Atlan says our objective can be putting a stop to excision. Recently, in the French courts, a young woman of African origin brought a case against her mother. People can have moral arguments, saying that excision 'is not right' . But those who conduct excision may perhaps not share that view. Therefore Atlan suggests agreement be reached to renounce excision (by invoking, for instance, public health reasons), but leaving open the possibility of continuing the ritual of excision. The henceforth symbolic operation would still be called 'excision'. For those in favour of it, excision would retain its essential meaning. For those against excision, it would lose its intolerable aspect. This example shows that people can agree on one outcome despite the reasons behind the agreement being founded on radically different values and systems.

I think debates on universalism and relativism could use such 'dynamic misunderstanding' or 'creative misunderstanding'. Nowadays the possibility of agreeing on everything, with a sort of universal transparency, is no longer conceivable and a type of generalised relativism, even in anti-ethnocentric guise, does not offer many solutions. It might be interesting, in a later exercise, to see how this problem is posed in different fields. Jurists, for example, report that homogenization is not possible any more and they recommend a type of convergence and a certain level of compatibility.

Eduardo Lourenço

I should like to come back to the question of art. Basically, we do not really know what this word means. But there is a sort of consensus to call 'art' any creation by man which gives form to an image or shows the outside world in a particular way. Thus, art is a field where all these aporia are more acceptable and, in a way, already embodied. These aporia are in a philosophy belonging to the same system, and yet maintained by different systems and by unrestricted universality coming from a *logos* which is also at the origin of this constraint.

Before the nineteenth century, and particularly before the twentieth century – at least until Cézanne and certainly until Delacroix – European art constituted a type of system. Then suddenly, in the twentieth century, European artistic creation – particularly painting and music – integrated in a very natural way and, indeed, experienced a sort of fascination for non-Western art. One always thinks of Europe as something over-unified in its behaviour, whereas in reality it is in a state of constant change. All cultures are like that but ours is particularly so. Thus, Picasso and some of his contemporaries became interested in what we call African art. The European art tradition discovered an art and gave it a prominent place in relation to its own which, from then on, suffered rejection. That rejection of the European tradition, whether academic or not, is one of the characteristics of the twentieth century and what we term 'futurism'.

And yet what happened to Picasso? Did he become 'Africanized'? Or did he 'Picasso-ize' African art by suggesting an unprecedented understanding? That is where we are now – confronted with dual understanding. On the one hand, European art combines with a contribution from another, non-European planet; and on the other hand, through a boomerang effect, African and all Oceanian art are raised to the level of Art. It is read, perceived and appreciated as having the same status, same rank, same interest and same commercial value as European objects which until the earlier part of the century were revered and considered to be the reference for art in Europe. On the other hand, what is not ambiguous – particularly in relation to music – is that it happened like a 'de-territorialization' of the European sphere towards other spheres. It was far less individualistic, less inspired and less theatrical than Picasso's idea of phagocytizing everything he could see. He put the same stamp on his creations inspired by African art as on those inspired by everything else with which he came into contact, including Peruvian and Mexican art. He integrated any form of art into his system which was linked to the European system through Cézanne and his compeers. Thus, at the end of the twentieth

century and particularly since the 1950s, European art has lost its status as a model not only for Europeans but also for all those living outside Europe.

Earlier on, Europeans knew nothing else. They loved what they created in an internal process; it was part of the tradition. It should be noted that European models, when they were known, were copied elsewhere simply because they were a part of Europe which imposed itself worldwide in all other spheres. When a European artist was in Brazil, for example, he took along with him artists who were going to paint Brazil. The first European paintings to reach Brazil were Dutch but actually painted in Brazil. This generated a Brazilian School which continued after the Dutch had left the country. Baroque art developed in the Portuguese-Brazilian tradition of the time until the circuit was interrupted.

In the 1950s, however, an extraordinary thing happened. While European art – painting, at least – seemed to be the only universal model, not just for Europeans but worldwide, another pole of art appeared, another Paris. I am referring, of course, to New York, the city that was to become the capital of the world. Painting suddenly had at least two fields of artistic creativity. On the other side of the Atlantic non-European art was more in demand. Fascination for another species of the planet came naturally with the successive discovery by Europeans of other countries' art. It was mutual. Do Europeans have a greater fascination for Japanese art than the Japanese for Western art? Everyone knows the Japanese are, in a way, hyper-Western in that they have a great fascination for everything to do with Western art. But does European art have as much influence on the Japanese imagination as their art has on Europeans?

With regard to music, things are clearer. One of the most extraordinary phenomena of the twentieth century is, I think, the destructuring that music has exerted on the aesthetic imagination and sensitivity of the West. We don't see this in connection with so-called 'noble' music but with music which comes from 'below' as the crude expression goes. Africa is the source of this phenomenon. I believe jazz is one of the musical creations which has most deconstructed how we hear music: it has altered musical memory. Jazz progressively transcended its status of so-called 'tribal' or 'ethnic' music, fundamentally linked to a matrix of African origin. Europe itself tried to integrate – as can be seen, for example, in Stravinsky's music – that other vision of the world, that other way of feeling things, that other rhythm until then unknown to the European tradition but which jazz carried with it. This spontaneous contribution coming from another culture deconstructed all European rhythm developed since the Middle Ages. And though today, we may

still think more or less in 'Greek' fashion, we feel and we hear Africa, India or the East, in most of the music we listen to. With all the contributions of jazz and raï, another planet is emerging and that other planet is ours. On the plane of our aesthetic sensitivity, we are already living a concrete plurality beyond all these memories of ours. They were typical, obviously Western and belonging to one particular country or culture. The music which is now becoming universal is something really new and characteristic of our time. Only fifty years ago we could not even have imagined it.

Georges Kutukdjian

I think Eduardo Lourenço has described one of the first instances of the irruption of the history of the conquered into that of the conquerors. It is surely no accident that this type of appropriation of music came about in the context of African colonization, like jazz, the music which developed from different styles played by slaves. For once this is an irruption of the conquered into the history always written by the conquerors – the story of their victory.

Henri Lopes

Since we are talking about 'exotic' cultures, I can't stop thinking of one of my country's proverbs: 'When you speak, have pity on those who listen to you'. I should like to have pity on you. I want to go back to the debate Georges Kutukdjian reopened on the question of knowing whether or not philosophy has moved away from its public and, more loosely, from the general public. I have been listening to you and I should like to express a few reservations – in the original sense of the term.

In the preface to a little known work, perhaps forgotten today – and yet it is a beautiful novella – by Chinguiz Aïtmatov entitled *Djamilia*, Luis Aragon wrote 'In these times when music is no longer music, and painting no longer painting . . . my God in whom I do not believe, I thank you for having given me *Djamilia* in whom I believe with all my heart'. In effect, it is a totally classic novel in form, very simple, as though written by a modern-day Maupassant, in the late 1950s, when the French novel – including, in some respects, Aragon's work – was not easy to read. Briefly, for those who know Aragon, that is no contradiction. Was it not avant-garde, surrealist Aragon who reintroduced classical verse and Alexandrines

into modern themes? Thinking about *Djamilia* again, I believe Aragon was right to cry out a warning and bring us back to the question of distance between creation and the general public.

It is true that there was a separation between the general public and artistic creation, particularly in the twentieth century with all its modern trends. We mentioned Picasso a little while ago. We might just as well have been talking about Vasarely or other artists, each of them for different reasons. We have difficulty imagining a peasant buying a Picasso or a Vasarely and hanging it in his home but we can easily see him falling in love with a painting by Toussaint or Rembrandt, without knowing why, without having any cultural background in paintings. The same kind of statement could be made with regard to music where there is a whole avant-garde movement producing something which makes us wonder if it is music at all or just noise. This is also true of poetry with surrealism and the novel. One question we can and do ask, and one that creative artists still ask, is whether creation should be understood by the general public? Or whether, on the contrary, it matters little if the work is illegible, the important thing being for the artist to leave the beaten track, follow his quest and open up new pathways, it being understood that the 'specialists' will understand.

In the sphere of philosophy, I would tend to think the opposite. When I was a young student and took a philosophy course, Husserl was in vogue. Under the influence of a Husserlian professor, I decided to change tack. This professor used to begin his lectures by saying 'our epoch is phenomenological' and would then launch into a transcendental analysis of a term such as 'the field', for example. There would follow a lengthy description which would be quite fascinating and yet left me totally at a loss with regard to what I had been told was philosophy the previous year. One of the dissertation subjects the professor gave us was 'What is the metaphysical tenor of yellow and what is the metaphysical coefficient of lemon?' I think that summarizes the meaning of this anecdote for our own reflection. All this was considered to be very serious in one of Lycée Henri IV's higher literature classes.

In conclusion, I rather have the impression that despite the existence of philosophical trends like the one I have just described – doubtless in an unfair way and certainly as a caricature – I doubt whether in philosophy there can have existed the same movement you were describing earlier in the field of artistic creation. Because I do not think that philosophy – apart from theological philosophy – was broadcast or popularized during the lifetime of the philosophers concerned. I believe that in their time, philosophers were known only by a small group of

people. I would even take the paradox further – knowing full well I am exposing myself to criticism – and say there are more people with some knowledge reading philosophy today, than there were one hundred years ago. Philosophy has become integrated into school programmes at an earlier stage of intellectual development than before. This coincided with the democratization of teaching and with the development of state schooling. So the number of people willingly or unwillingly steeped in philosophy, those who may forget it, come back to it or simply have a few memories of it is, I think, greater today than ever before.

Victor Massuh

Among the functions of philosophy, Gianni Vattimo has just mentioned the one of staying alert with regard to scientific experiments even though he expressed a marked preference for an ontology of actuality. The attention philosophy must pay to scientific experiments gives me food for thought.

When I received the invitation to these meetings, I was reading an old book from my youth, *Man's Place in Nature* by the German philosopher Max Scheler. This work had a certain importance for 'anthropological philosophy', a fashionable discipline at the time but which has since somewhat declined. The emergence of the thinking of Heidegger slowed down the development of a reflection on anthropological philosophy or philosophical anthropology, to the extent that Heidegger thought, in relation to Man, that it was more suitable to talk of ontology and even fundamental ontology. The book fell into oblivion and indifference. Reading it again with the eyes of a man who has already left teaching behind, as I have for some years now, I noticed that philosophical anthropology claimed to study man from a strictly philosophical point of view but taking account of the contributions of anthropology.

Max Scheler drew his philosophical conclusions on the basis of scientific anthropology which has now become obsolete. But when man was seen essentially as being a story and a history, with no equivalent characteristic in the animal world, philosophical anthropology tended to bring him back to nature and integrate him into the indifferent world of living beings. Man's journey to the past, the human species going back to nature, went far further than the insertion of man in the biological past. In the end, man appeared to be a figure of the cosmic world. The theory of the anthropological principle considered the objective of cosmic history or cosmology to be the formation of carbon, thus making the emergence of life

possible, the peak or culminating point being, one day, the emergence of man. At that time, the image of man given by science was at least enriching from the point of view of his insertion and integration into the biological sphere and cosmic reality.

Maintaining that the universe appeared only in order to create Man, is a theory which is, of course, of enormous interest for those who wish to practise extra-scientific reflection. But if, turning towards the future, we could pursue the analysis science makes of man as a natural being, we would come across an idea of man as protagonist of the evolution of his species. Man, considered from a genetic angle, corresponds to something which is dependent on the exercise of human will.

Current experiments in genetic engineering pose worrying questions. If the future of human evolution is now dependent on human will and if man holds his own evolution in his hands, are we being confronted with a sort of Faustian Prometheanism in which man creates his own physiognomy from a natural perspective? Are we witnessing the famous game of dice that eliminates chance? Are we ridding ourselves of life's spontaneous movement? Are we indefinitely pushing back the limit of what is allowed and lawful? All current scientific research gives abundant material for philosophical reflection. We are again asking questions about human nature. The question of the validity of the entropic principle, for example, very clearly calls for philosophy. Philosophy must provide a reply to the question of knowing whether the future of the human species can effectively be confiscated for the exclusive benefit of man or whether the human genome, human cells, must remain intangible.

All this leads me to a somewhat archaistic conclusion. A whole series of questions arise regarding the origin of man and the evolutionary future of the human being. And finally, I was wondering whether philosophical anthropology – in a new way, of course – should not be given a new legitimacy.

Georges Kutukdjian

The idea I now propose to put forward is not new, but it merits reflection. I think the philosopher has always been fascinated by politics. As with any fascination, the one that takes place between the philosopher and politics is ambivalent; there is repulsion and attraction.

Plato was very bitter after his experience with Alcibiades, the Sicilian tyrant. Things also went very badly between Descartes and Christina of Sweden, between Voltaire and Catherine II, or again with Hegel who, for a while was

fascinated by Napoleon. It is a mutual process. Politics is also often tempted to 'flirt' with philosophy or philosophers. This is why I think, like Rafael Argullol, that the philosopher often plays the role of ideologist. Perhaps that is also why, having thought about this question, contemporary philosophers are beginning to stand back from the 'masters of thought' role we would have them play in affairs of the State. And finally, I think that is why they sometimes hesitate. We have to say, quite simply, that the philosopher, indeed like any citizen, is often mistaken in politics. They have made a certain number of mistakes in analysis and estimation.

Public

My question is for Gianni Vattimo. In France, Luc Ferry has just proposed that there should be a reform of philosophical teaching, stressing the idea of philosophy as cultural mediation. He met with opposition from all sides, left and right. What is the most important task of philosophy today if it is not the one Nietzsche envisaged: cultural mediator? Should it be the task of arguing with a world that is more and more uncultured, leaning more and more towards production and productivity for productivity? Does it consist of giving meaning to the relativity of its position in a world devoid of absolute values, and incapable of reinventing the ontological fictions of the past?

Gianni Vattimo

I do not quite understand whether this is about philosophy as mediation or mediatization of culture or of forms of culture, or the idea of the philosopher as doctor of culture. It could be this Nietzschean idea but I would think it is more Habermas's idea of the philosopher as constructor. And so I would call the ontology of actuality an idea, a theory, or an awareness of what the being is, in our current condition. The being is not something, somewhere, from whence we have come, about which we remember or which we look for under the table, etc. The being is what is expressed in the word 'being' in historical humanities' use of the notion of reality.

During the siege of Constantinople in the fifteenth century, the sex of angels was discussed. But today we do not discuss that any more. It is the same with the subject of vampires. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, a highly reputable Bavarian Catholic philosopher wrote, among other things, a history of good

as well as bad mystique. In the history of diabolical mystique, there are pages on vampires where he copies – it still surprises me – accounts of servants of the Hapsburg Empire, in Transylvania, who had been to look at a known 'vampire' in his coffin and, since there was no fresh blood, were unable to state that it was a vampire. Nowadays, we do not know whether there are vampires or not. We no longer have the means to verify or falsify a proposal on such a subject. We do not think about it any more.

I took this example of vampires to show that the notion of reality changes. There is a history of being which is also the history of customs of the world as well as a history laden with ontology. It is not simply the history of language. It is the history of being, in the sense that there is no being beyond what is said about it, what is manipulated and what is worked. I feel this task belongs to philosophy and particularly modernity. If we define modernity as Weber did, for example, through specialization of spheres of existence, we run the risk of becoming schizophrenic in that our existences would be multiplied.

This is why philosophy must be interpreter, translator and synthesis not from the point of view of ultimate reality but from the practical language point of view, from the common *logos* of what we call shared discourse, everyday language and culture. It is true that being is actualized in language. Philosophy is a discipline of purified everyday language and, in a way, it is a little like a doctor: not because it reveals to you that some terms have no meaning, but by the way it helps you reconstitute a continual weave of experience, outside which we no longer know in what world we are living.

Public

In relation to the notion of the mask you developed in *The Post-Modern Era*, all that remains in a world without values is culture. There is only the cultural era where the mask assumes its importance and its role. Would the role of philosophy be both to indicate the desirable relativity of the mask in particular as well as extend that vision of relativity of the mask to the scale of society, without wanting to transform it?

Gianni Vattimo

In *The Gay Science* there is an aphorism which says one must know how to continue dreaming while knowing one is dreaming. . . .

Art and reasons[1]

Eduardo Prado Coelho

It seems to me we all share the feeling that a great change in society took place over the last thirty years. The task we now have is finding the word to designate this change. We have hesitated over several words. Each one offers both advantages and disadvantages and more especially because this change is fundamentally a transition towards the indeterminate, indecisive and undecided, and the fact of attributing a name to it would be equal to locking up and shutting in the excess of possibilities available in which we move with obvious, yet impassioned bewilderment.

The idea of a post-industrial society already existed in the 1950s. Daniel Bell was very keen on the idea. The degree of the transformations which took place within the production system incurred considerable contradictions between the technological effects and the cultural contributions of capitalism. Ways of life underwent tremendous changes. The expression 'post-industrial society' was taken up again by Alain Touraine who studied the more or less euphoric or dysphoric multiplication of that 'post-' which cut across everything from post-feminism to post-modern Marx, passing through post-structuralism and post-socialism – all of it coming from the post-industrial society.

1. This presentation is followed by a debate which took place in Rio de Janeiro on 23 April 1999.

Other words appeared which differed according to the way the issue was approached. They spoke of 'the global age', globalization obviously being linked to this transformation. They spoke of 'information society', taking into account the technological transformations brought about by the information plan. In *The Network Society*, Manuel Castells questions how a society relates to the effects of dissemination and disintegration of the subject, and the reverse side leading to a certain number of dwindling identity types or resistance – not necessarily negative – to that dissemination.

We talk of 'post-history' – a theme which in a certain way crosses over the theme of the end of history. We also talk about 'late capitalism' and 'flexible societies', of which one interpretation is presented by Anthony Giddens, and others by the German sociologists Ulrisch Beck and Niklas Luhmann. This leads to a series of interesting and important reflections which are sometimes sociological and sometimes ecological as is the case with Beck, or integrated into the theory of systems as with Luhmann.

Each of these reflections suggests a possible name; I do not particularly like any of them. I have the impression that each one translates part of the problem without managing to say what we cannot say in reality. Basically, all of these expressions are watching and waiting for the appearance of a transformation which will invalidate them all.

The word 'post-modernity' permanently wavers between a strict, precise definition and an endlessly changing value, tending most often to a valorization effect. It designates a type of artistic movement composed of an ensemble of combined elements and more or less periodical recycling of previous forms. This wavering produces permanent contamination of the word by what we could think, like or dislike, about a certain number of works, monuments, houses and paintings which present themselves as post-modern. Thus, from a post-modern framework, emerge entities like 'trans-avant-garde'.

We might also say this word reflects a crisis of the great systems which have been widely used. But it also presupposes a sort of system of the crisis of great systems – a self-performing contradiction; however, this is a positive sign to the extent that things which think are, normally, in contradiction. Derrida would say these are aporia, and we must start thinking from these aporia. But things become complicated because the word 'post-modernity' implies a sort of farewell to modernity, a farewell all of us, for one reason or another, have difficulty accepting. One of the reasons is the existence of a close link between modernity and certain values –

it could be a matter of generation; the other corresponds to the position held by Jürgen Habermas, that modernity has not yet realized all its promises of emancipation and so it remains an unfinished project.

I have tried to set out the problem by considering that, at a given moment, modernity makes us aware of the existence of opposition between ancient and modern, and this awareness ends up presenting itself as an acquisition of a type of trans-historical category. Even if we have only been aware of it at a given moment, this opposition between ancient and modern runs through the whole of history. One of Foucault's three readings of Kant's text *Réponse à la question: qu'est-ce que les Lumières?*, shows the marked influence of the Frankfurt School. It tries to consider a type of historical deep-rootedness, an apparition and the emergence of trans-historical structures. Thus, in all societies, in all epochs and at any time, there would be a sort of counterpoint between modernity and counter-modernity. This struggle between modernity and counter-modernity would take place in pre-modern times, in modern times and it would continue to take place in post-modern times. Those who reject the term 'post-modernity' deny its pertinence and usefulness, that is, to allow at one and the same time recognition of changes that have taken place, and continuance of defending a certain number of values of modernity which are threatened in post-modernity.

This is very visible in a country like Portugal where freedom, which was only really established twenty-five years ago, engenders a certain number of effects of the post-modern type. The introduction of new technologies (mobile telephones are extremely popular and computer language is progressing rapidly) is superimposing itself on illiteracy which is still present. This produces a type of barbarian modernization. There is a short circuit between pre-modernity and post-modernity that finds us unprepared when confronted with the negative effects of technological processes. Obviously, there is the question of knowing whether this line of post-modernity is part of a 'hidden agenda' of modernity or whether it represents another modernity. We find ourselves in a game where words are linked in such a way to problematics that it is better to discuss the problematics than the words.

One of the questions we should ask ourselves in this process concerns the subject. Even within a structuralist framework, this is not a question which can be considered in a homogenous way. There is, in fact, a very clear dysfunction of the subject in the theory which states that a science is all the more science when it is less human, and thus it includes a project where the symbolic loses the mark of human. This is fascinating, as was the case for a psychoanalyst like Jacques Lacan who saw

the cybernetic machine in relation to the thinking of Claude Lévi-Strauss. And then there are all those – including Lacan himself – who, in subsequent formations, can only see that the dysfunction of the subject cannot happen without leaving a trace, scars, or a point of connection between the two edges. Jacques-Alain Miller had suggested the 'stitching' concept to express precisely that question. Basically, when we reopen the question of the subject, we are undoing the scar which was healing and trying to see what is on both sides of the wound but has never really healed. Psychoanalysis and the unconscious show this to be obviously narcissistic.

The notion of post-structuralism is curiously not a French notion. The French have difficulty seeing themselves as structuralists and have never called themselves post-structuralists. Post-structuralism is an American notion taken from French texts – sometimes with quite a time-lag – when they were translated in the United States. It is a term which can embrace, with multiple effects, extremely different thinkers like Barthes, Lacan and Lévi-Strauss and even more recent thinkers like Baudrillard and particularly Derrida – who became the most obvious representative although he does not like the notion of post-modernity or post-modernism. Moreover, he has written a very clear text on the subject and has also published a text on all the '-isms' stating he does not feel himself engaged despite some texts read in the United States, in particular where there is an attempt to use his concepts in a multiculturalist way.

The common factor between all the components of this wave is the process of de-dialecticization. The stronger idea with all these thinkers is to finish with dialectics through a closed process linked to totalitarian projects. Dialectics must be replaced – opposition or contradiction – by difference. This is the emergence of difference in place of contradiction and the emergence of a type of indetermination in place of complementarity, instead of plain dialectics. From this angle, all Deleuze's texts are basically the installation of a thought of difference in place of a thought of contradiction. Yet differences are multiplied in such a way that the time comes when one can no longer differentiate between the differences which make a difference and those which do not. There is a type of indifferentiation of differences, linked moreover to globalization. From now on, we can conclude with reason that globalization does not efface differences. On the contrary – and this is an interesting process – it is sometimes the global which produces the local difference. Differences are parachuted by the global to give a sort of touristic or 'exotic' dimension to the local. Some sociologists, in a play on words, call this a 'glocalization' process, that is, globalization which introduces the local into the framework

of globalization itself. In its efficiency, this process of evacuation of differences is probably one of the marks we see later, not in post-structuralism any more, but in the 1980s in the post-modernity we call 'de-differentiation'.

One of the most curious aspects today is 'de-differentiation' between, for example, high culture and low culture and between different social classes. The 'de-differentiation' of all these differences which have been created, have become fragile, more flexible and have ended up being dissolved in global indifferentiation. I think post-modernity is very marked by this process of 'de-differentiation'. In my view or the view of someone for whom the value of modernity – which goes through pertinent differences to distinguish difference from the indifferent – still has meaning. And it is on this level that the question of lines of resistance, raised in the previous debate, reaches its full capacity. Obviously, plenty of other variations appear in this process. The colonized appears in place of the proletarian, but there are still differences in the appearance of the displaced and the refugee instead of worker in the international sense of the term. Giorgio Agamben's idea is that nowadays the subject of history is the refugee. Yet if refugees can be passive subjects of history, they have great difficulty in being subjects who are bearers of history's emancipation. This is obviously where the essential question lies.

I shall finish on another question which is currently of particular interest to me: the importance of the notion of tertiary in terms of the logic of thought. I am starting from the experience that there are thinkers of one, of two and of three. There are thinkers who tend to bring everything down to one – this is certainly the case for Plato and, although more complex, for Alain Badiou, a convinced Platonist who goes back to metaphysics. There are thinkers in two, for example Ferdinand de Saussure, who divides everything in dichotomies. The opposition between Saussure and Charles Sanders Pierce is therefore evident. Pierce does everything in three. As he says himself, there are those who think in triads. Throughout history, from Plotinus to Hegel, with Master Eckhart and Leibniz along the way, we find thinkers of three. One could even add Marx to the list. How does the tertiary image function today? The image of tertiary can be João Guimarães Rosa's 'third bank of the river', it can be the third of Jorge Luis Borges's poem, or even Graham Greene's *The Third Man*. The tertiary can represent the place of totality and in this case it takes us back to dialectics. Tertiary can also symbolize the place of neuter. This dimension is fundamental for the question of negotiation which appears in Eduardo Portella's text. Normally it always implies the tertiary. Norberto Bobbio wrote a book on precisely the absent third party, *Il terzo assente: saggi e discorsi sulla pace e la guerra*.

As the place of Other, tertiary can seem a figure of impossibility like a metaphor for infinite and indetermination. What interests me at the moment is perceiving this double war in contemporary thought: war between a binary thought, tending to hide or ignore the whole dimension of tertiary and corresponding fairly well with instrumental reason, and the struggle in the area of triads of thought where tertiary is between enclosing tertiary and opening tertiary. In this respect what interests me is seeing to what extent one of the lines of resistance we can oppose to binary thought does not touch on the idea of open, infinite and indeterminate tertiary, against the tertiary which is nothing but totality.

Beatriz Resende

I should like to make a few remarks about certain aspects of the culture of this intolerant change of century and then give some Brazilian examples. The twentieth century of the Christian era has known the most violent wars man could create. It began with the First World War and, without learning the lesson, went on to the Second World War which was even longer, more violent, more widespread and had an even higher death-toll. When it was over, that war left behind the most horrific genocide of all time, the Holocaust – a reminder of what ethnic discrimination, political or religious sectarianism and intolerance can lead to when confronted with any difference.

Later, divided into two great blocs, the world saw the armaments race render both sides capable not only of mutual destruction, but also of exterminating all of humanity. The Cold War, a political war with neither arms nor bombardments, as much between nations as within them, was nearly settled by a draw in the race to press the button – red or green – which could set off Earth's self-destruction. The warmongers took fright and at last came to the conclusion that such a route was excessively dangerous. For a while it seemed that, with difficulty, peace was being constructed among men and the century was taking that road. Man had either learned the lesson or worn himself out in the armaments race.

But the war machine seems to have an autonomous way of functioning. The last decade of the last millennium began with the appearance of a new war model. The Gulf War showed a new face: distant, scientifically calculated, conducted against dictators of a rather 'strange' culture. On television screens or computers connected to Internet, the images shown were both near and far away. Bombs falling from planes appeared to be less evil than a more widespread conflict.

That brief, cruel war was destructive and there were victims, but it had the peculiarity of taking on the aspect of a video game. Television stated that targets were hit with surgical precision. The war appeared to be a virtual event. It did not seem to be happening on Earth with human beings. We took it to be a mechanical game, removed from politics and economic or ethnic conflict. Sad mistake.

We have reached the end of a century in a world which is no longer divided into two blocs. Dominant capitalism is taking on new forms in a global economy. The cradle of Western civilization – Europe – is trying to gather together around a single currency and single market. Transnational politics prevail over national divisions. But at the very heart of this rich, comfortable, educated, civilized and rational Europe, former socialist bloc countries which are poor and peripheral began fighting over the crumbs.

That was the beginning of the Balkans war. First of all there were four years of civil war in Bosnia. The United Nations forces intervened and the conflict between different ethnic groups left 250,000 dead. Then it was Yugoslavia's turn. The world saw 'ethnic cleansing' sweep down on the poorest and most helpless: Albanians, Tziganes from Montenegro and all types of dissidents were pursued, expelled and in the end killed in the name, once again, of 'nationalism'. Refugees sought help in neighbouring countries, Albania, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania, Bosnia and Croatia – the nearest countries were also the poorest – and then in Italy and Greece. Then, remembering that the First World War had begun in the Balkans, the world decided to take action. It was feared there would be a 'domino effect' which would lead to violence flaring in the whole region. Then on the scene came NATO, the force created to ensure security in the North Atlantic, particularly against whatever might become a possible Communist threat. Thus another, very unusual type of war began, with a supra-national organization opposing a nationalist, racist, fundamentalist tyrant. Bombardments began. They were supposed to be precise and only directed at military targets. It was a strange war where there were to be no victims. But the video game soon showed it was not perfect. Danger sprang up on all sides and soon there was no way out.

Unlike previous wars, today's wars, particularly those in Europe, are delivered to us daily on the screen. Television images show physical suffering, death, faces which speak of separation and loss and orphaned, homeless children. We see women crying over their children, families who have become separated and fear they will never find one another again, and mothers who send their children away in the hope of saving them. Their faces show the utter despair of total loss.

Wars change but pain and suffering are always the same. Barbarism is back with a vengeance at this turn of millennium instead of teaching peace and tolerance, the essential *modus vivendi* for the survival of all of us. What have they got to say about that, those who spend their time in reflection, thought and philosophy? What needs to be done so that discussion, dialogue and democratic debate can take place?

One fine day the television crews left the Balkans war to tell the story of another, smaller war, but a highly significant one. In Colorado, two young people effortlessly acquired an arsenal and reproduced war in a school. Fifteen people were killed and many others injured. The immediate school surroundings were mined. The main targets were children from ethnic minorities. Mothers, like those of Kosovo, were crying for their children. To those who escaped the massacre, kids in trainers, friends, brothers and sisters of the victims of the two 'little Hitlers', suddenly a face of the holocaust was revealed.

Impersonal, calculated war does not exist. Purely virtual war does not exist. Whether wars are great or small, the incitement is always similar but they escalate in different ways. Real war kills, without any doubt. But there is also symbolic war, portrayals of war, war reproduced in plastic and in dangerously attractive games and toys. Those young people in Colorado made a reality out of what they had seen in portrayal. They were good students in the art of war. What pushed them to act was repulsion of difference, the ideal of 'ethnic cleansing', the primitive, basic feelings of violence and supremacy and wanting to claim the right to dispose of life and death for themselves and for others.

If we believe we have nothing to do with the suffering of people far away, and if we think that our own religion, belief or behaviour protects us from mortal combat, we are mistaken. Arms can be used at any time and against the people at the next table. In *The Transparency of Evil*, Jean Baudrillard asks 'What should we do when confronted with this new violence if we choose to efface the violence of our own history? We no longer know how to speak evil.'

Over the past few years an artistic form of expression has appeared which, instead of relieving man's suffering and making his life more aesthetic, or proposing as yet unknown solutions, or even diverting his attention from his discomfort, reconstitutes discomfort and speaks to us of Evil.

A moment's discomfort when we know there is Evil but cannot always see where; a moment when we can see where Good is, but can neither determine what it is, nor express it through aestheticization, nor the sublime, nor with comfortable or comforting certitudes. I am talking about a type of art whose

comfortable limits often disappear between high culture, popular culture and media culture.

Let us begin with the cinema, an art form which emerged already linked to mass media. The cinematographic icon of the first encounter of 1920s modernism could be Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* – misogynistic, separating good from evil in a town divided between upper and lower – but even so, innovative and radically 'modern'. In the 1980s, what appeared to be post-modern had the cult film *Blade Runner* as its emblem. A multicultural town, abandoned by the élite, becomes the place for immigrants, outsiders, social drop-outs and clones. It is a magnificent film, based on a detective novel, a symbol of the time when frontiers could be crossed including those between artistic genres.

At this current time of discomfort, when a millennium has ended on a note of war, in my view the emblematic film is the polemic *Crash* by David Cronenberg, drawn from English writer J.G. Ballard's novel. In this film, the indefiniteness of space – the non-place – predominates. The alternance of sexuality or the cohabitation of all possible sexual options with pain and the pleasure of mutilation is shown via successive car accidents which constitute the film's conspicuous theme. Like a post-modern model also used by Paul Auster, the main character is called James Ballard. The author is no longer dead.

Equally symptomatic of the last moments of the century and very close to the questions our towns are asking, is Ballard's last novel, *Running Wild*. It introduces itself as a 'thriller' and a detective novel, which in itself is already a symptomatic proposition, being a genre not easily read by both the educated and uneducated. The story takes place in a wealthy housing development on the outskirts of London. In roughly ten properties live some intellectuals – psychoanalysts and film-makers – all of them 'politically correct', well-intentioned, — intelligent and politically to the Left, who want to give their well-brought up children a pleasant, comfortable life and, above all, one of certainty in the threatening times we are living through. State-of-the-art informatics and electronics are there: computers, video cameras, electronic gates all go to create a new panoptic model – studied by Foucault – for protecting and controlling the youngsters. One morning all the adults are found dead and the children gone. It is easy to deduce that the adults have been killed by the children, particularly since they mastered the equipment of modernity better than their elders. The young people escape from their parents' model but become their own prisoners in a new, obligatory cohabitation which is the only way of not revealing their collective crime. Though it may not be

difficult to uncover the author of the perfect crime, it is painful to relive through this text the conflict we cannot manage to resolve in our own daily lives.

In Brazilian writing of the past few years, this same disagreeable, disturbing experience can be found in João Gilberto Noll's books and particularly in his novel *A céu aberto* [Open Sky], a beautiful yet terrible story where an interminable war is raging somewhere. We become aware of the singularity of this work from the moment we wonder why we are still reading it. It is the same feeling we get with certain moments of Cronemberg's film. The writer, Bernardo Carvalho – one of the greatest literary revelations of the last few years – follows the same track as Noll with identity and sex changes, tormented persecution, paranoid dreams and novels like *Drunks and Sleepwalkers*. In one of the films of Brazilian Walter Salles – not *Central Station*, which is a beautiful, important work, although still too full of certainties – but *Foreign Land*, we note similarities: indetermination of place – lack of space, of reference, of love and of money – is the one overriding problem of a young man leaving his country to go and die in a foreign land.

Finally I should like to talk about a new phenomenon in Brazilian cultural life: the appearance on the artistic and cultural scene of excluded and marginalized people not only as theme but as subject. The outsider speaks and becomes the writer. Already a character in our daily wars, he is now beginning to talk and write about them with violence. The greatest example of this is Paulo Lins's novel *Cidade de Deus* [City of God], where more than 500 pages tell the day-by-day story of a place of exclusion, a poor suburb of Rio, built during the military régime to remove from the town centre those who were living in the *favelas*. Paulo Lins holds an arts degree, he is a poet, novelist and script-writer and for almost all his life has lived in this 'City of God'. The novel shows the repeated violence, the world of drug-traffickers, the corrupt police, the traitor bandit and children flying a kite and trying to go to school. A picture of hell itself.

As a last example of Brazilian cultural output I want to mention one of our more controversial cultural products: the rap group Racionais MC's – young Blacks from the outskirts of São Paulo who compose their own songs. A video-clip was made of one of their rap recordings, 'Diario de um detento' [Diary of a Prisoner], and it won a well-known international competition which was shown on one of cable television's biggest multinational channels. As well as five nominations for the best video-clip, the group were also awarded the best prize of all: 'the viewing public's vote'. Journalists restated the group's role as mouthpiece for urban, cultural issues and not only organized the prize-giving ceremony but also sought to

understand why that group had been chosen, why it reacted as it did, and what lay behind the group leader Mano Brown's speech. At the award ceremony, he was wearing a shirt from Gap (the multinational brand name), the traditional rapper's baseball cap and had a tooth missing. The group was so elated to receive the prize and appeared so confident of the prize, that they addressed no word of thanks to the public but spoke in harsh terms like those of the prisoners in their song.

Once again, there reared the recurring dichotomy between the centre and the periphery – and in the global city of São Paulo, the periphery is more peripheral, if I may use such a pleonasm, than in other cities where shanty towns exist in the middle of the wealthiest residential areas. But this dichotomy is back in a 'reconsidered' way. It can be seen in the intentionally conflictual coexistence of two languages. It is in the form of a video-clip for cable television targeting young people from wealthy homes whose aesthetic views on sophistication and technical quality are constantly being revised. Rap is a rich form of expression but it is very tough and violent. Although broadcast on a worldwide channel, the words of the *manos* [brothers] as they call themselves, were local, self-centred, aggressive, slang expressions. The words referred to the brotherhood of the excluded. On receiving the prize, Mano Brown gave the classic line of thanking his mother but added that 'she had already done a lot of laundering for playboys'. The interesting thing in this story is that the cable television viewers who voted for Racionais MC's are precisely those 'playboys', the 'young men from wealthy homes'. Is this then a Brazilian version of post-modernism?

Eduardo Prado Coelho

Now it is time we developed the effacement of the political in relation to binary and tertiary systems. The political plane is inevitably binary: it is always the definition of two camps and it adopts a warlike stance. The political – as defined by Carl Schmitt – is the demarcation between friend and enemy, drawn up by provisional coalitions. We are always on the line of resistance and therefore cannot think political in binary terms. There is a time for thought and a time for the political. The two do not necessarily coincide. But when moving towards the political, it changes into an issue of strengths and separate camps.

The film *Crash* has a bearing on what I was trying to describe as a process of 'de-differentiation'. That film shows 'de-differentiation' between the human and the machine or 'mechanization' in the creation of a type of body which, surrounded

by technologically advanced prostheses, no longer corresponds to the traditional, so-called 'human' body. It is a sort of posthumous body, linked to a displacement of instancy, of the place of desire or the production of desire, that no longer passes through the theatrical dimension, but through the mechanical dimension which has a curiously proletarian connotation in so far as the metaphor factory/production replaces that of the theatre – which would be bourgeois – situated on the side of box/stage.

But other 'de-differentiations' appear, for example, in the image range between the numerical and the analogical. Previously, our images were produced with an analogical dimension, like those of the traditional photograph. The image used to serve globally as testimony of truth, but nowadays the image/truth relation can no longer be verified, because everything can be digitalized and is therefore subject to manipulation and falsification. And yet we continue to believe in the truth of the image. This manipulable image is therefore more dangerous. We could give the example of the plot in Brian Singer's film *The Usual Suspects* which rests entirely on the evidence – visually transposed – of one eyewitness. If it were merely a question of oral evidence we would have our doubts. But as the visual carries a strong measure of credibility, we only realize at the end of the film that the plot behind the statement upholding the image is verbal and what we see is false. Having made this discovery, we want to see the film again in order to see the image working as global mystification.

'De-differentiation' raises a question to which I have no answer. Nowadays we do not have the possibility of finding a basis for our aesthetic values. Similarly, when we want a non-value and we place a value on the non-value we cannot manage not to judge the absence of value. That is why we say this is good and that is bad, etc. A curious example of this phenomenon is the American Nelson Goodman, who wants to take away entirely from art the question of value and give it only a cognitive dimension. And yet he also writes that when we hear a fine rendition of a symphony by a first-rate orchestra, there are values which fall into place. Another writer who also tries to avoid the question of value is Gérard Genette, who declared in a debate organized by the newspaper *Le Monde*, that it is not possible to found a value judgement. He poses the problem correctly but considers graffiti and a painting by Velásquez to be on a par. He goes on to say that there are things he likes and fiercely defends but this is only as far as he is concerned.

We have to conclude that when one places a value on works of art for anthropological, ethnological or sociological reasons, there is a displacement of the

question of value. However, if we stay at the level of value, what does this displacement mean? What is the meaning nowadays of the displacement of the question of value towards works of art which increase in value because certain artists who previously did not have a voice now speak out and use that voice?

Ronaldo Lima Lins

We tend to situate the origins of modernity in the eighteenth century, when thought was accompanied by strong emotion. Even in his day, Rousseau's thinking was doubtless highly charged with emotion. They say that one day when he was on his way to visit Diderot – then a prisoner at the Château de Vincennes – on foot, as he was poor and liked walking, he had a newspaper in his pocket and sat down to rest under a tree. He opened the paper and on seeing the Dijon Academy advertisement for a monograph competition on arts and sciences, was overcome with such strong emotion and cried so much that his shirt was wet with tears. Rousseau was seeking the truth and we know that truth and virtue were of great social value in the eighteenth century.

By way of comparison, here is an interesting reflection of Hannah Arendt's on Rahel Varnhagen, an eighteenth-century philosopher who suffered enormously from the fact of being a woman and Jewish at a time when Jews enjoyed neither civil recognition nor any right to nationality. One day, Rahel Varnhagen read a sentence of Lessing's: 'Thought is sufficient to itself'. So she had the impression that everything was resolved. Little did it matter what happened since she could think, and thought was sufficient to itself. The truth of the world was not of such importance because it was possible for her to attain truth through thought. Hannah Arendt stresses the problematic nature of Rahel Varnhagen's discovery in so far as the problem of thought which thinks of itself is that the facts remain. These facts continued to surround the life of Rahel Varnhagen. Even equipped with this liberating tool – thought that thinks of itself – she remained prisoner of a circle of oppression so great that she was obliged to find a compromise.

On the way to modernity, thought distanced itself from emotion and forced itself to assume the label of impassiveness raised by Lukács, as though the fact of burdening oneself with emotions was a way of leaving instead of meeting the pathways of thought. Thus thought gives the impression of calmly going above facts as though it were a superior instance.

The process of differentiation that Eduardo Prado Coelho spoke of has given rise to fairly deep reflection. It is a process to which we have become

accustomed over the last two centuries as though the production of thought in such different directions could become neutralized. There would not be only one but several thoughts which would end by changing themselves into kinds of exercises.

Certainly the world we live in is charged with emotion but it functions as though it were not. In a way, this is the question posed by wars and the different yet numerous totalitarianisms. In a televised war where only other people die, we are taking part in an authentic cold war in the original sense of the term. It is as though it were possible in this world we live in to deal with pain lucidly and not from an emotional standpoint. I do not know how far this impassiveness, or label of impassiveness, trains thought in its totality.

Jean-Toussaint Desanti wrote *Un destin philosophique* [A Philosophical Destiny] in reply to a friend who was asking him to explain the contradiction between the fact of being a philosopher and a professor of philosophy on the one hand and, on the other, the fact of having belonged for such a long time to the French Communist Party. Desanti thought about the question at length and his book took so long to write that his friend had died before it was finished. In the book he says that one day, as he was walking up the rue du Panthéon, he saw some Jewish children on the other side of the pavement being held by armed police. In that instant he knew he should draw his gun. He had felt such a presence of facts that his thought – for it remained a thought – was heavily charged with emotion.

I wonder whether this presence of the method of thought, so important in the production of the considerable volume of thought modernity has developed over the last two centuries, has not led to a hegemony which is perhaps sterile. Has this hegemony of method, in imprinting a device of impassiveness on thought, only created deadlock and should we be readjusting the perspective of thought?

It is interesting how our discussions have moved from aspects of globalization, and how they unfold in people's lives, to the question of art. In a way, art remains the depository and territory of emotion. It is as though art, not being tied in a strait-jacket of method and impassiveness, can go further. We would certainly not expect a work of art to be tainted with impassiveness but nor would we expect it to be tainted with emotion. And yet we expect thought to deal with pain without suffering. Because it is part of life, we still expect pain to be a theme of reflection, but we do not expect reflection to appear and be received impassively by every single person.

Claudius Waddington

Eduardo Prado Coelho mentioned that globalization leads to 'de-differentiation'. Does it not also cause a recrudescence of fundamentalism and antagonistic movements at the same time as 'de-differentiation'?

Eduardo Prado Coelho

When we talk of globalization, there are several levels to be considered. There is globalization through the free circulation of capital linked to the technological matrix with the obvious effect of financial markets functioning in real time. Concerning information, globalization also has specific consequences. And then there is globalization at the cultural level, taking steps forward and back. One of the questions currently posed concerns the imbalance between political proceedings, still functioning at national level, and the need to find forms of organization and political decision-making adapted to a society where numerous phenomena function along global parameters. Globalization clearly provokes reactions which I term 'identity freezing' with certain limits. It also creates several levels of difference. If you go to Cancun, Mexico, for instance, you will observe a 'Mexicanization' which has taken place owing to national or international tourism. This 'Mexicanization' has occurred purely by and for the local population. Resistance can sometimes take on a fundamentalist dimension.

In relation to what Ronaldo Lima Lins has said, the influence of a logical-scientific, pragmatic type of thought clearly strengthens the dimension of impassiveness. Elsewhere there are different lines looking for ways to restore the domain of passion and emotion in discussion. One is the return to rhetoric despite its ambiguity. With rhetoric one has to know what the audience's passion is. When I am the subject, I have to put myself in a position to use that passion. So I bring into play some cold manipulation. In traditional rhetorical situations there is therefore a type of asymmetry with regard to emotion. *Descartes' Error: Emotion, reason and the human brain* by Antonio Damasio is a very sound study indeed in that it tries to show that without emotion, rationality is not enough for decision-making; there needs to be an emotional basis.

Nowadays, the notion of 'emotional intelligence' constitutes one of the ingredients of business ideology. To be a good managing director and a good capitalist one has to have emotional knowledge. The fact is, we are all committed to this rhetoric of language. There is nowhere outside this rhetoric. And so we make

judgements with arguments steeped in emotion and then salvage some dimensions from art, pain and suffering which are often shirked by the language of logic – a mouthless, bodyless language.

Flávio Beno Siebenichler

The importance of emotion in thought is undeniable particularly as it helps us observe that modernity is a project which is not totally realized. That is why I believe we are entering into an extremely propitious era for realizing the project of modernity, consisting of the establishment of autonomous morals and autonomous art, and in the construction and enlargement of space and autonomous possibility in people's lives. However, I should like to take the issue of rationality back to the need for rational law. The idea that 'society' strictly speaking does not exist is today widespread. 'Society' is then nothing but a title, very loose, very broad, embracing all tensions and social, cultural and other problems. On the contrary, what does exist are nations, groups and associations of people who try to shape their lives in an autonomous and free way. The means we have of shaping our lives is the law, rational law, marked by the idea that it is possible to build an association of free and equal people if it is based on the notion of justice.

The greatest challenge lies in the possibility of building an association of free and equal people of mutually respectful cultures who consider one another to be equal, with the means of a law which can only be rational. Until now, such a law has only existed within nations or nationalities, so to speak. Yet the idea Habermas develops in his last book according to which morality, or ethics, in order to be realized and accomplished, need to rely on rational law, seems fundamental to me, particularly in thinking of future society, this emerging transnational society. Here is an opportunity for philosophy to leave the ivory tower it is usually shut up in and discuss the questions it is asking. This engagement requires discussion, negotiation and co-operation within the very core of the discourse.

Ronaldo Lima Lins

The issue of law reminds me of one of Paul Ricoeur's lectures I attended in Paris in 1991 in a small lecture hall which was packed. Ricoeur was talking precisely about the question of law and quoting John Rawls on the need to find a solution to polarization between egalitarian but unproductive socialism on the one hand, and

competitive but productive socialism on the other. In general terms, Ricoeur set out the thinking of John Rawls, based on the institution of an arbitrator and a 'state of law' which determines, within conflicts, how to pose problems. It was all marked with the label of impassiveness if I may repeat Lukács's term. Ricoeur, prestigious French thinker, had not yet finished his presentation when someone in the audience jumped up, saying 'What about the prisons? How are we supposed to cope with discrimination now? We should free all prisoners because in a way they are truly victims of society!' His vehemence surprised me and even the moderator decided it was best to close the debate although unfortunately without the question being answered. I had the impression that the phenomenon had gone beyond the capacity for rationalization: the fact shown was society's failure, crystallized by the prison. Thus the law, which has to be the perfect balance, justice, never achieves this. It is an obviously internal negotiation that will reach a result we ignore and it may be just or unjust because it is in a system which transcends this idea.

Clearly, the system of law, the legal system, comes from an extremely rational conception: the idea and the need for a judge to arbitrate in conflicts which, as we know, were previously settled by God. So men construct a system and gradually try to impose that system and that culture. But experience teaches us the law is something else as though society could, in a way, follow the right path or not and law may have its own vision of truth – of what may be just or unjust. And so I do not know how far this question of law finds a solution in fact to the impasses posed by thought and rationalization.

Passion is something different. To speak about passion is also to presuppose and know what passion is. We do not often have a very clear idea of what it is. It can be a transport which becomes so uncontrollable that it blinds rather than illuminates. But passion can also be a process whereby we live things intensely, including thought itself. I have chosen this dimension to visualize passion. Let me give you the example of Alain Corneau's film *Tous les matins du monde* [All the Mornings of the World]. It tells the story of two seventeenth-century French baroque musicians. One of them, Sainte-Colombe, is plunged into the depths of despair following the loss of his wife whom he loved dearly. He abandons everything and shuts himself up in a hut in the grounds of his house where he plays the viola da gamba. He lives with his two daughters but speaks to no one. One day, young Marin Marais comes to ask him for music lessons since the recluse was considered to be the best viola da gamba player there was. He had even made an instrument which produced more intensely the sound of wailing and moaning. After having told the young man he could never

play the viola, Sainte-Colombe submits to the entreaties of one of his daughters, who had succumbed to the stranger's charm, and gives him some lessons. One day, when the young man tells him he played the viola at Court, the teacher, in a fit of exasperation, breaks the pupil's instrument. From then on, his daughter secretly lets her lover into the house so he can listen to her father playing and learn the secret of his musical talent. When the father discovers them, he says to the young man 'You will never be a musician because you do not live life with passion'. The daughter is impressed and asks her father if he lives life passionately. The reply is given by a mere facial twitch as though he were distressed. That was proof his life was lived with such passion that he wanted to attain and transcend the limits of pain, and learn to overcome supreme pain.

Thought was doubtless conceived in the eighteenth century as just such a form of passion, one not outwardly shown but which is in fact an intensity. In a way, the power of reason ended by stifling itself in the legend of impassiveness which, rather than helping thought, perhaps encumbers it. The facts surround us and they are not of the impassive kind. They fall into the category of pain. Thus, how can there be thought without thought of pain and how can there be thought of pain without it being charged – I am not saying 'overcome' – with emotion?

Eduardo Prado Coelho

One of the obvious points in Ronaldo Lima Lins's evocation is that passions do not formally constitute an emotional scene. There can be a passion of indifference or impassiveness. There can be a passion of apathy which we have already spoken about; an apathy of life without passion, plain acceptance of the order of things. There is another which, on the contrary, can be a passion of apathy but pushed to the extreme; an interesting point because it lets us modulate a little this question of passions. Passion does not always show exterior signs of its existence. Moreover, Sainte-Colombe seemed, judged and believed himself to be impassioned, but he was not living. He lived life with another kind of passion.

A short while ago, Ronaldo Lima Lins said in a manner with which I totally agree that art brings us back to the domain of emotions. But one of the most attractive and interesting aspects of contemporary plastic arts since conceptual and minimalist art, is precisely that the dimension of the senses, of pleasure and emotion has gone. This is an interesting point because it is about the functioning of an art form which is turning away from aesthetics; it is art against aesthetics and the

latter then appropriates the art. It is probable that a large part of the project of modernity also goes through this appropriation of what aesthetics does with art. We are witnessing today a kind of undoing of art which has nothing to do with the aesthetic dimension. Cyberculture art and interactive art are detaching themselves from the aesthetic dimension which used to be the art/aesthetics identification which had a great impact on modernity, combining German romanticism, obviously, and the ideal of poetry as absolute reality.

As a result, an interesting, complex space emerges as a challenge. We can refer to the contractual type of theories. With the 'veil of ignorance', Rawls's assumption is of an open future, total openness, necessary for this space of impassiveness. The question arising from theories such as Rawls's, and which can almost be seen with Habermas, is knowing if it is possible, once history has already begun and we are in the middle of the party, to go back to the beginning of beginnings and pretend to ignore, without it appearing to be simulation. Because in Habermas's universe, even if he took into account three types of rationality – instrumental, communicative and aesthetic – the model remains a strictly dualist model, founded on the rationality of law. This raises two types of question.

The first concerns the domain of the law, which has to be applied in order to function. There is therefore an interpretation of the law, incomprehensible and juridical, and then its application to a case. Now on the one hand, Habermas recognizes that the application to a case implies flexibility of the rationality of law, while explaining that this must be limited as much as possible. On the other hand, Luhmann's view – which is surprising coming from him as he is more to the Right – is that each case destructs or constructs the formal rationality of the law. So, like Habermas, we can try to limit the application in the singular or, conversely, suppose like Luhmann that the application in the singular is like drawing a thread which unravels the whole piece of material. It ends in a kind of randomness. That is Luhmann's argument which goes towards Habermas who, in a way, 'post-modernizes' in this respect the question of law. There are currently some extremely interesting studies on the relation between literature and the law and their similitudes. In their law faculties, Americans have developed this literary dimension of cases. Moreover, cases in literature can be considered as teaching material.

The second question raised by our discussions is in opposition to the first; it belongs to Lyotard. In certain situations when subjects do not enjoy the same conditions of equality, and when the 'veil of ignorance' could not function,

there will be cases when contention is inevitable and the finality of law will therefore not function. This is rather like Ronaldo Lima Lins was saying, that is, that situations envenomed from the outset do not allow for the slightest application of a universal right. These are situations where the victims, especially because of language difficulties, cannot put themselves on an equal footing with those having full capabilities, and so cannot function at the same level. And so Derrida would probably be right in saying the law is deconstructive in relation to these oppositions, although in deconstruction there is an ultimate core: the idea of justice. This is more than the idea of law which is historical and therefore deconstructible. In terms of the emancipation project, we must have a prop that is irreducible to any deconstruction, in other words, the idea of justice.

Milagros del Corral

I should like to come back to what happens when art definitively separates from aesthetics. In particular I am thinking how far an art, totally divorced from aesthetics, still constitutes creative expression. But I am also wondering whether, on many occasions, art does not have a tendency to attract attention through scandal and to convert itself into marketing producer. In many countries, we frequently notice this tendency in the plastic arts, music and the examples given by Beatriz Resende. I think the search is no longer for new expression but for causing a scandal, attracting attention and creating a product which sells well. How far can that have something to do with this separation between art and aesthetics?

Eduardo Prado Coelho

I think this process has often been called into question. It is very clear, particularly on the subject of analytic aesthetics. Goodman says that what interests him is studying art as a mode of symbolic production equivalent to others. It is the cognitive dimension, the cognitive effects of the mode which interest him. Questions of evaluation are excluded, therefore so is the aesthetic dimension.

Another view, probably the one to which today's market is more attached, and the same as that held by the American philosopher George Dickie, is that there exists a kind of institutional theory of art. According to this approach, works of art are objects which are in line to become works of art and be recognized as such by professionals in the art world. Thus the perfect circle is created: the

round of museums, museum curators, exhibition organizers, art critics, artists and theoreticians. It works like an institutional circle of the art world.

On another plane we are also witnessing the evolution of the sociological connection with art. The arbitrary question of taste is turned towards an effort for social distinction on the aesthetics plane. It does not say, on the question of art, where the aesthetics plane begins and it is difficult to understand where aesthetics finish and the social begins. Each time someone says he prefers Bach to some minor or popular composer, he is motivated by a desire for social distinction. It is another view which emerges. Anglo-Saxon cultural studies are also on this plane of distinction between the art of 'high culture' and that of 'low culture' as well as this recycling process.

For those to whom I shall refer as 'Wittgenstein's children', things are not quite the same. Wittgenstein says when looking at a work of art we cannot find words to express our feelings and the aesthetic relation is made up of a kind of exclamation. Truly speaking, this does not go along with the aesthetic experience; it also empties it on an aesthetic level. These different things have nourished a curious process which ended in minimalism and then in conceptual art. It is interesting to know, for instance, whether one writer's work becomes another's simply because it is signed by him. In fact, there is an interesting theoretical process that cannot be eliminated for purely market reasons. There are specific objects. Each one of them is inscribed in a programming logic of something interior. But, of course, this is an evacuation process of aesthetics inside the artistic creation process.

Beatriz Resende

I should like to say a few words about this question of the difficulty of working with everything which has the structure of a dichotomy. I think that one of the few unanimous agreements among us is a dislike of the idea of 'marketing'. But in Brazil there is at the moment a movement worth studying called the 'landless' movement. It is an unusual kind of organization of peaceful resistance to domination, provocation and situations where people dispossessed of land or property find themselves in a confrontational situation. This movement's particularity is its will to avoid confrontation while at the same time creating a new form of organization – the most difficult of all – in mobility, without excluding traditional forms like school, and even showing them in a favourable light. School is something that characterizes and

strengthens the 'landless' movement whose aim is for all children to have permanent access to education.

This movement has become very good at marketing. It has logos and marketing elements ranging from the recuperation of red flags which had been stored away, to the popular baseball caps of the 'landless'. And so it becomes difficult for those of us who want the 'landless' movement to retain a certain air of purity, to recognize the fact that it has often managed to get out of awkward situations precisely because it is very good at marketing. It even managed to reach people far away and inspire art work like José Saramago's preface to Sebastião Salgado's book of photographs.

On the other hand, the scandal art of plastic artists – which you have very rightly mentioned – is also the art of precariousness and the dread of art dealers because it does not sell. Other kinds of support or sponsorship are sought but it just does not sell. It is this kind of precarious art which mixes the most traditional forms of art conservation but at the same time renews them in a definitive way, like the museum question which also belongs to the debate on the canons of élitist art. But if you mention that to the dealer, it does not make him very happy.

Eduardo Prado Coelho

I just want to tell you a story very quickly because it is rather amusing. I organized an exhibition in Marseilles where I was showing the work of an artist whose speciality was to expose, for the sake of art, collections of objects he had stolen. One of the members of the video association to which he belonged, came to the exhibition and saw there a video camera owned by the association. He went and told someone about the camera and said he was very keen to get it back. He was told that would be impossible because in the project of the exhibition there was an artistic intention and the video camera could most certainly not be returned to him because the piece now belonged to a collection of stolen objects. 'In that case', the visitor countered, 'I am going to steal it'. So a policeman was stationed next to the object to prevent any attempt at theft. A communiqué was drafted, stating it would be impossible for video enthusiasts to be insensitive to the project. The video association issued a final communiqué saying all their efforts to retrieve the object were actually 'a happening' and formed part of the exhibition.

Ronaldo Lima Lins

I would add to our debate on the question of art and aesthetics that until the eighteenth century, art was linked to the category of 'beauty'. In comparing science and art, Lessing says science is extremely necessary because it works with truth which is the bedrock of the soul, but art, since it is not necessary, must work with beauty and pleasure. In the eighteenth century, beauty and pleasure had a moral connotation. Beauty in art was what drove man to become better. In this sense there were at the time links between beauty and art. But from the nineteenth century onwards, art became separated from the idea of beauty and even from the idea of pleasure. In fact the greatest literary production of our time is devoid of pleasure. Who can take pleasure in reading Kafka? His work has nothing to do with either beauty or pleasure. This also makes us question Kant's 'Sublime' Category, catastrophe. The whole narration of modern art – taken as beginning in the nineteenth century – in fact concerns the failure of man faced with a series of expectations which were never satisfied.

There is always an abyss nearby. On the other hand, there is art in every epoch and that is what will remain. And then there is ephemeral art. Clearly in our epoch, Marcel Duchamp has in fact been a good thing. Artists who began through the popularization of art – that is to say in transforming industrial objects into museum pieces, and taking part in the unification process which was more or less contaminating all culture – were already making a caricature of the well-established cultural process. Thus, in contrast with other epochs, we have reached the stage of the caricature of the caricature where anything is possible. Since laws no longer exactly exist, man is not bothered by morality any more. I think morality has been decomposing since the nineteenth century, and beauty has no function in principal art. What is left, in fact, is a dive into the abyss, which is art's way of knowing the depths of the human soul and working with it. This still retains the idea of catastrophe that we encounter with Kant – that is, what elevates man at the point of his decline is the conscience that he has one. And so it really seems to me that it is a very long time since art had anything to do with beauty. I do not know whether one can say it has nothing to do with aesthetics because aesthetics have changed. The meaning has evolved. Aesthetics still work with objects of artistic creation whatever they are like, even the most horrible and ugliest. This has nothing to do with beauty. Something ugly is interesting and is integrated into the artistic domain, as are ephemeral and vulgar objects. At last they have something true to say. Possibly they have nothing to say but often they do have something to say.

And as with the rest, the ugly can be very well or very badly done. It all depends on the talent of the artist.

Eduardo Prado Coelho

Basically, the possibility of knowledge through science does not differ much from knowledge through art. In the dissociation of art from aesthetics that we are seeing today, the relation with sensuality of form hardly has meaning. When the artist 'makes' an object, one of those pieces we put on a shelf, he often does not actually do anything. He simply gives instructions over the telephone, by fax or e-mail and the object is made by others.

The relation of the hand with creation thus disappears and, generally, the enjoyment of those objects is no longer normal. Sometimes, but not necessarily, it goes via the apprehension of the idea which is in the organization of the artwork and not in the pleasure or displeasure derived from the forms of the work. So it is not displeasure or aesthetics of what is ugly; it is fundamentally the idea and therefore the content more than the form which organizes that.

Clearly we are not in an area of openness, a space of the possible. In fact, everything is possible including the discourse of pure mystification. I remember going to see an exhibition of contemporary British art with my daughter who is very sceptical about these things. I made a few comments, in particular explaining what the idea was, and the subject. We came to a room where there was nothing but a light which came on and another which went off. She looked at me with a smile and asked 'So now what?' I replied 'Don't you see that it's all here? To be or not to be.' She retorted 'You're joking, aren't you?' That is the question.

Claudius Waddington

I would like to go back to the question of the law and Eduardo Prado Coelho's reference to Derrida's *Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority*. It would not be untrue to say that Derrida shows a difference between justice and law, the textual body of law, which must be deconstructed because it is irremediably compromised, not only with interested systems but also with systems of coercion. In this regard, we can recall the passage where Derrida underlines the liaison between law and force: 'the law is always an authorized force, a force which justifies itself and is justified in applying itself even though that justification may be judged

elsewhere as unjust or unjustifiable. No law without force, as Kant recalled with the greatest rigour'. To counterbalance the authoritarian character of the law, justice rises up as what remains and will follow through the whole process of the deconstruction of law. And, as Derrida states, it projects itself onto the future: 'Justice is still to come, it must come, it is coming. It displays the very dimension of irreducible events to come. It will always have it, this future, and it will always have had it. Perhaps this is why justice, as not being only a juridical or political concept, opens the transformation, the refounding or the refoundation of law and politics to the future'.

At this time of transition I think our task is not to consolidate antagonisms. More than ever we should be building bridges between the major references of thought so we are not left immobilized by strategies of impasse. With a view to establishing a dialogue between these references, I would like to bring closer together the positions of Derrida on the law and what Habermas proposes in *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, and this is clearly according to another perspective.

What Habermas proposes is not a law which comes to repair this society frayed by productivist competition and made uniform by neo-liberalism. His proposal concerns more a law that needs to be reformulated, debated and negotiated by members of a society, a society which has a new contract and has been reconstructed from its foundations. This is not about approving instituted law or reiterating the abyss of the society we know with all the disaggregation it incites. We should not forget that the Habermasian defence of law is a direct consequence of his option for the inclusion of the Other as can be seen in *The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory*. Habermasian reason cannot be confused with the syllogism of the Same because it comes from the association with the Other as vector of reconstruction. The challenge cast by this reason which opens to the Other is precisely the challenge of reinventing modernity because it cannot conceive of the future except as engaged with emancipation. The project of modernity is a critical, emancipatory project and I believe the critical essence of Habermasian theory would correspond – going from Nietzsche and Heidegger – to what has developed with Derrida as deconstruction, except that Habermasian critique, having always been fed with a desire for emancipation, goes from Hegel, Marx, Weber, Freud and the other thinkers of the Frankfurt School.

Habermas projects this possibility of law, this need of law, from the reformulation of society and not from a contemporaneity with the state of things.

Therefore the Habermasian defence of law does not consist in folding one's arms but in rolling up one's shirt-sleeves.

Flávio Beno Siebenichler

I think despite the divergences between Habermas and Derrida, it is appropriate to unite them in the perspective of a law engaged with the future. It is true that the question of law in a way crowns the whole of Habermas's work on a critical theory of society when he arrives at the conclusion that society does not really exist. 'Ideal' society, the one we think is the real society, does not exist. It is only a title we still put on this ensemble of tensions we have been debating.

From now on it is a question of thinking of the human, in relation to this quest for justice and law, as essential condition for the realization of justice. Not justice meted out by an élite in order to corroborate the privileges of some. Even less the tribal conception of justice, where each person and each community group wants to have his interests approved and his justice installed to the detriment of other agents of society. The social annihilation to which these partial conceptions of justice lead, reintroduces the primary impulse of taking the law into one's own hands. If this is the way things are, then the moral of the tale 'might is right' is valid.

Yet if we start from the idea that the human being is a free being, we must think of equality and justice in constant association with freedom. However, from now on the transnational level has to be taken into account. Until now, the idea of a just society was situated on the national scale. Today we see that the crystallization of this idea in the democratic state was only fiction. The return of nationalism shows that the nation can transform itself into a hotbed of belligerent fundamentalism. Without any doubt, the agenda of the new millennium will set great importance on the challenge facing the transnational system to reverse the escalation of mutual intolerance, both great and small. Habermas says 'we must keep trying', that we cannot simply abandon the cause of emancipation, and that we must keep working and building in the struggle for this society which must be just and egalitarian.

But freedom remains as the basis of justice. Can one conceive of justice without freedom? Here we have the anticipation of a future in gestation. If we were to discard these ideas which certainly constitute the heart of modernity, we could not think as a society any more. Communal life would become inconceivable. Should we deconstruct it or not? Contrary to Derrida, Habermas does not

advocate deconstruction. He finds that even law, which is not just, as evidence shows, is constituted in reference to the idea of justice. Presuppositions are different but I think there is a certain convergence between Habermas and Derrida, and Eduardo Prado Coelho grasped that with great perspicacity.

Eduardo Prado Coelho

I think the fact of suppressing or not taking into account or even criticizing the deconstruction process, creates an ambiguity for Habermas on the question of law, since law, if it is already applicable, is an ideal situation which projects itself as a regulating idea. This ambiguity can often be found with Habermas in relation to existing situations. It seems to me to be a weak point because it has something of the vision that does without a process of construction which I personally do not think one can do without. With Habermas, the questions worth studying are whether we can find points which enable an ideal model to be constructed, and if today there is a certain ambiguity between ideal model and real application of law? But these are questions more of perspective. In fact, I think Habermas short-circuits all the deconstruction processes and that leaves its mark.

Today's different difference[1]

Eduardo Portella

Questions of difference and otherness have always been central to your reflections. While remaining on a dialectical plane, has the differentialist movement been able to lead to a negation of the Same in favour of the Other? Does it not underline a Same? Do you believe there is a third way which allows for a conciliation of the Same with the Other?

Claude Lévi-Strauss

When I spoke about difference, I was not placing myself on such abstract ground. I was in certain historical situations where there were still people whom I would not define in the absolute as being 'others', but who represented sociological experiences totally different from our own. It was in relation to that situation when I spoke of difference.

But it would be very difficult to talk about it in the same terms today because those people have been picked up by historical evolution and their condition is no longer totally different from ours: osmosis has taken place. They and we

1. This interview took place in Paris on 28 February 1998.

now belong to the same history. So we cannot talk about difference in the same terms any more.

Eduardo Portella

One question which seems to me to fall within the same register is open identities and closed identities. The history of some cultures gives rise to a certain tendency to imagine identity as something closed. For instance, when one speaks of French identity, one can already imagine a given identity. On the other hand, other cultures seem to be in the midst of change and their identity seems rather plural and open.

Claude Lévi-Strauss

I wonder if this is a case of attributes of cultures which never change or do not correspond to certain stages and certain periods of their history when they either open up or become closed. Everything I know about Czarist Russia, for example, is that it was very open and foreigners enjoyed a certain prestige. My friend Roman Jakobson always spoke of the prestige attached to marrying a Tartar, Georgian or other princess, which contrasted with the attitudes in other countries. But I do not think this is something fundamental. I think this corresponds more to stages or epochs. In the eighteenth century, it seems to me, France was far more open.

Eduardo Portella

Can one talk of an opposition between simple and complex societies? Are there simple societies and others which, although open, are complex?

Claude Lévi-Strauss

Those are convenient expressions, corresponding or not to reality, depending on the angle from which we view these societies. For example, if you take the Australian aborigine you may think they represent, or did represent, a simple society from the technical point of view as well as of material culture. But if you look at their social organization or relationships, it was an extremely complex society and we found ourselves obliged to consult mathematicians in order to begin to understand how it functioned. So, viewed one way this is a simple society but

viewed another it is a complex one. If ethnologists preferred to choose 'exotic' societies, it was not because of their simplicity. It was because their number was greatly reduced – which is not the same thing at all – and it was possible for one person to acquire a global understanding.

Eduardo Portella

Does the exotic exist or rather is it the way the Same casts his eye over the Other?

Claude Lévi-Strauss

It is utterly subjective. I use the word in the etymological sense, meaning 'different', 'outside'.

Eduardo Portella

How do you see these social differences today when faced with globalization? Are there still societies with identities and differences or are we on the way to homogenization?

Claude Lévi-Strauss

I think that despite globalization, there exist in societies many things we do not know much about, or we do not understand well or we have insufficiently studied and, from this point of view, there is still a great deal to be done. But, of course, the phenomenon of globalization is irreversible – unless humanity has an internal need for differentiation which would mean that, at a certain level, from a certain point of view, while things are becoming homogenized, we see differences appearing which we had not at all anticipated or ones we are only beginning to anticipate. Just because things become similar in certain respects does not necessarily mean they will not become different in other respects.

Eduardo Portella

You compiled a well-known text for UNESCO entitled *Race and History* and, later, another one, *Race and Culture*, which you later published in *Structural*

Anthropology. Do you think that at this millennium's end there is a predominance of religion in relation to other elements, ethnicity for example?

Claude Lévi-Strauss

From the ethnological point of view, one can say that religious beliefs constitute a universal phenomenon. Basically, there is no society we have studied which does not have a position on the religious plane. It is therefore probable that fundamentalism or fundamentalisms we see reappearing here and there are a kind of reaction to previous religious weakening; it is like the swing of the pendulum. I think the reappearance of religious attitudes can also be explained as a reaction to the weakening of ethics.

Views in reverse: reflections on the North-South dialogue

Barbara Freitag[1]

Hinrich Fink-Eitel, author of the fascinating book *Die Philosophie und die Wilden*,[2] upholds the thesis that discoveries and the conquest of the 'New World' plunged the history of European thought into utter amazement when faced with the multifarious consequences of that extraordinary discovery. I agree entirely with this thesis. I would merely add that, until now, the history of European thought has not been able to overcome this amazement.

In support of his thesis, Fink-Eitel cites the work of the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss, born in France in 1911. As we know, Lévi-Strauss lived in Brazil from 1935 to 1939, where he worked and carried out research at the newly founded University of São Paulo. This French researcher collected valuable material for books which were later to make him famous. Among these I should mention *Tristes Tropiques* (1955), essays compiled in the two volumes of *Structural Anthropology* (1958) and *The Savage Mind* (1962).[3]

1. This article is a slightly modified version of a paper given in German at the Freie Universität, Berlin, in January 1996.

2. Hinrich Fink-Eitel, *Die Philosophie und die Wilden. Über die Bedeutung des Fremden für die Europäische Geistesgeschichte*, Hamburg, Junius-Verlag, 1994.

3. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, New York, Criterion, trans. 1961, *Structural Anthropology*, New York, Basic Books, trans. 1963, 2 vol.; *The Savage Mind*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, trans. 1962.

In 1995 Lévi-Strauss printed a collection of previously unpublished photographs along with a new text.[4] A text on the Nambikwara Indians described in this book had already been published in the first part of *Tristes Tropiques*.

Through his structural anthropology, Lévi-Strauss turns his thoughts to two essential aspects of handling the question of possibility and viability of the North-South dialogue: the strangeness of views and the duality of structures. Lévi-Strauss remarks that observing the culture of the Other produces an effect of strangeness when the subject looks back on his own culture, showing both cultures in a new light. Moreover, the French anthropologist sees how the duality of structures and systems of classification observed in the cultures of others constitutes an important theoretical reference for understanding and analysing one's own culture. In other words, binary categories such as the opposites 'above/beneath', 'inside/outside', 'man/woman', 'totem/taboo' , which come from the duality of studied social structures, are universal and have the same functions.

'The inflection of the ethnological view of our own culture temporarily transforms philosophy . . . into ethnology of our own culture', states Fink-Eitel.[5] Thus, the analysis of the Bororo and Nambikwara in the central Brazilian plateau opens the way to a critique of European civilization.

Indeed, we can talk about the four types of knowledge of the social researcher, in considering how, and from where, he begins to view things and what is the object of his analysis.

When the European scientist observes the culture of another and evaluates it (as Montaigne and Rousseau did) he will only discover the 'good savage', whose good qualities contrast with those of his own European culture. Lévi-Strauss is perfectly integrated into this group of scientists. His photographs are living proof of that idealizing view. Among the Nambikwara and Bororo he sees only simplicity, equality, warmth, goodness, melancholy and solidarity. That is why he talks of 'tristes tropiques' and 'saudades do Brasil', remembering the representatives of those declining cultures who led him through their simplicity to a negative memory of his own culture. He sees it as being a lost, aggressive culture – he has only to

4. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Saudades do Brasil*, Paris, Plon, 1994.

5. Hinrich Fink-Eitel, 'Claude Lévi-Strauss philosophische Beegründung strukturalistischer Ethnologie', in Hinrich Fink-Eitel, *Die Philosophie und die Wilden. Über die Bedeutung des Fremden für die europäische Geistesgeschichte,* Hamburg, Junius-Verlag, 1994, pp.19–94.

think of the cruelty of the Second World War – authoritarian, oppressive and excessively civilized.

When the European's view has negative connotations, these are immediately apparent, as in the case of the Indian cannibal of the Tarairiu tribe whose portrait was painted by the Dutch painter, Albert Eckhout. Eckhout accompanied the Prince of Nassau to Recife at the time of the Dutch invasion of the Brazilian colony, then under Spanish rule, in retaliation against the Catholic kings of Spain, enemies of Protestant Holland. Eckhout's painting portrays the Indian woman as a 'depraved savage' holding an arm and carrying a human foot in a basket on her back – the remains of a cannibal feast.

The positive view of another's culture generally corresponds to a negative view of our own culture. The negative view of the Other corresponds, in turn, to the idealization of our own culture.

The motivation underlying Lévi-Strauss's anthropological studies of the Nambikwara and Bororo of the central Brazilian plateau can be attributed to a malaise in relation to European culture, particularly French. We might even say a 'bad conscience' of French anthropology with regard to France's colonizing intentions, represented by the French pirate, Villegaignon. In the sixteenth century he occupied the Bay of Guanabara to found a religious Huguenot community.

Lévi-Strauss is one of those researchers who tends to praise the Other, 'the foreigner' or 'the savage', whereas Eckhout seems to have more affinity with Cortés and Pizarro who opposed the image of European Christian goodness to that of the 'savage', the latter being seen as a cannibal practising barbarian human sacrifice, a threatening 'other'.

Despite these contrasts, here the four perspectives are clearly full of prejudice. The journey to far-away lands does not easily correct pre-existing stereotypes. They become decisive on the manner of viewing the foreigner and continue to be determining with regard to the perception of the culture of origin when the observer returns home. 'The idealization of savage society takes the form of a reversal of what is perceived in someone's culture; it becomes the projection of the opposite of what we think we are', writes Fink-Eitel.[6]

After his return from Brazil in 1985, Lévi-Strauss himself wonders whether he is not 'seeking the remains of a reality which has already disappeared'.

6. Ibid., p. 73.

In that case he would be a loser twice over because 'when I regret the lost traces [of the past], am I not becoming insensitive to the real spectacle taking shape here and now, but which with my limited competence in the present, I cannot see any more?'[7]

The view taken from the negative prejudices of Europeans like Eckhout or Hans Staden can see the Indian only as an uncivilized, menacing cannibal. In the same way, the Amazon tropical forest is no longer the legendary Eldorado but 'green hell'. The European casts his existential fears generated by his own culture on to the foreign region and culture which then become frightening. Thus the fear caused by his own culture is lessened.

These same mechanisms, illustrated here with characters from the past and the present, predominate in the imagination of German and Brazilian researchers who are preparing studies on the culture 'of the other' overseas. What makes the difference between their judgements and the opinion of the ordinary citizen is the academic language in which the scientist couches his prejudices. In other words, authentic knowledge of the other's culture is difficult to relate. Hardened stereotypes determine the visual field. Hence a true 'North-South dialogue' becomes impracticable.

That is the essence of a commentary by Dietrich Briesemeister analysing 'Brazilian culture': 'In the nineteenth century Brazil was the 'Promised Land' for emigrants and researchers, naturalists, zoologists, geographers, botanists, mineralogists and ethnologists. The history and the culture of the country barely caught the attention of researchers in Europe. Brazil therefore offered a natural place which was fascinating, rich and exotic but it was not considered as being a cultural place. Its history was perceived as a graft of overseas European expansion, and its culture as a botanical or zoological culture of the colonist, Portugal, which we also know little about.'[8] What was valid in the nineteenth century continues to be so in the twentieth century. In a critical report, the magazine *Der Spiegel* states 'the gentle savages have lived on in the imagination of Europeans swinging on creepers

7. Claude Lévi-Strauss, quotation in ibid., p. 75.

8. Dietrich Briesemeister, 'Kultur, Bildung, Wissenschaft', in Dietrich Briesemeister, Gerd Kohlhepp, Ray-Güde Mertin, Hartmut Sangmeister and Achim Schrader (eds), *Brasilien Heute*, Politik-Wirtschaft-Kultur, Frankfurt-am-Main, Vevuert, 1994 (Bibliotheca Ibero-Americana), pp. 377–638 (quotation, p. 377).

through contemporary history. If they crack their skulls in the process, that's their problem'.[9]

The inversion of observation, the surprise and alienation in which the European scientist is absorbed is, however, not an inherent characteristic of his European status. Brazilians and Latin Americans in general 'cultivate' their prejudices and modify their observations according to the four categories shown here. The positive observation of the Brazilian or the Latin American regarding Europe is often a pretext for criticizing conditions in their own societies. Thus Europe is seen as the highest expression of Western culture and humanity itself, in order to stress the social and cultural poverty of his native country. So European culture provides the norm of excellence, idealized on purpose to ensure distance in relation to his own country. The analyses of Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, in his book *The Roots of Brazil*, are along this line of reasoning.[10]

The negative observation of the 'native' Brazilian sees the European as colonist, oppressor, explorer, responsible for the problems of the country which is a former colony. The reasons for inequality and injustice, the origins of which are at least partly internal, are thrown out and attributed to the gringo, external domination from the Northern hemisphere. In this case as well, clichés and prejudices abound, deforming the perception and evaluation of 'the other', 'the foreigner'.

In the programme of official visits between Brazil and Germany that took place in 1995 – President Cardoso to Germany in September and President Herzog to Brazil in October – an opinion poll was conducted among one hundred Brazilians chosen according to statistical principles. The survey was conducted by the ALMA/BBDO institute of opinion polls. It aimed to find out what Brazilians thought of the inhabitants of five countries: Germany, France, Italy, Japan and Brazil.[11]

One can see that the self-evaluation of Brazilians – cordiality, *joie de vivre*, adaptability and spontaneity – contrasts especially with the evaluation they make of Germans who are characterized as being cold, strict and aggressive.

9. See the report of Henryk M. Broder in *Der Spiegel*, No. 38, 1995, p. 224.

10. Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, *Raízes do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, José Olympio Editora, 1936.

11. Marcello Serpa, 'Tugendwächterstaat. Was Deutsche von Brasilianern lernenen können B un umgekehrt', in *FAZ*, No. 276, 27 November 1995. (Special article: Brasilien. Verlagsbeilage zur Frankfurte Allgemeinen Zeitung, p. l.)

It is clear that this type of self-knowledge and acknowledgement of the Other does not produce authentic knowledge either of one's own culture or of the culture of others. In addition, it renders difficult or even prevents dialogue and understanding between peoples. So we should ask what would be 'possible conditions' for a true 'North-South dialogue' which, at least on the academic level, would make it possible to produce authentic knowledge and, in turn, bring about true understanding and real communication between the two cultures.

To elucidate this question, we can again refer to the theoretical contributions of Lévi-Strauss. Since inversion of observations has shown the difficulties of self-knowledge and knowledge of the Other, referring to structural analysis takes us out of the impasse. The discovery of the duality of social structures refers precisely to those structures which are independent of time and space. These universal structures constitute the condition of possibility for an authentic, mutual acknowledgement.

When Lévi-Strauss analysed the arrangement of huts of the Bororo Indians, he confirmed his thesis of the duality of spatial structures. Albisetti had already observed, with respect to the indigenous village of the Brazilian Indians, the clear superimposition of two principles of order and arrangement of the huts. According to the former, they were arranged in two diametrically opposed semicircles, so as to differentiate between the sacred and profane activities developed by the inhabitants of the huts. According to the latter, the huts were arranged in two concentric circles having the same function. The person in charge of sacred activities lived in the centre of the village and the inhabitants of the peripheral huts belonged to the circle of those who practised profane activities. In both cases, the duality of spatial structures allows for further aspects of the social life to be considered: hierarchies of power and gender, rules of relationships and taboos, etc.[12]

What Albisetti verified with the Bororo, and Lévi-Strauss confirmed, had already been stressed by Malinowski regarding an Omarkana village,[13] and reaffirmed by P. Radin about a Winnebago village in the Great Lakes region of Canada. In the case of the Winnebago village, it is curious to note that the two principles of structure are present in the conscience of the inhabitants. Some of them – those who

12. See Claude Lévi-Strauss, 'Do dualist organizations exist?' in *Structural Anthropology,* vol. 1, Paris, Librairie Plon, 1968, pp.147–80, reference on p. 157.

13. Ibid., p. 151.

hold higher positions in the hierarchy – see their village in the form of two half oranges. They were called the 'wangeregi' [those from above]. The others, from the other half, were called 'manegi' [those from below]. The two halves were exogamous as verified by Radin, and they also defined reciprocal rights and duties. But the researcher also observed in that village an odd discordance among the inhabitants. One group perceived the arrangement of huts in concentric circles. The oldest and most influential inhabitants occupied the centre of the circle while those who were less influential and usually the youngest occupied the peripheral huts. Perceptions differed depending on the informer. The first version of the arrangement of huts came from the 'wangeregi' and the second version – the concentric circles – from the 'manegi'.[14]

Lévi-Strauss confirmed that what was valid for the Winnebago was also valid for the Bororo. In most dual forms of diametrical type, he observes on the one hand a pseudo-exogamic East/West axis and on the other hand an apparently non-functional North/South axis; and finally an exogamic dichotomy in the contiguity relationships between clans. In concentric forms of dualism are the masculine/feminine, celibate/wedded, sacred/profane oppositions, and so on. It should be underlined that such oppositions can be thought in dual forms of diametrical type as well as in those of concentric circles. As Lévi-Strauss was later to demonstrate, the apparent contradiction was overcome when the structures were integrated in the form of three groups, when the above-mentioned dualities are preserved and presented in a new way thus enabling both perspectives to be understood and overcoming the limitation imposed by each one of them.[15]

The arrangement of Bororo huts, like those of the Winnebago or other peoples of the Americas, Indonesia and elsewhere, is therefore the reflection of principles of social organization which differentiate gender and relationships, and the prohibition of incest, power hierarchies and taboos that regulate or forbid access of some members of the tribe to material, sexual or symbolic goods. It is a matter of structural universal principles, underlying the human mind which not only order geographical space but also structure social life and thus define the forms of knowledge of the human mind and man's behaviour.

14. Ibid., pp. 148–9.

15. Ibid., pp. 162–3 and 175.

If this is true, then the division of the contemporary world into a Northern and a Southern hemisphere, an East and West, rich and poor, is only the expression of the mental and social duality of our human condition, materialized in social structure. That is why it is perfectly understandable for part of humanity to see themselves as 'those from above' confronted with 'those from below', while another part – the greater part – perceives the globalized world as divided between 'centre' and 'periphery'. But as we have just seen with Lévi-Strauss, this dual structure can – and should? – convey a three-part structure so the dual perspective can be relativized and broaden the perspectives of 'random' interpretation into three parts. Other social scientists have used the expressions 'perspectivism' (Kohlberg), 'decentration' capacity (Piaget) or 'communicative competence' directed towards understanding (Habermas). Social science's role is to clarify these – usually unconscious – structures underlying human thought so that they become conscious. Only thus can the inversion of views stop being a mere change of position (above, below) and preservation of usual social structures, and turn into a real break-up of dual structure, broadening out to new perspectives – where there is three-part formation.

The analysis of the question of the inversion of views, brought to the fore by studies in the social-science domain, shows us that these views can lead to erroneous conclusions on cultures studied from the standpoint of another culture. The view of the social-science researcher does not always lead, as we have tried to say, to an understanding or an authentic intercultural communication, to the widening of the visual field or mutual knowledge through the simple displacement of one culture's view of another.

With the examples of the Winnebago, the Nambikwara or the Bororo, Lévi-Strauss's studies of the duality of social structures and thought reveal 'that the inversion of views' – of half a village in relation to the other half – fulfills an ideological function: veiling some social relations. Here, the word 'veiling' has a double meaning: 'throwing a veil over' these relations to hide or disguise privileges and current conflicts; and 'making sure that' 'precautions are taken' so that things go on in the same way.

It is nevertheless up to the social sciences to 'reveal' or lift the veil from such structures and make people aware of the behavioural principles underlying the collective unconscious organizing their lives. Thus, when perceived dualities reach the level of consciousness, they can correct the alienated and alienating view. They can break the duality and become three parts and 'perspectivism'. The Bororo who

enters his village from the North side – rather than from the South – will invert his view of the man who is above and the man who is below; but on entering from the East or West, he is aware that the centre and the periphery remain intact, irrespective of the 'entry' chosen. To overcome structures of privilege, the inner circle must be permeable and the privileges granted to one group of the tribe must be of a temporary nature and interchangeable among the other members of the group in order to break the structural duality. If living in the centre of the village means power and privileges, everyone could occupy that place (at a given moment in their lives) if the access criterion is a quality everyone can have – age, courage, wisdom. This would not be ensured by the diametrical conception of two hemispheres separating one half of the inhabitants to the advantage of the others. Such a correction of the view also becomes possible for social-science researchers when that view is distanced and decentred, and reveals – about the other culture – the underlying reason for the structures of duality. In other words, social scientists can see through and unmask the logic upholding the arrangement of the villagers' huts on which – sociologically and anthropologically – a culture builds its principles of organization.

From a good 'understanding' of the classic design of the Bororo village, Lévi-Strauss saw the structures of power, privilege, segregation and the organization of the tribe. He managed to do this only after critical distancing from his own European culture. In the social structure of the other, to his dismay, he rediscovers the same principles ruling life in French society: schemes for the exchange of power, goods and women, 'veiled' (with the same double meaning as above) by symbolic systems hiding the correct perception of their essence.

Let us go back to the 'North-South' dialogue. For an effective dialogue to be established, it must be made clear to each of the parties what their respective culture is seeking to 'veil' from itself and from others. Since it is apparently easier for a French anthropologist to see what is happening in a Bororo village despite the risks of distortion, the process of knowledge between French people and Bororo should be completed by inviting the Bororo chief to study power dealings in Paris. Only after a visit to the French centre of power and after an exchange of his impressions with Lévi-Strauss or another representative of French civilization might one consider that a true North-South dialogue could progress.

The above can be illustrated with the example of the panels painted by Albert Eckhout in North-East Brazil in the seventeenth century. The painter had no specific knowledge of the indigenous Tarairiu culture when he painted the Indian cannibal. Subsequent anthropological studies showed the Tarairiu religious

belief to be that their ancestors continued to live among the members of the tribe who thus accumulated their qualities. So the dead were symbolically interred in the bodies of the living. Thus the dead found immortality and peace within the tribe. The Tarairiu religious ritual of inhumation was as follows: the ancestors' bones were exposed to the sun, dried, and later transformed into powder. The powder was then mixed with the food of those most closely related to the dead person. After ingestion of the powder, the period of mourning was over and family duty with regard to inhumation worthy of their dead was deemed to have been fulfilled.[16] If the Tarairiu chief or another member of his tribe had had occasion to visit a hospital in the so-called 'civilized' world – let us take the example of the 'Charity' hospital clinic in Berlin – and witness an organ transplant, he would have been delighted at the elective affinity of the Tarairiu and German cultures, interpreting the medical practice of transplants as a modern form of the cult of deceased ancestors. On his return he would have told his follow citizens that Germans and Tarairiu Indians conduct the same ritual and the same cult of the dead.

Oswald de Andrade, the Brazilian modernist writer and poet who published his Manifesto antropofágico in São Paulo in 1928, anticipates the above synthesis with his statement 'Only cannibalism unites us: socially, economically and philosophically.'[17] An effective intercultural dialogue between the Tarairiu chief and the Director of the 'Charity' Clinic could lead to the joint discovery of underlying moral and ethical principles in transplant surgery and, in the last instance, in the supposition of 'cannibalism' in the principles regulating the practice of preservation and perpetuation of human life.

This dialogue calls for prejudices and stereotyped views to be discarded in order to reach an acceptance and a syncretic view of current cultural forms, through the acceptance of certain dimensions of our culture and of the culture of others, and the rejection of other dimensions of those cultures. This is possible if these cultures are integrated into a more differentiated referential framework – transcendence of bipolarity – which allows for a multiple perspective.

16. Clarival do Prado Valladares, *Albert Eckhout. Pintor de Maurício de Nassau do Brasil 1637–44*, Rio de Janeiro, Livroarte Editora, 1981, p. 116.

17. Oswald de Andrade, 'Cannibal Manifesto', published in French in Anthropophagies, Paris, Flammarion, 1982, 'Do Pau-Brasil a antropofagias e às utopias', in *Obras completas*, Vol. 6, Rio de Janeiro, MEC-Civilização Brasileira, 1970, pp. 11–2.

In applying this provisional conclusion to Serpa's study, carried out among Brazilians, which presents their perception and their evaluation of members of other cultures, one needs to go beyond the positive, favourable self-evaluation of the 'cordial Brazilian', kind, gentle, likeable – themes which are also found with Sérgio Buarque de Holanda. Believing in his existence is a clumsy way of hiding the real conflicts of Brazilian society and avoiding a real solution. On the other hand, Brazilians also need to recognize that the evaluation of all Germans on the basis of a stereotyped view is just as untenable – a view according to which these people would be, from an ontological point of view, serious, cold and strict. German specialists and researchers living in Brazil over a number of years can show happiness, warmth and an adaptability – particularly after a few *caipirinhas* (typical Brazilian aperitif made with lime and cane sugar alcohol) – which take Germans and Brazilians by surprise if they are not forewarned. The ease (Brazilian *jeitinho*) with which these 'acculturated' Germans learn to deal with awkward issues like, for example, finding the best way of avoiding taxes, shows that it is not difficult to transform Siegfried into Macunaïma (Mario de Andrade's 'characterless' hero).

What works for one side should also work for the other: prejudices cultivated by Germans against tropical societies need urgent revision. These prejudices suspect Brazilians of being lazy, slow and irresponsible, those being qualities or faults which would account for the poverty and relative backwardness of Brazilian society. Such prejudices do not stand up to serious sociological examination. In Germany the set number of working hours per week is thirty-five, whereas in Brazil forty or forty-eight hours is considered perfectly normal. The German work ethic, so idealized by Max Weber and many other classic authors of German thought, has already lost much of its spark. Very high unemployment rates (over 12%) and the tendency of German businesses – like Volkswagen – to transfer its factories from Germany to Brazil and other countries prove that the ethics and competence of the Brazilian worker (not to mention the low salaries which German industry finds highly acceptable) are already acknowledged by German business leaders. The German Chancellor once complained – to the great indignation of some – that German society had been transformed into a 'leisure society'.

To summarize, intercultural dialogue in the social-science domain and in relations between North and South has the primordial task of deconstructing prejudices cultivated by 'those from above' and 'those from below', and – as Claude

Lévi-Strauss pleaded – of bringing about awareness and exposing the structures and underlying principles of social structuring in different cultures which are responsible for the distortion of views. In translating what is still unconscious and latent in each culture so as to register conscious and clear knowledge, the social-science researcher, especially the anthropologist, must intervene between the white man of the North and the 'savage' of the South. He must intervene between the 'wangeregi' and the 'manegi', and help both parties construct an adapted view of the respective cultures with their limitations, qualities and faults, and assist them mutually to move on towards realizing the potentialities of the human condition irrespective of its cultural specificities.

When that time comes, an analysis of inverted views will have lost its pertinence and the ground will have been laid for a true 'North-South dialogue'.

In search of new languages

On intolerant dialogue

Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira

Tolerance is an end in itself. The elimination of violence and the reduction of repression to the extent required to protect men and animals from cruelty and aggression are primary conditions for the creation of a human society.

Herbert Marcuse, *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*

The wording of this text[1] is a combination of wishes and concerns I have expressed on different occasions both in Brazil and abroad, at conferences touching on fairly unusual issues among my anthropology colleagues. These are questions associated with themes such as ethics and morality and they are beginning to penetrate the borders of my discipline. I want to pick up my subject where I left off. It was at the opening conference of the Brazilian meeting on anthropology in 1996, in Salvador, when I touched on the theme of 'Ethnicity, ethicality and globalization', concentrating on the examination of the possibility – and principally on the difficulties it

1. International seminar 'Science, scientists and tolerance', organized by the Vice-Rectorate of Post-Graduation of the University of São Paulo, under the patronage of UNESCO's Unit for Tolerance, held at the University from 18 to 21 November 1997.

raises – of the drawing up of global ethics,[2] ethics which would be valid for everyone and which would go along with – under the sign of tolerance, let me add – the realization of what Marcuse described as being the 'primary conditions for the creation of a human society', as cited in the above epigraph.

So it would perhaps be useful to recall briefly the issue dealt with on that occasion before expounding on what to me is the Gordian knot of the problem – without, however, being capable of untying it! I should simply like to propose a selection of debates liable to meet with some agreement. There is nothing better than the organization of meetings such as this to get collective thought going.

At the above-mentioned conference I tried to show that discursive ethics, in the manner formulated by Karl-Otto Apel and Jürgen Habermas, leaves a residue of incomprehension in the dialogic relation when discussion involves members belonging to totally different cultures (when, for instance, it takes place between Indians and non-Indians and it then becomes marked by theoretically incommensurable horizons). We know that in so far as the discussion leans on the possibility of hermeneutics (here I am referring particularly to Gadamer's hermeneutics), discursive ethics operates on a historical tradition which is generally shared by the interlocutors even though they may belong to different historical periods. One could say therefore that there is a pre-existing common culture medium allowing for a fusion of horizons between text and reader engaged in a dialogic relation – that is, between the text's horizon and the reader's horizon. I do not think it necessary to refer to Hans-George Gadamer to uphold this well-known argument. Now, since this is about individuals inscribed in cultures as diverse as those we have observed between Indians and non-Indians, the probability of this fusion of horizons between contemporaries decreases noticeably and yet one cannot state that it is nil, since there can always be found empirically (hence the contribution of anthropology) a link between different horizons thanks to the exercise of rational argumentation – as indeed is suggested by the very theory of discursive ethics. Still at the same conference, I recalled the significant debate which took place in Mexico, at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana of Iztapalapa in 1991, the results of which were published in a volume entitled *Debate en torno de la ética del discurso*

2. Text published by the *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais* (11th year, No. 32, 1996, pp. 6–17). Another version of this text was recently given at Oaxaca, Mexico, on 25 June 1997, as the Inaugural Conference of the International Symposium 'Ethnic Autonomies and National Studies', under the title 'Ethnicity, Ethicality and Globalization'.

de Apel, with the appropriate subtitle *Diálogo filosófico Norte-Sur desde América Latina*. The debate was organized by Enrique Dussel – an Argentinian Mexican, specialist in the philosophy of Apel. What seemed to me important in that debate was what I consider to be an opening of the discussion on the signification of discursive ethics – which sees itself as global – in relation to empirical instances that philosophy rarely deigns to examine as an empirical discipline, which lets the anthropologist occupy an interesting position. In this sense, the 'theology of liberation', a recurring theme in that debate, would take here in this text a secondary position. It would not serve as the point of reference for religious doctrine or political ideology for the sole reason that my interest would be centred on the conditions of possibility of dialogue and not on the actual subject of the dialogic relation.

From my 1996 lecture I should like to take up two concepts which seem to me fundamental. These are Apel's concepts of 'communication community' and 'argumentation community'. It is enough to recall that a 'communication community' is a constitutive instance of knowledge present in any discourse aiming for consensus, whether scientific or simply laden with 'common sense'. This is therefore an instance marked by inter-subjectivity which, in turn, is inherent in any 'argumentation community' (second Apelien concept) – a community from which even the most solitary thinker could not withdraw, as Apel himself states. These two concepts are thus coextensive. This means that these communities are made up of individuals from any cultural group, on condition they subscribe to the same 'language game' (to paraphrase Wittgenstein); all the more so because there is a similarity between this Wittgensteinian notion and the concepts proposed by Apel. As for the communication community, let me simply add that this is thought by Apel in its double dimension: as ideal community and as real community. The former corresponds only to the logical possibility of its realization – and it would function as a 'regulating idea'– while the latter goes back to its empirical realization, which is to say it implies a community made up of real human beings.

By way of illustration, let us take the extreme case of a highly sophisticated professional community like, for example, a community of scientists. Apel would say that the logical validity of the arguments formulated within that community necessarily presupposes an inter-subjective agreement around explicit or tacitly accepted rules. Which is to say that even in this kind of communication and argumentation community, one observes an exigency for consensus on norms and rules – like, for instance, those of formal logic – inherent in argumentation and which must prevail. The guarantee of such consensus is precisely in the existence of

ethics which are inter-subjectively valid and signify the duty of all members of the community to obey the rules and norms instituted by that consensus. If this is true for a scientific community, it will also be true for any other communication and argumentation community within which any knowledge is constructed. That is an idea which must remain very clear in our minds since it holds a central position in the arguments I am going to put forward.

Let us imagine a situation where members of different ethnic groups, with different fields of semantics, try to establish a dialogue. And let us suppose, for example, that this dialogue takes place between the heads of a particular indigenous group and representatives of the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI). Let us also say that these representatives are imbued with the principles of the doctrine of alternative development known as 'ethno-development',[3] according to which it is essential that possible changes proposed by the Brazilian Indian organism be negotiated with the indigenous population. In order to carry this through morally, this negotiation should therefore be done within the framework of discursive ethics. In such a way, there would be no calling into question of the compatibility of the ethno-development model with the ethics of discourse. In an earlier text entitled 'Inter-ethnic Practices and Morality: for a (self) critique of Indianism',[4] I discussed the subject at length without, however, tackling the inherent difficulties of the total effectiveness of inter-ethnic dialogue, without which – it must be stressed – negotiation becomes impossible. If negotiation includes symmetrical dialogic relations, the question of power, although inevitable, can be more or less neutralized by democratic positions resolutely adopted by Indianists devoting their time to persuading Indians to accept the introduction of possible changes among them. The ethno-development model seems to allow for such a situation without asking too many questions about the positive results which must finally come. Nevertheless, to my mind, there are intrinsic difficulties in the very structuration of this dialogue, even

3. Ethno-development is an alternative to the interventionist development policy and is recommended as such in international gatherings in the manner of the background to the 'San José Declaration', published in *Anuário Antropológico*, No. 81, 1983, pp. 13–20.

4. See Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira and Luis R. Cardoso de Oliveira, *Ensaios antropológicos sobre moral e ética*, Rio de Janeiro, Edições Tempo Brasileiro, 1996, pp. 33–49. This fuller text constitutes chapter 2 but is published in its original form in Antonio A. Arantes, Guilhermo R. Ruben and Guita G. Debert (eds), *Desenvolvimento e direitos humanos: a responsibilidade do antropólogo*, Campinas, Editora da Unicamp, 1992, pp. 55–56.

if the dominant pole of the inter-ethnic relation adopts an eminently democratic position, for example, when the FUNAI representatives accept the ethno-development model as being the most correct way of implementing changes in the indigenous world. Obviously, that route runs through the mutual understanding of both parties concerned. There seems to be no doubt about that. The doubts we must examine – let me say again – belong to the very structure of this dialogue which ties up individuals situated in distinct semantic fields. Overcoming this 'semantic gap' seems to me to be the great challenge, even between people of 'good faith' wanting to reach consensus.

Let us keep our example of dialogue between Indians and FUNAI. There must be room in this imaginary dialogue for a sort of interpellation – the 'deed of word', as Enrique Dussel defines it – so indigenous leaders can always address the Indianist organism. Without that deed, how can there be any guarantee of the dialogue's minimal conditions necessary for implementing the 'exigencies of the claim of validity' recommended by discursive ethics?

By this it should be understood – here I am going to take the liberty of transcribing a fairly long passage from my lecture – 'that any interpellation addressed by the dominated element of inter-ethnic relations to the dominating element – the latter, white, culturally European, Western – cannot demand from the former prior conditions of intelligibility, truth, veracity and rectitude which, it is hoped, are present in the whole exercise of discursive ethics. Interpellation by the Indian to the dominating white – not only because he or she belongs to the dominating section of national society, but also as dominator of the language of discourse itself – often makes the interpellation's intelligibility awkward and therefore, also his or her natural claim of validity, since this basic condition is lacking for any deed of word which is 'genuine' – that is, accepted as genuine by the travelling auditor; which has 'veracity'and is therefore accepted with illocutory force (of conviction) by that same auditor; who shows 'rectitude' or, in other words, who respects the norms of the ethically constituted argumentation community, norms established and institutionalized in terms of the rationality in force at the dominant pole of the inter-ethnic relation.[5] This dominating institutionality, if not the cause, was at least a serious factor of political and social domination of indigenous peoples, unable to be avoided by militant Indianism, whether private or official, whatever its good

5. Roberto Cardoso de Oliveira, op. cit., 1996, pp. 11–12.

faith. According to Dussel, the only option would be to replace it by a new institutionality capable of ensuring the normativity of an interpellation by the dominated party of the inter-ethnic relation. For Dussel, "non-normativity of 'interpellation' is demanded by the fact that the future institutionality, from which the 'interpellant' will have rights which he does not at present have, is at a founding or original moment of new normativity."[6] The importance of this new normativity lies precisely in the fact that, thanks to it, one can make viable a discourse in which none of the parties, possibly in litigation, finds itself prevented from communicating nor runs the risk of stumbling further into the jungle of a 'deformed communication' – to borrow Habermas's very useful concept. There is therefore the imperative need to transcend the fundamentally Eurocentric, hegemonic discourse that compromises the ethical dimension of an argumentative discourse which should flow naturally within inter-ethnic dialogue.

Many paths could be taken here. Paths which would lead us to seek – and possibly propose – ways of getting out of the impasse brought about by the need for a new normativity. For the time being, I prefer to stick to just one, which happens to feature on the list of themes of this seminar: the elucidation of the concept of 'tolerance' and of its applicability to inter-ethnic dialogue and therefore to discursive ethics. That is how I would like to conclude this short, purely exploratory text.

Among the various meanings to be found in dictionaries of the word 'tolerance', I will choose the one which seems to me to bear most relation to our field of enquiry. Here is the third meaning of this term such as it appears in André Lalande's *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie*: 'State of mind, or rule of conduct, consisting in leaving to each the freedom of expressing his opinion, even though one does not share it.'[7] Thus formulated, the idea of tolerance expresses an attitude which, although democratic, is profoundly moral. This virtue of tolerance is far from characterizing inter-ethnic dialogue. It can be said that ethnography clearly experiences, not only in Brazil but worldwide, difficulties which seem to be inherent in the type of dialogue commonly observed within inter-ethnic systems. In this regard, the existence of difficulties in social relations must be recognized. These

6. Enrique Dussel, *Diálogo filosófico Norte-Sur desde América Latina,* Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1994, p. 71.

7. Fifth edition, 1947, p. 1111.

difficulties engender representations marked by prejudice and deeply discriminatory of the Other – particularly when that Other moves furthest away from the cultural parameters of the dominant pole of global society. But what we do not always know how to recognize, through lack of a social layer empirically identifiable by ethnography, is the language map, or rather the discourse as means of intercultural relation. It is true that what we call the 'linguistic turn', from contemporary philosophical thought, is gradually introducing itself into anthropology and it certainly contributes in bringing to the horizon of that discipline the phenomenon of discourse and particularly (what interests us even more) the problem of inter-ethnic discourse. Now if we could attribute a margin to this discourse we would say it would be that of intolerance. It is this intolerance which monographs record *ad nauseam*. However, without wanting to reduce the problem of the persistence of hegemonic discourse, usual in inter-ethnic dialogue, to an exclusively psychological factor, I shall try instead to situate it beyond any psychology, in order to examine it in terms of morality (recognition of the idea of well-being of the Other) and of ethics (recognition of the idea of duty to negotiate democratically the possibility of achieving consensus with the Other). I mean – still in accordance with Lalande – that it is essential to separate from the notion of tolerance any meaning which links it to a certain feeling of charity toward the Other, treated as an inferior. Because tolerance must be understood as a respect, and without it moral dignity is wounded. In this sense, for Lalande – following Renouvier – 'what we call tolerance is a virtue of justice, not of charity'.[8] Having removed that possibility of misunderstanding, we can at last formulate the concept of tolerance as a question of law as well as placing it on the level of morality and ethics. That being so, the rejection of intolerant dialogue henceforth comes from justice, and underlying inter-ethnic relations must be dealt with on the plane of legitimate morality and not only as a political reality to be exclusively managed through the democratization of those relations. So it is no longer a question of political concession of the dominant pole, that is, the state, but a moral imperative.

I cannot see any other possible direction if we want to tackle the problem created by the evident need to institutionalize a new normativity – as suggested by Dussel – capable of replacing the hegemonic discourse used by the dominant pole of the inter-ethnic system. For the Indianist, looking at improving inter-ethnic

8. Ibid.

practices and possibly through a sort of 'action anthropology', these questions being developed may provide a certain interest because they could always lead him to rethink the habitual relationship modalities, commonly doomed to failure. With regard to the role of anthropology as an academic discipline, it seems to me that – thanks to the clarification of the concept of tolerance as well as of the position it holds in inter-ethnic dialogue – it must not only lead theoretical reflection towards the empirical (ethnographic) dimension of a certain type of dialogue (reflection leaning more towards philosophical incursions), but also indirectly contribute to the formulation of Indianist policies which would be compatible with the imperatives of ethicity and morality.

Society or community: tribalism and feelings of belonging

Michel Maffesoli

This paper is more socio-anthropological than strictly speaking sociological. Indeed, the important changes of values taking place in our societies as we move into a new century, oblige us to take our distance. This is what can be done if initially we keep in general terms. Later on we can propose a methodological lever to try and understand these changes of values that have just been referred to – by using a metaphor for this, tribalism, a phenomenon which these days appears to be re-emerging, bringing with it a whole series of consequences for the very constitution of the individual.

In order to set out rapidly the framework for my hypotheses, I want to recall some, albeit banal, data on modernity.

First of all, there is the notion of *epistème*. Via this notion, Michel Foucault indicates that finally we are more thought than we think and more acted on than we act. In introducing the notion of *epistème* to the heart of the debate, Foucault wants to signify that the forms of representation and social organization have a double aspect. On the one hand it is something which, in an underground way, will fundamentally shape social representations. On the other, it will evoke the fact that these social representations themselves have a whole series of consequences on social organization, although this is not necessarily thought made conscious or verbalized as such. One can say the same of scientific discoveries. That is how a writer like Thomas Kuhn makes the same statements as Foucault via the notion of paradigm – more flexible than that of model. He clearly shows the

existence of a matrix in the scientific domain from which emerge ways of representing the world.

The notion of semantic reservoir proposed by Gilbert Durand, inspired by the collective unconscious of Carl Jung, is another interesting notion to consider. Durand uses the image of semantic reservoir to show how small things give rise to greater things. The trickle ends by creating the river at the bottom of the valley, a river which will be given a name, and be canalized, and then finally will be lost in the delta before running into the sea until a new cycle begins again.

Similarly, we can think of ground water which, although we cannot see it, sustains life in its profundity, that is, our ways of being. This is what can be called a social atmosphere, covering the notion of the spirit of time, whose importance was shown by Hegel in the nineteenth century. Thus, even before the constitution of individuals or social actors, members of society, there is something that goes beyond everyone, beyond the globality of society. This something is indeed 'mysterious', in the simplest sense of the term, understood as a link, uniting people.

This is another way of designating culture, not by the great works that constitute culture but via this substratum or background into which each person melts without noticing. Basically, it is what we absorb in infancy and are impregnated with through education. Even university has a culture that forms us. And yet this notion of *epistème* is not data peculiar to modern times. It can be applied to many other periods according to a cyclical evolution that has to be taken into account in order to fully appreciate the pertinence of this proposal. But then there is the question of the passing from one *epistème* to another.

The passing and the completion of one *epistème* and the beginning of another is a difficult question which we can only think about with the utmost caution. We can retain one of the proposals of Sorokin – an American cultural sociologist. In employing the notion of saturation, he shows how at a given moment a cultural ensemble loses its conspicuousness. It is precisely when this conspicuousness is being lost that one gradually enters into a new kind of *epistème*. It is a little like the friendly or loving relationship; the obviousness of love or of friendship disappears one fine day without our being able to say exactly why. We simply talk of lassitude and weariness, thus summing up the common history shared over time with someone as though everything has to grow tired almost automatically.

In the same way we might ask ourselves whether it is not something of the same order that is currently happening in our societies, behind what is commonly called the crisis.

We do not quite know what should come under this word 'crisis', apart from the fact which we are more and more in agreement in recognizing, that this crisis is not or is no longer purely economic, nor purely political, nor simply cultural. Here, it would doubtless be better to talk of a loss of conspicuousness. So this means that at a given moment, a social or civilizational ensemble is no longer conscious of what it is. It no longer knows what are the great myths animating it. It no longer has confidence in what it is. Let us think of one of Kundera's formulae in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*: 'Loves are like empires. When the idea on which they are based ceases, they disappear with it.'

In many respects, we can think that the myth at the basis of modernity is saturated. Until now, what constituted the skeleton, on the basis of which representations were organized and society was structured, has become exhausted in a way, to the point that something else can be born.

It is important to refer again to Sorokin. Indeed, this author indicates that there exist empirically two kinds of social ensembles: on the one hand there are social ensembles of the more rationalist type, and on the other there is the more sensualist type of social ensembles.

In his own way, Nietzsche had formulated this dichotomy when he underlined the oscillation between Apollo and Dionysos. Art historians like Walter Pater have also taken up these distinctions. In the same way, Karl Mannheim made a similar type of proposition. I myself have also reused these notions to underline that something constituted modernity around the emblematic figure of Apollo. However, from a sociological point of view, I prefer Prometheus – the one who steals fire from the gods, and from whom we can recognize a certain number of active attitudes in oneself and in the world. The hypothesis is that, currently, surreptitiously or in a more or less open way, this emblematic figure of Apollo or Prometheus is giving up its place to the emblematic figure of Dionysos.

In other words, a more sensualist society is gradually replacing the rationalist society which was modern society. Indeed, the emblematic figure of Prometheus or Apollo and therefore everything characterizing modernity, is organized around a few keywords. So what are these keywords of modernity?

When one wants to have an in-depth understanding of a social ensemble, we have to know what is the element of the temporal triad where the social ensemble places the stress: the past, the present or the future. We can identify societies where time is turned to the past. This is the case for so-called traditional societies where nothing is innovated and everything is done according to tradition, that is, what is

already past. In contrast, other societies stress the present. And there are yet others where everything that happens is dependent on the future. Modern society has functioned thus – referring to the future – resulting in the myth of progress, a major expression of this finalized time. It is very difficult to know why our societies have become oriented in this conception of finalized time. From the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and even more so in the nineteenth century, we can but observe when this orientation of society dependent on its future will reach its apogee. All Hegelian philosophy of history and all the different analyses of philosophers or sociologists such as Auguste Comte are therefore formulated according to what is to come. Today's worth is dependent on tomorrow. This is also what Freud implies with his notion of 'delayed gratification'.

This concept of finalized time, of time always thought of in relation to the future, is one of the first elements of the constitution of the *epistème* of modernity. We could say that here we are in a projective conception: the project is a component of the individual. Similarly, it is a component of the whole social ensemble. The vector of this finalized time and the fact of only thinking about the world according to the future is a way of stressing reason.

Rationality is, of course, one of the characteristics of the human animal but, at certain moments in his history, that rationality takes a specific direction. I want to refer here to the philosophers of the Frankfurt School who have clearly shown how in the nineteenth century rationality became rationalism. In German the term is more significant. *Zweck Rationalität* is a reason which takes its direction from an objective. According to this perspective, 'only what has meaning has meaning'. Thus, what has no meaning becomes meaningless. From this point of view, the polysemy of the term in French is interesting because here, within this great human capacity which is reason, it allows for an underlining of what will not be retained and for only one type of reason – something that gives meaning only according to the future. This has been translated with the expression 'instrumental rationality', which expresses well this conception of modernity wanting everything to have value only in so far as it has a use and is based on utility. Here we can refer to Heidegger when he talks of 'utensility'. From there on, we have a whole series of social consequences which deserve attention.

The great utilitarian conception of the world that everyone progressively acquires in education and socialization is the fact that one must control oneself. This is the economic conception of modernity: economy of oneself and economy of the world. For the individual, it is a question of learning to have an identity in

control of itself and, consequently, learning with others who have reached this same control to dominate the world. It is interesting to recall Corneille's formula in Cinna, at a time which was precisely the very beginning of modernity. Cinna says 'I am master of myself as of the Universe, I am, I want to be'. Poets have often had the capacity to crystallize time.

The pivot of this scheme of modernity, which is in the order of conspicuousness, is the individual or individualism. Individualism appears in a way as the theoretical expression of modernity and fits into its general framework. The *principium individuationis* is certainly the essential point from where modernity is thought of and from which we elaborate all our systems. But thus to restore it within modernity indicates to us that it is a punctual phenomenon which has not always existed. It will not necessarily always exist. We can say that this *principium individuationis* is saturated in facts and yet not in our heads, at least not in the heads of the intelligentsia – those who hold the power of doing and saying something.

We can draw up a brief genealogy of this principle of individuation. When Descartes says 'cogito ergo sum', he clearly indicates, in relation to collective thought in the Middle Ages, that there is only individual thought. By the way, the Latin term in full is more interesting: 'cogito ergo sum in arcem meum', 'I think therefore I am, in the fortress of my mind'. This formula clearly shows the specific 'enclosure' which was the constitution of the individual at the beginning of modernity. It also clearly shows the fundamental difference in relation to anterior thought which was collective. And it is not impossible that subsequently we may return to collective thought.

The Reformation, almost contemporary with Cartesianism, also introduces something of the order of individualism because, with the Reformation, the relation to deity stops being a collective affair. Luther and Calvin introduced the notion of free will, the expression of an individual relationship that an 'I' would establish with absolute alterity.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau did the same. Clearly, from a rational individual, a social contract can be thought, as became apparent with the French Revolution and the Napoleonic Code. Finally, the master word following on from what I have said about Descartes, the Reform and the philosophy of the Enlightenment, is clearly autonomy, the autonomous individual. Let us remember the etymology of the term *autonomos*: I am my own law. It seems to me that is where the pivot of modernity is situated, in this conception of the individual giving his law to himself and who can associate later with other autonomous individuals to make history. It

is from this point that the social contract is constructed – today we can well see the fragility of it – based on citizenship which doubtless is all that founds the democratic ideal. Hannah Arendt clearly showed everything this ideal owes to the individual.

In contradistinction to the above outline and in contradistinction to the emblematic figures of modernity, my empirical proposal is that from now on we are confronted with heterogenization of the monotheistic model which, until now, was modernity.

There is no theorization of what is happening in our Western societies. However, sociologists and anthropologists are obliged to notice the saturation, fatigue and porosity of the nation-state. This nation-state, political expression of the democratic contract and ideal, is becoming saturated and we could put together a whole series of elements to show this, whether in a violent and even bloody way in some countries, or in a more policed and gentler way in others.

It is the same for the great institutions constituted essentially in the nineteenth century: the family, the medical institution, the university institution and even the ecclesiastical institution – the Catholic Church only found its final form at the first Vatican Council in 1871, a Council which, in sum, concretized the 'Romanization' of the Church. Thus, all social institutions, whichever they may be, are becoming more and more porous these days. We can call up an image, a social fabric which remains whole although moth-eaten all over. This 'moth-eatenness' generates microscopic entities in institutions, businesses, education milieux and social work – whether cliques, micro-groups or what I call tribes.

Another element of this heterogenization of the modernity model lies in a comparable saturation of the ideological certainties of the past. Thought was animated by great ideas, 'those grand reference narratives' – to borrow one of Lyotard's expressions – which could be Marxism, Freudism in some respects, and positivism. These grand ideas themselves become saturated and more and more porous. It is not that they no longer exist, but that they exist only in a residual state and not as references in relation to which we should situate ourselves. Today we are confronted with a sort of patchwork or ideological bric-a-brac, portable, multiple and diverse ideologies, or a kind of 'Babelization of thought'.

Within the framework of this heterogenization or this hypothesis of political, institutional and ideological heterogenization, it appears necessary to question what I have just defined as the pivot of modernity, that is, the individual with his specific, sexual, ideological and professional identity.

From now on, it seems the individual must give up his place to something else. The term remains to be found. For my part, I proposed person in the etymological sense of the word (*persona*). Which means we are confronted with 'masks' and that we present identifications rather than an identity. The acquisition of identity was until now the peak of education and the apogee of socialization. But we are now witnessing a passing from identity to multiple identifications. It is this passing which to me appears to found the birth – or perhaps it would be better to say the rebirth – of tribal forms of existence. Tribalism is thus a useful metaphor to try, provisionally, to take note of the saturation I have been talking about, and because the individual or individualism is now giving way to micro-ensembles and community forms. Nowadays we are too used to insisting on the individual or individualism. In fact, now it is 'elective affinities' which prevail and these are the reality not just of some, but of a fairly great number, constituting us in tribes within our institutions. This is striking in the university world. And it is just the same in the religious order where sectarian evolution is evident. In fact, all institutions are fragmenting into microscopic entities.

This is where the idea of autonomy, which was constitutive to modernity, gives up its place to something else. We could talk of heteronomy, thus showing the fact that I am no longer my own law. My law is the Other. I exist only in and by the mind of the Other, only in and by the expression of the Other.

World trends in fashion are, in this respect, interesting: clothes fashion, language fashion, body fashion and sexual fashion. There is, therefore, as with the fashion phenomenon, something being established in our society, no longer depending on will but on contamination. It is something in the order of a virus. Fashion is viral. It makes for epidemics. To my mind, there is something of this order happening in all domains. Thought itself does not escape this phenomenon. This is particularly striking. Where one should think on one's own, there are small sectarian, fanatical entities being constituted which oppose one another.

Contrary to the contract, characterized particularly by its rational and voluntary nature, there is another way of being and another form of sociality being constituted. This other way of being will reinvest the elements left out by social analysis: the emotional and the affectual. The affectual and the emotional are not only of the order of emotive or affective, but they clearly constitute a specific atmosphere which rests on the processes of contamination and on the fact that a whole series of 'trances' – at times macroscopic, often microscopic – provide the sustenance of social life.

In this way, *homo politicus* or *homo economicus* will, for better and for worse, give way more and more to *homo aestheticus*. The latter will be constituted on shared emotions. Hereafter we will have to think of the capacities of bringing into play the emotional and the affectual in order to think of this *homo aestheticus* who is the basis of my designation of the term tribalism.

Communication and *Lebenswelt*

Muniz Sodré

This fable is introduced by Nietzsche in *Twilight of the Idols* as the result of the end of the 'real world', that is, the world of stable essences corresponding to Platonic ideas. Without the hypothesis of an eternal truth which can be measured, Nietzsche states that the world 'becomes a fable'.

It is in the sense of this *fabula* that Gianni Vattimo extends beyond the meaning of 'epopee of the origins', the meaning of 'saga' (*sage* in German), one of the words used by Heidegger to evoke the non-metaphysical essence of language. The fabulous 'saga' can be the remembrance of a founding event or the interpretation of the meaning of existence in its contemporary form.

To place the ethical question within the framework of a reflection on communication in the world of global technology and total organization, it seems timely to go back two and a half millennia and hear the fable of the Chinese, Chuang Tsu:

'Dsi Gung was travelling across the northern region of the river Han when he saw an old man bustling about, busy with the irrigation of a field. He had dug ditches in the ground and with difficulty was climbing up the side of a well, a bucket in his hand, in order to bring water to his crops. Despite all his efforts, very little water ran in the ditches.

Dsi Gung went up to him and said:

– There is an easier way to transport far more water quickly and with very little effort.

The old man stopped and asked:

– And what would that be?

– Technology, of course! You install siphon pumps and you get as much water as you need, replied Dsi Gung.

A wide smile crossed the old man's face and he said:

– A long time ago I already heard it said that to use technology everything has to be done technologically; you need a technological heart. Now he who has a technological heart in his breast loses the innocence of life and lives in fear and trembling. And he who trembles with fear would not know how to encounter the mystery of reality in realizations. It is not that I am ignorant of technological things but I have not yet learned to maintain a relationship with them in the savour of creation of the world.'

Etymologically, 'innocence' means that which 'does not harm' or 'does not hurt'. In this fable, loss of innocence is equivalent to renouncing the harmonious relationship with the springs of life, or what Husserl's phenomenology termed *Lebenswelt*, 'the world of life' – the milieu or the multiplicity of horizons the subject has originally been given.

Here, 'subject' is not to be confused with 'person', because there is no idealization included. This subject is the existing being. To say this as it was originally stated in *Lebenswelt* supposes conceiving of the subjective essence not as simple reflective *cogito*, or conscience detached from the world, but as a being integrated in original spaciality and synchronic with the present of the Other.

The Other, as outlined in the story of the old man and his well, includes men, land and trees. We could add animals and gods. Here, the world of life appears in a different perspective from that of subjective idealism, to characterize man, not as pure conscience but as being, linked to the essential dimensions of territoriality and community.

Jürgen Habermas uses the term Lebenswelt (see *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*) to designate the symbolic or cultural order which becomes embedded in institutions, cognitive schemes or personality structures of individuals. In order to avoid the notion falling into idealism, Habermas links it to the theory of systems. *Lebenswelt* (real world) and systems (social world) would be the two sides of one coin: one devoted to cultural reality and the other to activity socially integrated into groups or institutions.

For Habermas, the problem posed by a society ruled by such systematic and technological communication (contemporary media) is withdrawal/recoil from

the symbolic horizon anchored in *Lebenswelt*, which is to say agreement modalities, behaviours and traditional attitudes. The partially subjective and pre-conscious rules of the world of life give way to technical discourses of a rational, universalist vocation.

The difficulty shown by the use Habermas makes of *Lebenswelt* comes from the stiff opposition he establishes between this notion and the technology of current communicative practices. The mythical dichotomy of good and evil reappears in his over-generalist analysis which places excessive confidence in the substantial rationality of linguistic communication.

In the little Chinese story, however, what we could call *Lebenswelt* is not the set dimension of a tradition, but the *logos* in a temporal transmission of messages where we can see the earth and the land as what brings the Other closer. The Other is already there or implicit in the simple presence of an individual in the world. But the being supposes the proximity of the other, whence all communication and all comprehension is realized. Inside the 'world of life', technology only has meaning if it is intrinsic to the subject's particular way of existence, if technology is consubstantial with the *arkhe* – understood here as the vigour of original events – which is present in the 'archi-tecture' of man's creative thought and action.

What dynamic tradition says – as opposed to traditionalism – and what the philosophers of being say – like Heidegger – is that technology must be conceived within the order of the 'production of man'. Technology is not a neutral means; that is to say a means which operates the effects of material transformation, without at the same time transforming the human subject. Therefore, 'he who has a technological heart in his breast loses the innocence of life'.

Here it is not a question of an attitude of rejection of technology. There is but one indication of the consequences or of the radicalness of change, and a warning about the necessity of establishing a relationship with these things 'in the savour of the creation of the earth', which is to say a human relation with the thing imposing itself as creator with regard to man.

Like the story of the experiences of popular subjectivity in Latin America, Chuang Tsu's parable shows a practical interest for a discussion on the consequences of the technological empire and of the transnational capital in the contemporary human milieu.

In Brazil, for example, we are currently witnessing the historical construction of the neo-liberal ideology of techno-economic progress – practical creations, enormous urban growth, modernization of consumerism and life-styles,

the construction of a sophisticated communications system – all of which confers an absolute value on technological development, independently of the human conditions surrounding it.

Here, it is not a question of the simple examination of a theoretical object which we could call 'organization of relations of production' based on the transnational capital of global economy. It is about understanding, in other ways, the cultural devices of a perverse socio-economic structure which announce to man a hope of relief or of salvation by the consumption of objects. Its structure is comparable to that of drugs, the consumption of which is increasing exponentially in contemporary metropolises.

The question is also knowing how to evaluate correctly the possibilities of democratization or of welcoming human diversity when confined by this techno-culture that accompanies the transformation of towns into 'mega-machines', as Lewis Mumford puts it – producers of individual or collective subjectivity by means of classic urban equipment (education, health, cultural diffusion) and the means of mass media.

This latter aspect requires particular attention because 'democracy' today is not only the universal imperative of civic participation in decisions of the state. It goes beyond the sphere of strictly political relations and overflows into the socio-cultural sphere where the individual defines himself not only as citizen but also in the heterogeneity of his status and the specific roles he is given within the different social institutions.

Democracy is thus the practice of construction and re-elaboration of the social subject in his everyday life, but of the subject necessarily articulated with the 'world of life'. If democracy plays its game in the smallest day-to-day situations, in the relational 'coming and going' between institutions and in the existential vicissitudes of citizenship, it also deploys itself in the 'cosmological' complexity of the relation of the subject with both territory and community.

We are therefore relativizing the abstract universalism of political democracy and taking this concept in the direction of a 'democratic' organization of social life, ensured by a 'collective memory' capable of celebrating diversity as the vital core of experience common to all singularity. Experience of democratic life is animated by the interaction of beings and things 'in the savour of the creation of the earth', which is to say not so much what the strictly political institutions make explicit, but rather the manifestation of a structure sensitive to the perception of the remembered social standard of democratic experience.

Concerning the expression 'collective memory', we should not omit the thinking of Maurice Halbwachs for whom remembering or recollecting consists not in turning one's back on the present or on public exteriority, but in reconstructing the past from a present intelligence of social life.

Recollection is not mere repetition since no memory pure and simple is capable of reviving the past. The new encounter with the past can only be realized in the reconstruction of memory by a system of values which coincide with the present social framework, itself being a stable, dominant memory like the myth as dynamic structure of the revelation of reality.

Without reconstruction, memory is only the dead stock of past events – in the form of books, works of art, monuments, knowledge and archives – and the accomplice of possible anachronic repetitions. 'Mechanical' memory, widely practised in the most varied forms nowadays, is nothing more than a 'utopian' nostalgia of ruins. The resurgence of racism and totalitarian groups in Europe, accompanied by the well-fed indifference of the intellectual class, shows that the culture which sees itself as being the most enlightened of the planet, as soon as it bases itself on mechanical memory, becomes retrograde and anti-democratic 'with no savour of the creation of the earth'.

The democracy to be constructed – the one that will emerge from the progressive erosion of the power mechanisms of the classic Nation State – supposes the representation or collective memory of historical experience of political democracy with its statements and contradictions, but transformed by the new social standard of late modernity where attitude and democratic behaviour must organically extend to all spheres of the daily existence of the *socius* by transforming itself into the common-sense phenomenon.

Democratic common sense presupposes a sociocultural model which confers a relative autonomy on the individual and collective subject in relation to the process of formation of will and the possibilities of opening up to the Other. Will and opening up are faculties linked to the psycho-cognitive mechanisms of the subject.

The question is knowing how to organize this common sense from human values which are becoming more and more rare in 'mega-machine' urban areas, where the accelerated decomposition of community groups, in the absence of adequate symbolic mediation, creates imbalance and social anomy.

The most usual trend today is to question the field of communication and media technology which, under the influence of a veritable analogico-digital

paradigm, constitutes a mutation of the integration modes of the psycho-cognitive mechanisms of the subject in the contemporary social order. The question posed in the initial terms of this approach is: does the 'world of life' exist within the contemporary media technology régime?

Much has been said about television tele-populism and about public opinion formed by the techno-cultural flows of a statistical system along the lines of the market economy. However, faced with the technical changes suggested by the very latest information technologies, notably the Internet, the most common attitude is insisting on the immense possibilities of choice or of freedom offered to the consumer, who is now apparently liberated from his passive condition or from commercial subjection. So the metaphors 'immersion' and 'navigation' have a free rein.

We must, however, accept the evidence that the new technological devices allow or will allow businesses and the market economy to control potential consumers in a far more efficient, 'capillary' way. Through new televisual systems, (Cable TV, Pay for View, Video on Demand, etc.) the spectator can be individually known by his consumer acts as commercial transactions are gradually intensified through the view-data processing networks.

If, on the one hand, it is true that this new technological order brings an increase in the power of access of certain groups to vague springs of knowledge, it stimulates on the other hand a doubtless exponential growth in the power of market advertising topped with unprecedented funds from direct marketing. The flow of data over the individual that the entrepreneurial system could control is so wide-ranging, it already makes one question the romantic 'navigating' freedom being proclaimed as a cyberspace Utopia.

The liberal or neo-liberal idea of a self-regulating market, independent of other human variables, is doubled with a notion of a purely electronic community, dedicated to filling the mental time of individuals, producing – as do drugs – only cognitive stress. The encounter of the 'mystery of reality in realizations', as Chuang Tsu's story suggests, would imply making communication a truly democratic, cultural dynamic, and a pole of convergence of cosmological, ethical, aesthetic and economic diversity. It would mean constructing with the help of new intellectual or spiritual communication technologies the idea of the unity of life which is present in the *Lebenswelt* notion.

Yet the building of an idea of that order in a technical *Umwelt* (surrounding milieu), like the one designed from a world *inforoute* – flow of

immediate communication in the form of numerical texts and images – demands a real change in the forms of socialization and mentality.

In this context, democracy supposes a transformation of the modern experience of politics – 'new politics' therefore – towards an agreement having participation and diversity as imperatives, and going far beyond the classical 'liberty, equality, fraternity'. Participation means coming out of active or passive indifference, with the guarantee of a new standard of human responsibility – 'responsibility' being understood not only in the juridical sense but also in its full communicative and existential sense. Diversity returns to uphold the equality of all, not only before the law and before God, but also opposite the evidence of their singularity. 'Tolerance' perhaps harms diversity because it makes it live in 'fear and trembling'. Only the radical, democratic cohabitation of equals satisfies it as a *Lebenswelt*.

Thinking at the service of silence[1]

Emmanuel Carneiro Leão

The obscure, the enigmatic and the nebulous are considered to be vestiges of a continuation of the relativity of conceptualization. They are relative concepts in relation to a parameter as soon as they define themselves with significant force. The parameter which still serves to measure and vest power against the silence of thinking is what constitutes the ensemble of possibilities and resources of a certain way of being: the discursive way of being of reason and operation. If we think that the silence of thinking is obscure, this is because it is difficult to be detached or to escape from the discursive domination of reason. It is therefore not in the obscurity of silence that the difficulty lies, but in the resistance to alter the paradigm which has dominated all understanding in the service of knowledge. It is difficult to understand why such comprehension only mobilizes resources of knowledge, given that the reason of knowledge, despite all its resources, constitutes only a way of being and not the only way of thinking.

The thesis I am putting forward here deals with a characterization of what the life of thinking could be from the point of transformations to which civilization sees itself subjected. If we look at the two and a half millennia of Western culture, thinking initially develops in the service of the being; from the end of Antiquity, it changes and places itself in the service of 'believing'; at the end of the Middle Ages, in the Renaissance, it is in the service of 'knowing'. Now, at the

1. This paper is followed by a debate which took place in Rio de Janeiro on 22 April 1999.

passing from the second to the third millennium, perhaps thinking should place itself in the service of silence.

To try and see what transformation and change this represents, we could look at a few points which characterize a thought in the service of silence. Heraclitus in Ancient Greece stated that thinking would be in the service of *logos*. *Logos* prepared a first condition for thought to place itself in the service of silence: to detach itself from logic. To become detached from logic corresponds to being delivered from links, hindrance and limitations both rational and irrational. The Hellenistic period transformed the *logos* of Heraclitus into science of logic, operations of reason and calculations of reasoning. In a way, the activity of thinking became prisoner of the plans of a dichotomy between true and false, Good and Evil, as well as of all the other dichotomies of Western culture and civilization.

In Hellenistic times a legend was already circulating about imprisonment and the detachment of thought and reason. The well-known story takes place when Aristotle had to leave the court of Macedonia on the death of his patron and protector, the Lord of Asso. While waiting for the team of horses that were to help him flee the town of Asso, he noticed an old man who had dug a hole on the beach and was filling it with seawater which he fetched with a very small spoon – the type used for pouring oil into lamps. Aristotle asked him what he was planning to do and the old man answered, saying he was transferring the sea into the hole. Aristotle asked him if that was not a useless effort given the dimensions of the hole and the immensity of the sea. The old man then replied: 'And your head, is it bigger than the hole in the sand? Is reality less vast than the immensity of the sea?' With an effort of thought, can we make everything that is reality fit into a small oil spoon? In both the East and the West, it is said that the old man on the beach of Asso was Heraclitus of Ephesus and he represented the tradition and the *logos* of Heraclitus. This passage is in the first book of Aristotle's metaphysics where he asks: what is reality in all that is real? Reality is neither logical nor illogical. It can be cosmic or chaotic. But it is neither logical nor illogical.

What is the difference between *logos* and logic? Perhaps the most straightforward and simplest way of replying is to understand by an experience that logic or any other effort of thought in the service of knowledge is a doctrine on reality. It is a science of thought, a theory of what is truth and of what has value. It is a discipline of relationships whereas reality is specific thought, specific truth and the specificity of 'being in relation'. For that, to be complete, logic must be

abstract. To be consistent, logic must be excluded; to be coherent, it must be defined, and to be continuous, it must be uniform.

Thus, to be placed at the service of knowledge, thought has to be linear. There is no need for it to be concrete, but it should be discrete. Reality is therefore integral and concrete because the real increases with the tension of the differences of contraries and with the initial force of conflicts. That is why the town can never be the map. It must be both 'map' and 'non-map'. Only in this way, once integrated concretely as 'being town' or not 'being town' can the guide find it. Substituting the real by variables and functions only occurs in the abstract. Why? Because in the concrete, a realization and a 'non-realization' always belong to the real. In being realized, the 'it is' of all reality fulfills a constant 'coming to be' or 'becoming', because in it is included the scope extending between being and non-being, between unreal and real, between logic and illogic and between rational and irrational.

That is also why no realization of whatever real it may be can be reduced to a mark or the mark of a function. For the real to be alive, it has to live as much as it has to die, it has to be animate as much as inanimate. Life and death are like two wings. No bird can fly with only one wing. In the same way, in our lives we will never succeed in being any one thing exclusively, excluding differences and contraries, oppositions and contradictions. Only in the illusion of an ideology is it possible to pretend to be one thing excluding the other. An ideology, a doctrine or a knowledge must perhaps be logical – but not life. It only needs to be vast.

As Rilke said in the sixth sonnet to Orpheus, 'the vastness of life is made of two kingdoms'. Thinking in the service of silence has no need to repress or exclude anything. It has no need to fear contradiction nor to exclude anything in order to impose itself. In this way, the necessary condition for constructing an obedient thought which corresponds to silence is detachment from any tyranny and being free and giving itself up to the unknown, to the silence of reality. Thinking in the service of silence is not even a conquest – whether salvation or power – which is obtained in the end. It renounces all pretension of domination, power or realization.

Thus, thought is obedient with regard to silence to the extent that it gives and welcomes reality's sudden, unexpected light. The gradual process which little by little guaranteed us the possession of silence of thought does not exist. All graduations belong to reason. These are the ruses of reasoning. All the levels impose a movement of progressive approximation. The thought of silence never approaches gradually. It is impossible to continue to grow towards it, step by step; thought gives itself completely because it is neither exercise nor realization of anything.

It has already been said that thinking's silence is only possible as a discovery, the discovery of jumping into the abyss. Indeed, in the thinking of silence, it is not a question of a summary totality, but of a simple 'whole'. Reasoning that calculates neither thinks nor can think silence, because it only includes what can be determined, specified, analysed and synthesized. Reasoning only knows how to work with links, particles, parts and fragments. Its process is analytical and synthetic. Whereas thinking's silence, because it is simple and resists any decomposition and/or excludes any composition, always escapes from any mesh and does not appear in the registers of thought's censors.

In *Philosophische Untersuchungen* [Philosophical Analyses] (no. 19), Ludwig Wittgenstein states that the results of philosophy are the discovery of a simple absurd and the contusions or 'bumps' acquired by understanding in knocking itself against the limits of language. It is these bumps which help us to recognize the value of discovery. Thus it is with the thought of silence that man has always sought to think of reality. Thinking reality means letting reality become installed in the exercises and the activities of thought. For the thinking of silence, reality is the simple 'whole'. Thinking is not knowing, in the sense of determining relations or functions, nor is it reflection on the origin, nor does it representing the processes of constitution. Let me come back to the third sonnet to Orpheus, when Rilke reminds us that thinking silence is neither covetousness nor the conquest of something one ends up obtaining:

> Thinking is being silent. For reality it is very easy,
> But us, when are we silent?
> And when does the real make the silence
> of the earth and the stars come back to us?
> For you who are young, loving is nothing yet
> Although the voice forces your mouth;
> Learn to forget you have thought.
> It evaporates.
> In truth thinking is another breath,
> A breath of silence, a trembling in the silence, a wind.

In this sense, the thinking of silence restores, recomposes or renews links with the first experience of its Latin past participle. We know that in Late Latin, the verb to think, *pensare*, comes from *pensum*, the past participle of *pendere* (to suspend, to hang). The noun *pensum*, already formed in Latin, takes on the derived

sense of task or burden and, in the literal sense, the ball of woollen thread that is suspended for spinning and weaving to last through the daylight hours of just one day. This is the whole experience which shifted to the neo-Latin languages with the verb 'to think' (*pensar*, *penser*, etc.). The concentration and formulation of weaving always goes beyond the thread to the weave and the integrated ensemble it accomplishes in silence.

To think of a wound, where the flesh is torn, and pain together with the silence of the cells, shriek for our compassion, does not mean to represent, to calculate, to reason, to determine relationships or establish functions. Thinking of a wound above all means mending the tissue with its weave of cells in such a way as to allow the different currents to flow again: blood and stimuli, the bio-electric, biochemical current passing in a silence which attracts no attention. It is in the radical, constant exercise of such mending, in the relentlessness of reality and in the realizations of the real that silence and, particularly, the silence of thought, exists.

In this sense, all thought is integrating. It always binds together the real and the realization with the absence and silence of reality. And when this binding gives back its provenance to the realization of the real in the inexhaustible silence of reality, then we have a thought of silence – a weaver of reality.

At the beginning of Western thought, the first thinkers believed in a radical 'compertinence' of both provenance and constitution, the real in its realization. Thinking the real in its realization is, therefore, weaving reality into the peripeteia of its silent strength, in the vicissitudes of its emergence which does not attract attention to itself.

That is why it can be said that thought in the service of silence is obscure, enigmatic and nebulous. It is a mere vestige, a mere continuation of the domination of conceptualization. The difficulty does not come from the silence of reality but from the obstructions of a thought in the service of knowledge. The way of being which demands and supposes the thought of silence is not that of knowledge, but of a radical thought. For there are two ways of being: knowledge and radical thought.

If you want to know yourselves, there is no point in changing many things in relation to what you are. You simply need to acquire an ensemble of capacities, information, rules, ways of proceeding, means of demarcation and materials. You also have to show great skill in collecting, substituting and calculating relationships, and testing and trying to falsify lines of correspondence and interpolation.

Thus we have what is necessary and sufficient to place thought at the service of knowledge and to produce knowledge. It is useless to transform oneself

in order to know, because it is at the level and with the model one already knows that one increases the basis of knowledge. The 'being' of he who knows may remain the same before and after having known, without, however, the knowledge becoming non-viable. Knowing is therefore a passing activity; it is not immanent.

'Transmanence' is not only a condition of the object, it is also a condition of the subject of knowledge. Subject and object of knowledge do not alter in their way of being through the production of knowledge. Therefore it is not necessary to attain a different level of realization in order to know something. So as not to impose a change in the way of being, knowledge can therefore be clear, distinct, precise, efficient and operative.

It is easy for knowledge to be understood and defined, calculated and effected, because being easy and clear is proper and is worth everything which demands neither transformation nor imposes a change of value. That is the ontological statute of all knowledge, whether philosophical, scientific, dogmatic, critical, natural or produced.

The other is the way of being, the statute of the thinking of silence. To think everything that one can know or do does not help much because when one gets to know or do something, the process of thinking is already installed and consolidated in the levels and resources of its changes and transformations.

After the Second World War, during the occupation of Japan, an anthropologist went to the Kyoto monastery with a questionnaire of three hundred questions. He wanted to know the Japanese way of thinking and understand their mentality. This knowledge was to facilitate Japan's democratization process. No one asked the Japanese if they wanted to be 'democratized'. Democracy was imposed on them with the same force and the same dictatorial power the Mikado had been accused of. The master of Kyoto invited the anthropologist to take part in the tea ceremony. The anthropologist apologized and declined the invitation, saying he had little time left and that he had to visit other regions. The monks simply had to answer the three hundred questions in accordance with Zen thinking.

The master then asked him to sit down, handed him a Zen cup and said that while he was being given tea everyone would answer his questions. The anthropologist held out the cup and the monk began to pour hot water on the tea-leaves. He continued to pour the hot water even though the cup was overflowing. The anthropologist stood up and cried 'It is already full. This cup cannot hold any more!' The master then gave him back his three-hundred-question questionnaire and said 'It is already full, there is no room for another question'. The meaning of

this story is that a formed mind does not think. Or at least does not think with regard to silence. To understand the thinking of silence, another quality of being is imperative. There must be another kind of understanding of phenomena and another level of realization which is different from the comprehension and knowledge in the service of operation and production. All of this requires a strange patience, the patience Heraclitus spoke of in fragment 18: 'If you do not expect the unexpected, you will not find it, for it is hard to be sought out and difficult.'

Now, since transforming oneself requires an effort, just as expecting the unexpected creates anxiety, growing demands work and maturing brings pain and suffering, it is naturally the silence of thought which is obscure, nebulous, enigmatic and difficult to understand. When one is on this side of the level where thought stirs, silence cannot be understood and its contribution and its coming are therefore always an obstacle. So the experience of silence denotes a disposition to open up, and be continually available for the transformations of behaviour models and the founding forces of structures and expectations.

The great thinkers in Western history have always spoken in paradoxes and contradictions. This is why it is said that philosophers have the characteristic of contradicting one another – when one says yes, the other says no. The original philosopher is characterized by the fact that he contradicts himself: when he is saying yes, he is also saying no.

In order to avoid paradox and flee contradiction, there is only one route to take: change the real in the simplicity of its achievement through systems of theories and explanations. Thus there is clarity and incisiveness, but to the cost and detriment of the silence of reality.

In conclusion, here is a story which takes place in China, in the seventh century. In China, Zen was split into two factions known as the Northern School and the Southern School. The two Schools were living the same understanding in a different manner, as shown by the choice of the sixth patriarch.

At the end of his duty, the fifth patriarch asked each of his monks to compose a line which would show their view of Zen and their understanding of the difference between the body and the mind. Whoever showed the most open understanding, the most capable of welcoming differences, would be chosen to succeed him and would become the sixth patriarch. Among all his disciples, one stood out from the rest – Chen Shou. A veteran of the community, he had great experience of meditation and as much prudence as the masters. No competitor was his rival for

succeeding the fifth patriarch. So he was the one who should be elected. He composed the following lines:

> The body is the figtree.
> The mind a polished mirror.
> Therefore one must always take care to wash it
> So that no speck of dust can mar it.

Whoever possesses a minimum of perception and understanding of mysticism and contemplative experience, whether in the East or the West, will understand the meaning of those lines. They are based on the distinction between body and mind, and consider the awakening as being the result of a purification which frees the restrictive, limiting conditions imposed by the body on the mind. At least, such is the understanding that in general one has of Zen and mysticism. In the monastery there lived a peasant called Hui-Neng. He worked in the kitchen and tended the orchard. On hearing these lines he felt that this conception of Zen was quite improper. He said that Zen was something else and he recited some lines for which he was chosen to succeed the fifth patriarch:

> In no way does the body resemble the tree.
> The clean mirror has no mark.
> If, at bottom, everything is empty
> Where is the speck of dust which would mar the mirror?

In the perspective of the thinking of silence, that peasant was the thinker of the future. Why? Because thinking is letting reality be reality with all the ups and downs of the realizations of thought itself. In this sense, the peasant was a thinker because his lines were not verse on the Zen experience or the difference between the mind and the body according to Zen experience. His lines allowed Zen to be lines, thus, thinking the identity of the lines and of Zen, reciprocally, starting from the difference between mind and body.

This is what was to mark the thinking of silence which differs and concords with the other exercises of thinking to accomplish a radical effort of identification through difference. What is this radical effort? It is the effort that thinks, to the extent that it lets silence and the mysterious roots of thinking articulate the listening of thought. When we say 'I think it is going to rain', we do not think, we simply believe – whatever may be the efficiency of resources, the certainty of methods or the security of techniques – what we say. Because any effort to think silence

either includes the vigour of reality in the act of thinking and not thinking, or it does not think of silence. It states and simply reconciles data, describes and only presents situations, and elaborates and articulates facts. Reality is not one fact among others. Thinking reality is learning the force of transcendent immanence which gives and withdraws within thought's dynamics. It is through this strange way of giving itself by withdrawing that the exercise of the thinking of silence becomes obscure and imposes enigmas on words and contradictions on discourse.

Eduardo Portella

This exposé of Professor Carneiro Leão draws attention to the ontological status of silence within the framework of thought throughout Western history. One of the challenges of this common effort we are undertaking is precisely to define the path of objective metaphysics as a place of stridency, a place where noise has predominated and a place from which silence has been excluded. The way of being of knowledge has, to a great extent, been a movement towards elimination and the exclusion of silence.

The effort of an original reflection of a thought of silence, as Emmanuel Carneiro Leão has just defined it, is therefore an effort of inclusion. This dimension was missing from the ensemble of reflections and references on the reconstitution of the metaphysical path of the West. When thought tries to eliminate silence – and this is characteristic behaviour of objective metaphysics – we can say, like Emmanuel Carneiro Leão, that this thought is thought by a mind not made for thinking. Since thought includes silence, reality – he concludes – cannot live without silence.

At the end of a millennium fundamentally dominated by a set of models and paradigms of objective metaphysics and turned towards precisely configured realities, proclaimed and quoted realities, it is essential to include in this effort of reflection a sort of invitation for us to hear the sound of silence. To hear the sound of silence, hearing is not enough, there must be almost an interplay of perceptions which are transmitted not only at the purely auditory level.

Flávio Beno Siebenichler

How could this thought of silence constitute a viable alternative in the context of this clash, this situation in which we find ourselves today, where thought is discussed and feels its powerlessness even in its chattering? What alternative could

this thought of silence offer within the framework of this clash of different languages and different thoughts? If we say nothing, if the thinkers said nothing and if they listened, would that be a really adequate position in the current context?

Emmanuel Carneiro Leão

To speak about the thought of silence is to avoid the tremendous clamour of an opposition between the thought of silence and the other functions of thought. On the contrary, it means that the whole function of thought belongs to thought, even if conveyed by something inexpressible in language: when I say something, when I transmit something to the other, it is what I cannot say that constitutes the force of the communication contrary to what I might say. This means that the thought of silence does not want to substitute itself for the whole thought because it is the strongest or the one which has a far greater force of communication than the other functions of thought. That really would be a great clamour. Whatever the silence of thought may be, it does not lessen through its function the part of reality that thought receives from the real. Within certain limits, respecting this donation of reality through the real is what marks silence. Silence is therefore not the contrary of the word. It does not exist precisely because there is the word, because one says something, or because a certain type of sound transformation is worked.

What emphasizes the thinking of silence is that one must not refuse to listen to what is withdrawing, like silence, in the clamour of what is thought, said, known and worked. For that, there exists more than one form of operation or knowledge. The one we have does not exhaust the full potential of workable reality. Where is that 'something more'? It is 'put to silence' in what can be operated, worked or produced. So the thinking of silence does not want to be a substitute for the final, complete, whole, universal thought of all the attempts made by thinkers throughout the evolution of Western history. What the thought of silence wants to show is that among all these thoughts, what really constitutes creativity lies in silence. Directing the attention of our words to the silence of what we say is the challenge of future thinking.

Eduardo Portella

I have the impression it is now more or less clear that the thinking of silence is not alternative thinking and silence is not a non-saying. Silence is all that is said in what

is unsaid. Therefore silence is the concentrated word at a level of maximum density, and the strengthened word to the point that it has no alternative but to be unsaid. To be silent so as to say more. As far as I have understood, we must never view silence as an alternative thought. It is not a question of opposing it to a current thought or to the thought which has just developed or to the possibilities of the thought. It is simply a question of adding to the ways of being of thought, the furtive, barely visible modality that one has hardly heard, which is the way of silence.

Muniz Sodré

In the communities and *terreiros* of Bahia, there is a proverb which says 'of silence is born the word'. It is silence that gives birth to the word. Therefore from the word is born silence. Aristotle also uses a Greek term that Emmanuel Carneiro Leão is familiar with – *epieikia* – translated as 'rectification', 'adaptation of laws to the complexity of the real'. The complexity of the real is always greater than that instituted by the law, the rule or the regulation. Not because of the shortcomings of the law but because of the complexity, the vicissitudes and the difficulties encountered by all realization of the real. So the law constantly has to be rectified in order to adjust it to the real.

This difference between the rule and the space of adjustment, and the difference between the word and what produces it, which is silence, makes me think of another Greek term: *fronesis*. It means ethical knowledge, a knowledge which opposes defined, determined, prefigured knowledge. It is technical knowledge as well as knowledge for itself, but it is a knowledge which also makes possible coexistence and the relation with the other. It is therefore a viscerally and radically ethical knowledge.

I think this question of silence and the fact of considering the limits of the word and of the rule, also has a practical application. For example, when one talks nowadays of teaching reform, university reform, reform of the knowledge banks, possibilities of knowledge, the position of the Ministry of Education and Culture – which is also slightly that of the World Bank with regard to the instructions it gives – it discredits all and any knowledge, all and any discourse which is not directly involved with the law of technology, the law of production knowledge or the law of start-up knowledge. So universities are now beginning to get rid of the fields of knowledge not directly destined for a specific use. With reference to what Emmanuel Carneiro Leão has said, I would say that the possibility of reflection and

of thought is a place of silence. It is the place of silence in relation to technology and in relation to production knowledge. It is therefore the place and the possibility of a *fronesis*. Therefore I believe that the use and the possibility of using this type of thought is currently one of the ways of reuniting education with culture and thought, and of reviewing the place and the position of philosophy and the human sciences in the general framework of this technologization of knowledge.

Eduardo Portella

I find your comments most timely since what defines education and culture – at least in Brazilian public policy – is an absence of thought, as though we were witnessing low-flying on automatic pilot. And this happens, as you have well analysed, in close connection with the models of World Bank policies. In the effort of reflection that includes silence, it would be difficult to hold a financial conversation and ascertain the cost and profit situation. So I think your remark touches on a reality which is very close to us all, a fundamental reality in the life of this country.

Ivan Junqueira

From the viewpoint of philosophy and language, what would be the language of communication of the thinking of silence? When Heidegger says that language is the house of being, what does the situation of the thinking of silence become, from the viewpoint of a language which is transmitted?

Emmanuel Carneiro Leão

What is the mother tongue? Is it not the matrix language, the genitor of communication, transmission and exchange? The mother tongue is always the relationship. But where will that relationship take place? Where there is no occupied space because the thinking of silence is empty thinking. It is thinking which is occupied by no content, no modality of thing, but is always welcoming since it is always empty.

So it is not a metaphor to say that language is the house of being. It is an experience of emptiness and of the fact that the being always inhabits emptiness. Indeed, Lao Tseu, in one of the fragments of his *Tao-tö king* says 'What is language? The communication and transmission of new experiences dwell in the silence and the emptiness of any saying'. The transmission of a new experience does not mean

I have an experience the other does not have and that I will transmit it to him through the emptiness of language and discourse. No, it is not that. But it is the novelty of the experience he has, the experience in which he is participating. That is the level of transmission of silence. Hence the wording of *Tao-tö king*: 'When are we home? Where there is nothing, where there is no wall, no door, no window, no bed.' It is where there is nothing that we are home and it is in this sense that language is the house of being, in this concrete sense which belongs to it alone.

When we talk of abstract poetry, the poetry is abstract because it comes from common, everyday language, it is creator of language, it interrupts rules of repetition and succession of language spoken at different levels of its articulation of 'relationship' of encounter and non-encounter. So poetry will always interrupt what is full, already said and already spoken, the language operating in immediate exchanges of speakers in a linguistic community.

Ronaldes de Melo e Souza

I fully agree with Emmanuel Carneiro Leão's thesis, but I should like to discuss it in a more general context as I can see certain problems. In reality, the option of thinking in Western European civilization has been precisely the refusal of silence.

We have roughly two régimes of thought. There is the thinking of silence, which was the thinking really 'set in poetry' by all the great poets, both classical and modern. For some of them, silence is synonymous with chaos since it is not separate from the cosmos. Even Homer, considered to be a poet of the gods of Olympus, and the most important character in *The Iliad*, demonstrates a power of silence which is indeed also a power of death. And since silence is to the word what death is to life, whoever denies silence also denies death. Emmanuel Carneiro Leão has given a very good illustration of the double domain of life and death in Rilke's poetry. With Hölderlin, there is unity of the organic and the non-organic which, for him, are inseparable. Poems, in fact, give rise to silence. Hence the originality of the meaning communicated which comes therefore from the problem of not being able to communicate what is already common or what may become common, to establish a new meaning. So we have a poetic régime from ancient times to the present, which has always been accepted among the great poets – even if poetry has always been considered the poor relation of philosophy and science among others, as philosophical and scientific discourse has always favoured unveiling and the negation of what is veiled.

To tackle the enigma of the third millennium, I should like to put forward an additional element on this question of the possibility of new knowledge. We observe that this game of silence and the word, or of life and death, this interaction of symmetrical and opposed elements which really comprise the poetic régime of thought, is not accepted by the representational régime from the mists of time, where we find ideas as representatives and the subject as representative. In truth, what have we been seeking in all Western European tradition? We have sought a prop which would be unique, a single, unifying principle – whether the supreme Being, the one God, or the unique logic of a form of canonical thinking. We have always sought to establish a unifying principle which excludes differences. Therefore what characterizes Western culture is the search for a monologue and never a dialogue or dialogic interaction.

And so what happens? With the scientific revolution to which philosophical discourse has been subjected since Nietzsche and atomic physics, there began to appear something that showed itself in a happy light: the possibility of hearing and admitting this thought of silence. But despite everything, we observe that today's greatest physicists are, once again, all trying to discover a unified theory, a new principle of unification. They want to discover the hidden parameters because now there is no longer any hidden boundary.

That is why, to my mind, there are two strong régimes in the West – and, in fact, only one is really strong. One is monologue or the exclusion of difference, but the really strong one is the thinking of silence. Not the way Emmanuel Carneiro Leão spoke of it – but which I deem to be equally positive – since the thinking of silence he spoke about is the thinking which listens to silence and comes from silence itself, impregnated with silence. But the thinking of silence we have is, in reality, the thinking that makes us silent, what the professor called reality, and which is entirely configured in tensions. For example, let us take a chemist like Ilya Prigogine who talks of a new enchantment of the world with regard to all this – science and biology – where these interactions are also allowed. So it seems to me that we have two different things. One is technology in a state of accelerated development, far from going into a decline or falling into decadence, technological rationality, the extreme consequence of logic – that chain production, for example, in the metaphysical tradition, in unification, in modelization, and even elsewhere. The other is the opening up of the perspective of this dialogic, interactive thinking, this thinking capable of recognizing differences, plurality and so forth.

I think here there is a question of power due to the silence of reality. This reality is made silent in order to be dominated by categories of understanding, of knowledge as power, order, command or commandment.

I wonder whether this poetic thought which has always been subjected to silence can really be heard today?

Emmanuel Carneiro Leão

The historical evolution of the West and of the world is always accompanied by the success of organizations, conquests, and the increase of power and domination. That is precisely why it has also always been accompanied by a feeling of failure: the more progress was made towards new conquests of power, the more experiments were carried out showing the greatest power always includes the greatest failure.

That is why, throughout this evolution, the thinking of poetry, poetic thought, has, in a certain way, brought to consciousness the experience of the failure of any success founded on the main power, on the control of reality. This is a modality of the presence of poetry, where the thinking of silence continually draws attention to progress built on the increase of power and domination, progress ever condemned, not to future failure, but having already failed with its own impetus.

This presence of poetry, whatever its level of articulation, is always food for the thinking of silence. That is why poetry and philosophy have not often fed each other. Yet, that is why, as Aristotle first said, the philosopher has a passion for myths. He is a 'philomyth' – one who loves and has a passion for myths.

Claudius Waddington

Has Western philosophy already referred to the horizon of silence through the concept of alterity? If that is the case, has it helped understanding of the other and of the horizon of silence?

Emmanuel Carneiro Leão

The proposal of the thinking of silence is not a new thought. It is very old. It is the one that accompanies and has accompanied the evolution of thought itself. If one were to refer to the Ancient Greeks, it would be in the manner of Aristotle. This is

done continually. It is not a finished past, not a past which has gone and is over, but a past that continues to develop.

One of the forms through which the necessity of silence is articulated is the Other. The Other is the pronoun of silence, the one who, in some way, establishes the need to listen to silence, silence from whence comes the impassable limit of the Same, of oneself, one's capabilities and one's powers. Knowledge is endowed with an extraordinary power but that power is not absolute. This is what poetry and alterity, the Other, bring as a contribution of silence.

Pedro Lyra

If the thinking of silence is articulated to the Other, what would be the Other of silence? Would it be the telling? What would the silence of the poem be then? Is it what is not said, but what is suggested? Is it what is hidden in metaphors or in the insinuations of this language which does not explicitly tell?

Emmanuel Carneiro Leão

The Other of silence is not the telling, nor is it the word. The Other of silence is the pretension of saying everything, the word which can say everything and has nothing more to say – having exhausted all the potential of saying in what is said. It is the same experience as death in life. It means the opposite: the installation of silence in life and the pretension of an absolute saying.

Muniz Sodré

In one of his books, Jean Baudrillard tells a story which I like very much. It is a sort of parable recounted by Tibetan monks who spend their lives reciting the name of God. Recitation of the ten billion names is the cult's chief occupation. One day, some IBM technicians visit these Tibetan monks and propose creating a programme that would enable computers to recite all the names with great rapidity. The monks accept but say that, according to the prophecy, the world will end when all the names of God have been recited. Obviously, the technicians do not believe this. They launch the programme and after a few hours the computers, with extraordinary speed, begin to recite all the names of God. While the monks are listening, the technicians begin their descent of the mountain and half-way down, they see the

stars disappearing one by one. Someone exclaims 'it looks as though the end of the world is beginning'. That is how the story ends.

This idea of recitation, of the use of words and the end of the world through the use of the names of God, seems to me to be particularly linked to poetry. Silence, here, seems to intervene like the possibility of annihilating the value of usage, the value of exchange imposed on words by language, which is to say the political economics of the *sigma* of words established by the code of language. This is what Roland Barthes proposes when he says language is Fascist. The expression is somewhat exaggerated but all language is a code of restrictions.

Whether abstract or concrete, poetry is like an ebbing of annihilation because, in reality, the function of the poet with all the resources he uses, is to invest in language and create new horizons and new possibilities, but through the annihilation of the value of the bourgeois, conventional, habitual use of words. There is, then, I would say, an alteration of the annihilation of the stable value of the sign. So in that, I see another lesson of silence which shows how even the use of the word has its limits and the limit of the word, and of its value, is silence.

Eduardo Portella

Muniz Sodré has been very explicit and very clear. Poetry cannot be realized except at the level of systems of signs. It cannot only be speech. Passing through speech is indispensable but staying in speech is not. No one becomes a poet by remaining solely in speech. The place, the inviolable depository of language, the official residences of language, are dictionaries and grammar books. And I very much doubt that anyone has ever smiled or cried over a dictionary or grammar book. That is why speech needs to be transformed into language so the poetical dimension is attained, the poetical place, if you prefer. The authoritarian system of speech must be altered and the place of language created. It is in language that poetry dwells, although language is obliged to pass through speech.

Hillary Wiesner

Why has traditional, classical philosophy as practised for centuries in the West now come to a sort of aporia, an impasse? Perhaps it is primarily because of a fundamental error in the image philosophers have of themselves and of their discipline, of their sphere of competences and limits. At times, traditional philosophy and

logic throw a light on problems rather than solving them. But more often, they multiply them. In his treatise on perpetual peace, Kant wrote that even if absolute, perpetual peace came to Earth, there would always be a group of living beings who would eternally continue to fight one another. This group, of course, is the group of philosophers. Kant underlined this by quoting one of Kaestner's poems:[2]

Auf ewig ist der Krieg vermieden,
Befolgt man, was der Weise spricht;
Dann halten alle Menschen Frieden,
Allein die Philosophen nicht.

Indeed, for philosophers there is a no for every yes. And for every yes there is a no. For every generalization there are exceptions. And for every affirmation there is either a level of generality or of specificity or a perspective where this affirmation is false. Heraclitus and Parmenides were both right. I am also thinking of one of the poet Baudelaire's reflections – he explained that it is mutual incomprehension which makes the world go round and renders collective life possible. If, one day, people began to understand one another, the conflicts of logic would be endless.

That is why I believe the twenty-first century will bring us – must bring us – a knowledge of boundaries and limits of rationality, of classical, binary logic and blind reductionism. We must tune the instruments of perception with their study materials in order finally to identify the limits of those instruments and know what we do not know. The instrument of perception determines what is perceived. There are some schools of philosophy, like Husserl's phenomenology or the defenders of transdisciplinary approaches, who allow us to overcome the constraints of classical, traditional philosophy and to become aware of the extent to which this philosophy is inadapted to the study of complex problems.

Indeed, the future will perhaps in the end – at least I hope so – bury positivism and go beyond the fallacious opposition between science and religion. We must also put an end to the claim of hegemony of Anglo-Saxon analytical philosophy, characterized not only by its pretension of objectivity, its lack of intuition and imagination, but also by the incomprehension of its own sphere of competence and its myopia. We should work towards a real diffusion of new logics, and sciences of complexity and uncertainty which are none other than the science of the twentieth

2. 'Ankeundigung des nahen Abschlusses eines Traktates zum ewigen Frieden in der Philosophie', in *Berlinische Monatsschrift*, December 1796, pp. 485–504.

century. The majority of the world's population are still prisoners of a mechanical understanding of the world of nineteenth-century science. It is a disgrace, but above all a handicap, which must be overcome. This also made me aware of your openness to ideas, to the great ideas of the world's religions, once again transcending this false distinction – which, by the way, one does not come across in Asia – between religious thought and language on the one hand, and philosophical thought and language on the other. On the linguistic level, it is imperative that we deal with and incorporate indigenous philosophies which exist more in oral form, structured by proverbs and aphorisms expressed in rich, delicate shades of language which are disappearing.

With regard to metaphysics, rather than a decline of metaphysics itself, I will talk – referring to my own experiences – of a decline in philosophical normativity. I notice that the law and human rights in this field are replacing moral philosophy whose great failure is not having known, throughout its history, how to articulate real universal ethics. Today, moral philosophy has given way to international law – utilitarian and minimalist – which we saw coming fifty years ago and doubtless it will be developed and improved over the centuries.

Throughout history, universal ethics have remained incomplete. In my opinion, the cause of that failure comes from the fact that simple rules can neither describe nor encompass a complex system. But life is complex and multiple. And yet I see that the general can be enemy of the complex because, in seeking to construct general theories, philosophy frequently and rapidly errs on the side of overgeneralization: it files, lists categories and elaborates deterministic laws which neither last nor have pertinence. Analysis is too often reductionist and transforms things, particularly via very poor grammar books which function with standardized notions of identity, difference, resemblance, good, bad. Like you, I believe conceptualization leads to paradox, not because everything is itself a paradox but because conceptualization is the act of making things different from the way they are.

Finally, may I add, in the thinking and words of Buddhism, that to try to talk of existence with words and concepts is like trying to drink soup with a fork. Life cannot be described with a theory. It is like compressing a globe for the construction of a two-dimensional map, like the Mercator projection. And I believe that you, Latin Americans, know better than I the distortions thus created, since, with such an operation, either it is possible to keep distances between the different elements, or the size of whole continents has to be modified. And it is the North which has always won in this operation. In conclusion, I would say that any normative approach to morals and ethics can only be relative, subjective and

fragmentary, not universal, objective or complete. This is a good thing. It is also a lesson we have learned from the great dramas of the twentieth century which was a century of totalitarianisms. I only hope we have learned this lesson well.

Flávio Beno Siebenichler

I have a Habermasian view of what has preceded. Indeed, Habermas said that 'we live in a situation of enlightened perplexity'. In order to face this enlightened perplexity and understand the reality of today, we must start from modernity itself. And to do that, we must take as starting point, Hegel, the last great systematist, who was the problematizer of reality in defining philosophy as his time in thoughts. From then on, philosophy was to conquer its identity in a discourse which problematizes its time. It is situated in a context of collaboration with all the activities of the human mind which are turned towards understanding the epoch, the moment and history: the sciences, art, morality and even, to some extent, religion. From Hegel we can see several paths of modernity emerging. I am thinking of two in particular.

The first is the one followed by Marx and Lukács and the later Frankfurt School (Adorno and particularly Horckheimer). This path ends, of course, in an aporia, that is, in an activity of criticism of reason by itself, a well-known total criticism of reason. The other path entering into modernity is the one that follows the trail of the 'linguistic turn', particularly known in the twentieth century and mentioned here in Emmanuel Carneiro Leão's contribution when he spoke of Wittgenstein. The important thing in this 'linguistic turn' is that reason is seeking to assure itself of itself, which is to say, seeking its identity through a radical criticism of itself, a criticism which even incites it to subject itself to silence: philosophy must be silent principally on what most belongs to it, which is the metaphysical aspect – the aspect it cannot manage to problematize in a clear, distinct way.

Hegel maintained that reason, when it problematizes reality, is seeking rationality because the whole is rational. Now this post-modern line, this first panel, is beginning to refuse to believe in reality but to believe in a radical way in rationality. So it ends up abandoning the very question of reason and goes naturally in search of 'the other' of reason.

This is when the other, pragmatic 'linguistic turn' arrives, which Habermas attempts to reformulate in an inter-subjective way: the question of modernity. It is worth emphasizing that this modernity we are talking of – one could say in such an obvious way – has nothing clear about it. It has always been

extremely ambiguous and that is why it gives rise to so many interpretations. In a way, if this inter-subjectivist interpretation – I am referring here to Habermas's theory of communicative action – tries to continue along this line, it is because modernity, in our opinion, is a project of reason, a project of thought, a project of interpretation of reality, and a project towards a path of interpretation of reality that has not yet been concluded and will always be on the move. It is worth continuing to follow it and continuing to believe in it.

Needless to say, if we place ourselves in the perspective of Habermas's post-metaphysical line in order to continue working and commenting on this labour of reason, we are straightaway putting ourselves in the field of a critical theory of society. Hence the necessity to place reason in a context of practice. This is reason which is always attracted to what is called – in a very vague and therefore ambiguous way – autonomy and the emancipation of the human subject. Reason is not only concerned with reproducing and representing reality – and here, Heidegger's critique concurs. Its objective is always to transform reality through following the focal point represented by the emancipation of the human subject.

From the time we place ourselves in the perspective of a critical theory of society, it becomes possible to discover that this path of thought can have the effect of leading to what I would call a communicative rationalization of human existence or of the 'world of life'. Indeed, I realize – and all criticisms of the 'authoritarianism' and even of the 'terrorism' of communicative reason have already been made – it can also lead to functionalist reason. This dual possibility must always be taken into account. But we have to realize the importance of staying in the first alternative, as Habermas noted. It must be taken as a challenge. If we take reason – that is, modernity – in the context of a communicative rationalization of the world of life, we could attain ethics which would be supported by normative elements.

Communicative reason does not exclude. It continues to believe in the normative elements that Hegel placed in reason. If we take these elements, we can think of a morality and ethics supported by the principle of justice and solidarity and also, of course, law.

Claudius Waddington

Is it not odd that at a time when apparently everyone is enjoying the freedom of doing everything – there is even a climate of 'everything is good' and 'total freedom' – we are still up against the need for the emancipation of man?

Flávio Beno Siebenichler

This philosophy is fundamentally turned towards the emancipation of the human being as subject, and obviously starts with certain premisses, notably the Hegelian notion that the human subject finds himself in history and must construct his identity because he is capable of learning and fighting for his recognition. That is the fundamental human situation. But within the framework of communicative reason, he constructs his identity through communication with the Other, his alterity, his inter-subjectivity.

Emmanuel Carneiro Leão

I want to provoke and to question by saying that the current situation of transition from the second to the third millennium does not seem to be going towards an acceptance of communicative inter-subjectivity while the great transnational and international institutions, including the United Nations and UNESCO, are losing power and losing their voice. Are they growing silent? I think not: they are becoming wordless. And on that, even silence would be impossible.

On the other hand, one can see a steady growth in the uniform predominance of models of imposition through technological and economic development and also through the manipulation of speeches. The vector increasingly follows the information route. What have we learned from our failures? With regard to the situation in Yugoslavia, what have we retained from the experience of Nazism? It is as though Nazism had lost the war yet won peace. Not only the case of Yugoslavia but other situations in the latter half of the twentieth century seem to me to correspond to an indocility of communicative inter-subjectivity.

Flávio Beno Siebenichler

That contribution was very interesting, provocative and good for clarifying the question of communicative inter-subjectivity. This inter-subjectivity neither depends on nor is the result of a statistical analysis. This is about a theory which is configured from what happens between subjectivities. That is why this return to Hegel and modernity through language and to all philosophy with a capital 'P', to the great philosophical tradition going back to Heraclitus, is both interesting and fundamental. Because this notion of subject which depends on the other in order to be itself is not the result of an analysis of the period. It comes from an

analysis of reason itself. It is reason which goes in search of itself, that is, the human subject.

If we do not keep this reason, with all its faults, its gaps and fragments, to what do we have recourse? Enlightened perplexity? A divinity?

In earlier times, intellectuals could pretend that they knew something. Today, they have to realize for themselves that they do not know and are perplexed.

Muniz Sodré

I ask myself increasingly about the theory of communicative action. Habermas presupposes a substantial rationality in dialogic exchange, in communication itself, as though this rationality could spring up – independently of concrete, historical situations – almost as though through the work of the Holy Spirit. As though reason were something metaphysically timeless which falls on situations. As though this rationality were made in dialogue, logically, exposing what error and illusion bring and what they forbid. So let us say that what all ethics would aim for – the just – would, so to speak, be adjusted, pacted and obtained when substantial rationality, brought about by communicative exchange, would expose and demystify the errors of illusion. But I realize that this just is perhaps not only veiled by error and illusion, but also by the blinding which comes from passion. And the passion of reason as it shows itself to the world can be blinding.

It is this blinding which seems to me to constitute the limit of Habermas's system. Because established reason is always Western reason, this same reason which is always lacking at precise moments, although what happened in the Balkans was perfectly rational. What is at stake over there is a new *nomos*, as Carl Schmitt, theoretician of the modern state has shown. There is always a *nomos*, a rule of land distribution in spaces imposed by the West. First of all, by a state of exception is constituted sovereign exception, rules are created and reason is created. Afterwards, this has to change. The subject again eludes reason and rule and creates a new *nomos*. This does not mean a return to the natural or savage state, but simply a return to a state of exception to human civilization, to institute a new *nomos* on Earth, a new distribution rule for national or regional spaces. Reason, such as it appears, with this immutability, becomes a game. That is the only reason we have, and in reality I do not know if it really works, because what arrives first is always the fact, always the act and always force, then the discourse of reason covers all that.

Now this does not seem to me to be entirely foreign to the intentions of Habermas's communicative action.

Eduardo Portella

In the case of Central Europe, has there been a collision of two reasons? Or are there two expressions of the same hegemonic reason, totally opposed and refractory to impurities, that will end up crashing into each other? It seems to me very interesting to tackle the question of modernity from two perspectives: one being what the French prefer, deconstructionist, which is believing that modernity has finished its journey and has no more to say, and the other, Habermas's reconstructionist perspective, which believes modernity is an unfinished project falling on us to pursue.

At a certain point I was drawn to the French deconstructionist perspective but I have to admit, as my friend Sérgio Paulo Rouanet said to me one day, that the edifying discourses on modernity are still standing. All electoral campaigns are conducted in the name of justice, democracy, liberty and the great references the West has sold and colonized, and with which it continues to create a fundamental hegemony, albeit by imposture and lies. This hegemonic rationality has ensured its continuity by destroying the other hypotheses of dissension, extravagances and margins. It is also very probable, and regrettable, that existential enrichment of this conflict is little, even inexistent, since this is about a reason which does not oppose itself to other modalities of reflection. The *rapprochement* which tends to multiply the forms of the exercise of rationality has not taken place. This is a reason which inflicts flagellation on itself. The same reason that drops bombs promotes ethnic cleansing. I suppose all this is in the itinerary, more or less known to all of us, the itinerary of hegemonic reason in the West.

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