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Spis treści/Contents

Randall Auxier, <i>Real Deletion, Time, and Possibility</i>	5
Krzysztof Czapkowski, Andrzej Pankalla, <i>From Metapsychologie to Realpsychologie: Archetypal Imagery in the Psychologies of C. G. Jung and J. Hillman</i>	43
Wojciech S. Kilan, <i>Imago Dei in St. Thomas Aquinas: A Philosophical and Anthropological Analysis of Man Created in the Image of God</i>	65
Leon Miodoński, <i>Imaging the Absolute: Can Philosophy Visualize Abstractions?</i>	83
Karol Morawski, <i>Images of Paradise, Images of Utopia: The Search for Community</i>	99
Ilona Błocian, <i>The Problem of the “Primeval Mind” and Symbolic Thinking in Early Anthropological-Philosophical Approaches</i>	121
Kamila Morawska, <i>Androgyny and a Dream: Gaston Bachelard’s Question about a New Anthropology</i>	135
Patrycja Neumann, <i>Transgression of the Self—the Total Act in Jerzy Grotowski’s Laboratory Theatre and Jungian Archetype Experience</i>	147
Jan Krasicki, <i>In the Land of Metaxú</i>	163



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Real Deletion, Time, and Possibility

Keywords: time, process, artificial intelligence, temporality, possibility, potency, Whitehead, Bergson

Słowa kluczowe: czas, proces, sztuczna inteligencja, czasowość, możliwość, potencja, Whitehead, Bergson

Abstract

Does anything ever really “go away,” completely? This paper is a search for “real deletion,” and the metaphysics that must accompany real deletion. Why is that important? In artificial intelligence studies, researchers have offered a moving target for when artificial intelligence has been achieved. It began with the Turing test and has evolved through a thousand arguments (e.g., Dreyfuss’s *What Computers Can’t Do*, through Kurzweil’s “singularity” and into a hundred other criteria and thousands of discussions about what intelligence is and what it would mean to simulate or, as I favor, *emulate* it). This whole discussion is still just sorting through analogies to human intelligence, not approaching the thing itself, but good analogies must approach much more than analogous *function*: they must approach real indiscernibility. My arguments here will therefore be largely in the field of metaphysics and ontology, which is how I understand the word “real” in the phrase “real deletion.” I do not think that current researchers have rightly understood time and how it bears upon the criterion or criteria of artificial intelligence. Hence, I offer “real deletion,” in the sense to be described, as the criterion. The AI argument has implications for all of metaphysics as it relates to the fundamental character of time.

The flux of things is one ultimate generalization around which we must weave our philosophical system.

A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 208

Metaphysics: A Crash Course in Process Temporality

Bergson argued that the full past is *active* in the present. The issue in the present is *access* to the past, he says. The past is all there, but our access to it is variable, mediated, and limited, for a host of reasons (Bergson, 1988, pp. 133–134, 139–142).¹ Metaphysical annihilation is not possible, Bergson thinks, even for a divine being (Bergson, 1983, p. 5; Bergson, 1988, pp. 148–150).² Whitehead took a softer and subtler line: yes, the past is all there, sort of, but the past is only “objectively immortal”; its “subjective immediacy” and its “relevance” to the present “perpetually perishes.” No real deletion here. Everything that was ever actual is positively “prehended” in subsequent actuality (Auxier, 2017, pp. 162–168). These are convictions about past *actuality*. The actual is usually identified with the past, but clearly there is something actual about the present, and something not quite actual, and that issue will come up in the following argument.

What about possibilities? Presumably past possibilities once had some active relation to some actual (or quasi-actual) present, but, if their “moment” passed without their being actualized, are these possibilities, these “might-have-beens,” now really deleted? In more ordinary language, are might-have-beens truly gone? And in what sense? I will argue that insofar as anything intelligible to us can be “really deleted,” it must belong to a “constellation” of possibilities (my term) that never “ingresses” (Whitehead’s

¹ The epitome of these limitations is summarized in Bergson’s view that to gain access to the past we must insert or “replace” ourselves into it, taking on all the limitations of “pure memory,” which *does* nothing and is of no interest to my body. See Bergson (1988), p. 154. For his argument (and it is a *good* argument) about how the past can exist without anyone being conscious of it or able to use it, see Bergson (1988). He links our “access” problem to the essentially active character of the body, which he uses to define the present. It is an embodied interpretation of finitude and far more empirical than Heidegger’s *Dasein* and its finitude.

² Bergson makes these arguments in numerous other places. See also Bergson (1988) for the argument supporting this assertion.

term), due to its “incompatibility” (Whitehead’s term) with a “collection” (my term) of possibilities that does ingress. Thus, the “eliminated” possibilities (Whitehead’s term) “egress” (again, my term). Not ingressing (i.e., egressing) cannot be real deletion until actuality has drained such a constellation of might-have-beens of all potency. When a constellation of possibilities egresses, *some* of those possibilities still “might be,” but not as part of the egressing constellation. This is to say, some of the egressing possibilities retain a proportion of “integrity,” insofar as they are included in constellations that have not egressed (still “might be”).

But some possibilities pass permanently into the no-longer-possible, and here we may say that they “dis-integrate,” or lose their integrity (Auxier, 2021, p. 257).³ Whether and how that happens is the question of the form or constitution of the durational epoch of “the present.” Leslie Murray says, “Such stability [as we experience in that epoch] is also constantly individuating itself and, thus, we do not suffer the feeling of the annihilation of possibility.” (Murray, 2021) There is a forgetting that doesn’t “hurt,” even when it damages our prospects and weighs down our history. Is this loss of possibilities, this elimination, “real deletion”? Are those possibilities altogether gone?

Real deletion seems to demand the full elimination of what *never was* and later, never could have been (incompatibility with the actual), when it is constellated (in a sense to be explained) *in* the present *by* some intelligence. It would be impossible to delete what was never even intelligible, since deletion involves the removal of something that was in some sense “there” or “there-ish,” i.e., intelligible from some standpoint. Now we are in a position to venture a hypothesis about real deletion: **Real deletion, by hypothesis here, is a combining of some actual present with a genuinely possible but non-actual past for the purpose of projecting a future that has never happened before.** The projection adds no warrant to the likelihood that the constellation of possibilities projected will ever be actual; that would require more energy than projecting the constellation. It requires movement to increase such warrant, and projection requires no movement.

The importance of this assertion is that, if confirmed, real deletion is a condition for the introduction of novelty into the present and

³ This suggested terminology arose in conversation with Leslie M. Murray, to whom I am grateful for the suggestion. The logic of this ingress and egress has been operationalized in my essay, Auxier (2021), chapter 19.

future. It accounts for why the future *is unlike* the past, which is much more difficult to understand than why the future *is like* the past. This projection and its concomitant real deletion can be done well, or it can be done poorly (it is not a value-neutral act), but every human intelligence does this. That other intelligence projects/deletes is not to be seriously doubted. Any intelligence that has a future that differs from its past would project/delete. It is a process that spans the full range of temporal reality, but novelty (and hence projection/real deletion) is negligible in much of the physical universe. Where there is biological life, real deletion becomes increasingly evident as the future is increasingly variable relative to the past. Real deletion is, therefore, enacted in the present, in proportion as actuality is related to possibility (past and future) in any given moment. Computers cannot yet carry out any significant real deletion, only that which occurs as a brute result of repetitive concomitant physical processes. There are many reasons. Some of these reasons point to limitations that are not likely to change any time soon.

Further, there is a kind of necessity associated with the proposed criterion of real deletion. There *must* come a moment when at least one constellation of un-enacted possibilities (the number of constellations may be infinite, and probably is) loses all potency. The act (sometimes quite dramatically) whereby a constellation loses its last measure of potency is all we can reasonably mean by “real deletion”: the genuine end of a process (it can be called “achieved satisfaction,” in Whiteheadian language). It may be called “the collapse of the time function.”⁴ Real deletion is something human beings do, with greater “de-cision” (sharper cuts, Whitehead’s term) than other beings we know about. The rupture in continuity, while not absolute, is out of proportion with the de-cisions of other entities. Animals surely de-cise as well, but that is not the current issue. The question, as it applies to the issue of artificial intelligence, is whether it can be done artificially, at the high-bar level of emulation of what humans do (of approaching analogical indiscernibility in principle, not just in observation). The answer is, “not yet, not even close, and perhaps not ever.” Continuity dominates digital processing almost as it dominates the tendency of inorganic collections of electromagnetic energy in terms of the proportion of repetition

⁴ I will explore the physical reality of “the collapse of the time function” in a forthcoming paper, already written, bearing that name.

to creativity. Human acts, qua human, are, like all acts, unrepeatable and each is unique. But human acts are less continuous with their predecessors to such an extent as to seem almost miraculously creative. Computer acts are nowhere close to this bar, except as the cosmos as a whole provides the uniqueness in them. In a word, we *act* in a very robust sense. Computers? Not so much, at least by the criterion of real deletion.

To “delete” in general, then, is to devalue in a radical way some constellations of possibilities in their relation to other constellations of possibilities. A “favored” constellation, which I call a “collection” of possibilities (Auxier & Herstein, 2017, pp. 131 ff.), is separated from those constellations possessing only *some* potency, and is exemplified in the actual. The other constellations fail to become “collections.” On analysis, the eliminated constellations had not enough intensity to surpass what might be called (by analogy) “ontological entropy,” understood here as a threshold of actuality, not merely the second law of thermodynamics. We may assume that possibilities, qua possible, are always evenly distributed throughout existence, but qua potentiality, there is significant ontological disequilibrium. The radical devaluing of constellations of possibilities, taken alone, is not enough for deletion. Indeed, the full elimination of constellations in favor of a collection is also not real deletion (that elimination is called “egress,” as I will explain, not deletion). The combining of a present actuality (in all of its “relativity”—Whitehead’s category) *with* a might-have-been is also not yet real deletion, but all of these reductions are conditions of real deletion. **Real deletion is the act of projecting that combination of reductions into the future as a configuration in sympathy with the genuine lure of feeling** (the active future, in Whitehead’s sense).⁵ That is an act computers cannot undertake in any measure sufficient to ground an emulation of human

⁵ In a forthcoming paper, I spend significant effort defining “projection” in naturalistic terms, deriving from the development of this idea by Susanne Langer (Auxier, 2022, June 21–24). A different part of this paper was presented at the International Conference on Robot Ethics and Standards in Seoul (Auxier, 2022, July 19–21). A piece of advanced work showing the physical basis of this idea in the behavior of light is in preparation with Mohammad Sayeh, in which we demonstrate that optical systems exhibit “proteresis,” in a way that cannot be explained without allowing that time, as dynamic form, precedes energetic changes in such a way as to provide form for what has not yet happened. Essentially, even light “projects” in the sense argued here. Proteresis is difficult to model mathematically, but both living systems and digital systems exhibit this foreshadowing of future action. The fact that optical systems show the same

intelligence. Yet, **this act of projecting is the only deletion consistent with the continuity of the actual and the possible.** Yes, it is a “cut,” a “de-cision,” but the continuity that comes to be is more basic. We expect to find real deletion in inverse proportion to the range of possibility that can be projected into the future, while the future itself largely (not wholly) answers to the range of projection (Taleb, 2010).⁶

The digital world is binary, not just in symbol, but in its dynamic form. The world, however, is *not* binary. The digital world lacks a principle of active exclusion, which is to say that 0 is not really 0. In the digital world, “0” is a set of instructions to disregard all noise (all other actualities and possibilities) that falls beyond primary boundaries of concern (whether it be the train of causes, the circuit, or just the path of reasoning). Exclusion of actualities and possibilities is a matter of regionalizing concern, not of eliminating anything real. Whatever is set aside is maximally informative as contrasted with what is included—it is “everything else.” We cannot do this kind of deletion in a digital medium except as intelligence permits the original substitution of some digital situation for some analogue situation. The criterion of “setting aside” approximates a justification for disregarding (Auxier, 2021, p. 166).⁷ What is disregarded is irrelevant to that intelligence and its purposes, but not in any sense “gone.” This process of digitization has nothing to do with real deletion. All elimination is virtual.

The act of exclusion which defines initial conditions of any “analogue” situation is the *work* of active intelligence (Auxier, 2013).⁸ That act of exclusion depends on real deletion, and this sort of act, the exclusion of actuality from the might-have-been, must be grasped if any truly general criterion

temporal structure suggests that futurity reaches all the way down into the simplest forms of physical reality.

⁶ The occurrences described as “black swans,” i.e., highly improbable events in both society and in nature, cannot be accurately anticipated from the study of real deletion. But the study of real deletion is helpful in understanding why human beings are so overly wedded to model-making that fails to predict the most important changes. See Taleb (2010).

⁷ I have a full discussion of “setting aside” in Auxier (2021), chapter 10.

⁸ I am taking this notion of “active intelligence” from the arguments among Josiah Royce, George Holmes Howison, and William Ernest Hocking that I have examined in Auxier (2021), chapter 3. I take a position there favoring Hocking’s account.

for artificial intelligence is to be set out. This argument therefore crosses the digital/analogue divide and shows one very important feature of their continuity. My case also sets aside pointless controversy among theories that have not accounted for the acts that are required for the reality of the initial conditions from which the analogue world *comes to be*, what Whitehead calls “the becoming of continuity” (Auxier & Herstein, 2017, pp. 42, 138, 152). The digital world, is many, many steps removed from this conversation and hopelessly abstract by comparison.⁹

Work

One may wonder what the problem of “real deletion” has to do with “work,” in the technical sense of that term, as related to energy (“energy” is “the capacity to do work” in the general definition in physics). What is the energetic cost of real deletion and what are the implications? In short, what “work” does it do? At the basis of the idea of work is the capacity to employ energy to bring about a transformation or transition of some sort. I will set aside “transition,” which is the generic form of transformation, since transition includes repetition. Our concern for the present belongs to the domain of living beings, beings who “act,” in the intense meaning of the word, are agents, and hence, the more complex kind of transition called “transformation” is all we are interested in theorizing at present. Such transformations as we seek to describe may not be teleological in character, but all of them somehow contribute to a change in the fundamental order of whatever is working and is worked on.

To tear down a building, for example, is “work” just as surely as constructing a building. Smashing particles in super-conducting super-colliders is also work. In physics we cannot define energy without recourse to the idea of work. But the sort of work that undoes or unmakes *earlier* work is often overlooked when we think about work. Yet, we know that it *is* work to erase, delete, demolish, disassemble. My investigation goes beyond ordinary undoing; it is about generalizing from what we know of “elimination,” and the effects of “elimination” on the even more

⁹ This idea, and its common misinterpretations, are discussed in Auxier and Herstein (2017), pp. 42 ff., 138 ff., 152 ff.).

general idea of “real deletion.” The term “elimination” is chosen in keeping with the usage of Alfred North Whitehead in *Process and Reality*.¹⁰ I have offered a few preliminary descriptions of the term “real deletion” above, but the term is to be made more determinate (not quite “defined”) in what follows. This inquiry belongs to metaphysics, or if that term bothers you, you might call it ontology or just speculative/descriptive cosmology. In any case, it is intended to be applicable to any and all processes of becoming insofar as they have a physical basis. But real deletion, insofar as we can get at it, will have a basis in our experience that should be generalizable to the larger cosmos. After all, we are part of that order, and whatever happens with and to us happens within the cosmos.

Taking the human case as an example poses an old problem: Whether these results about work, transformation, and real deletion would apply to, for example, the becoming of an idea *qua* idea, i.e., not insofar as the idea is rooted in the physical processes and order of the universe, but to the extent that one idea might spring from another in a purely mental or even noumenal way. I do not know. I don’t know how to get at questions of that kind in any honest and non-arbitrary way. The answer has to be, “maybe.” Those who hold Platonistic views of mathematics (and that includes every theorist who ever asserted that the binary world of 1s and 0s was identical to the actual cosmos) may insist that, for example, no physical basis is required for the procession of purely mathematical ideas. This kind of claim strikes me as needless, since the existence of *ideas* (such as “1” and “0”) implies the reality of a ground of the ideas, including possessors of the ideas, and if the possessors are in no way physical, then I don’t how the ideas can have direct applicability to our cosmos. One might as well argue about whether the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father alone or both the Father and the Son. It is semantics unless one grants the premise of a reality wholly independent of physical processes, and I don’t see any evidence for granting that. For us, as humans, 1 and 0 must, at the very least, somehow

¹⁰ Whitehead uses the term “elimination” most consistently in speaking of the “negative prehension” of eternal objects (that is, possibilities). He holds that what is actual (whether physical or mental) can never be wholly eliminated from some minimal relevance to everything else that is actual. This “objective immortality” of the actual is a requirement of his Principle of Relativity. I have no argument with his view, but I think it allows for considerable nuance that he never really explores. See Auxier and Herstein (2017), chapter. 6.

become physical to apply to our cosmos, and at that point they will fall under my type of inquiry. Otherwise such ideas make no difference to us and have no efficacy.

As far as I can tell, this sort of Platonism about numbers is the “received view” among theoretical mathematicians and has infected physicists since the time of Newton, and more recently also the life sciences, such as theoretical biology (Auxier, 2016, pp. 381–400). It is a kind of theology. That dogma is unhelpful at best, and at worst harmful to science. But if one believes ideas have an independent reality, so be it. I will treat only the reality they possess as part of the cosmos which, as far as we know, does not include disembodied ideas.

Bad Habits

Yet, this unempirical habit of first formally modeling in physics, and then claiming that the physical universe must conform to the formal (mathematical) model, dominated twentieth century scientific thought, from Einstein’s monstrous claims about gravity, and his absurd elimination of genuine time, temporal passage, from cosmology, to Francis Crick’s reductionist interpretations of the relation between certain nucleic acids and the possibility of life. In expanding their efforts at mathematical modeling into claims about the order of existence and experience as such, such scientific writers leave the domain of science and become, as Kant phrased it, purveyors of a physico-theology (Kant, 1987, pp. 437–441).¹¹ We have enough bad theology without the help of amateur theologians like Crick and Einstein (not to mention their less educated progeny, such as Richard Dawkins and Stephen Hawking).

I will not pursue the purveyors of physico-theology here. If such ideas were offered *as philosophy*, their crippling weaknesses would be obvious to everyone, but under the guise of the authority of science (and in spite of its increasing mystification and reduction to ideology in our recent history), the patent absurdity of, for example, 4D spacetime, passes as an actual scientific truth, or at least hypothesis. Balderdash. If my experience of time is an illusion, somehow caused by the gravitational warping of some divine

¹¹ See Kant (1987), section 85, and Kant (1987), section XII.

entity called spacetime, I confess that I am content to have an illusory philosophy of time. And my view will be philosophically defensible, which is more than can be said of the standard model of gravitational cosmology or the ultra-Darwinist assertions about evolution.¹²

But the dogmatic physicists surely have this much right: Energy is well defined as the capacity to do work. And they believe energy can neither be created nor destroyed, only change forms. If this “law” holds universally (and I don’t see how we could ever know that it does—sounds like theology to me), then we might conclude that “real deletion” is impossible. The conservation of energy would be the conservation of existence itself. Yet, it is not the same, and therein lies the problem. Existence includes energy but is not reducible to it. Why does it not occur to people that energetic variation

¹² Many philosophers and some scientists have worked against this push to turn science into theology, and I would mention Henri Poincaré, Ernst Cassirer, Marjorie Greene, Michael Polanyi, Isabelle Stengers, Ilya Prigogine, Ludwig Bertalanffy, Jakob von Uexküll, Richard Feynman, and numerous others who did all they could to pull the world of science back from *scientism*. A well-documented study of this struggle was published by Canales (2015), which shows Einstein’s quite conscious and deliberate efforts to eliminate philosophical thinking from its traditional role in criticizing physics, and to have physics (really it was not physics but mathematical modeling) replace the traditional roles of both philosophy and theology in the minds of the public, and even among scientists themselves. Einstein was a fifth-rate philosopher at best (a very unscientific admiration for Spinoza dominating what little he knew), and no theologian at all. The metaphysicalization of his physical theories (in truth, just mathematical models) has been the greatest setback to scientific thinking since Ptolemy theologized the heavens. It took over a thousand years for the world to re-situate the Ptolemaic system properly, relative to human experience. Let us hope we can move past Einstein’s scientism, and his physico-theology, in fewer centuries. There have been many studies of Einstein pointing out these failings, beginning with excellent ones by Cassirer and Whitehead, but people persist in eulogizing his theology as physics. See Cassirer (1923) and Whitehead (1922). There is even a book-length study of his mathematical errors, but no one can breach the aura of scientific sainthood and celebrity. See Ohanian (2008). Even at the Advanced Institute, Nima Arkani-Hamed has finally broken the bubble: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTx98PUW6lE&t=4438s>. This is one of numerous public lectures in which he takes apart the basic problems that were always present in Einstein’s assumptions about the physical world. This is from Einstein’s own Institute at Princeton, mind you. He has not published a scientific paper on these criticisms at present. Also finally making some progress against Einstein’s theology is Chiara Marletto—see her talk at The Institute of Art and Ideas (2018). She works in David Deutsch’s program at Oxford, and Deutsch has been trying to get scientists away from their theology for decades. See also Peter Woit (2007).

is a sign of change but there may be more to change than energistic variation? (I call it “kinetic variation” in other places, but the point is to distinguish movement, transformation, from mere motion.) And further, even if change (observable and non-observable) is the sign of time (and its nature), it does not follow that there is no more to time than change. The reduction of change to energistic variation, and of time to change are two of the most persistent, most avoidable, and most unforgivable errors of reasoning in the history of Western philosophy. Why can we not simply understand that when we have a solid indicator of the nature of something real, we do not necessarily possess the whole nature of that something? In this case, the problem is that there is almost surely *more* to change than energistic variation, and there is almost surely *more* to time than change. It isn’t that difficult to understand. The idea of work is a reliable sign of energy, but probably not the whole of it. Energy, organized and directed, is a sign of transformation, but perhaps not the whole of it. Transformation is the most interesting aspect of change, but not the whole of change. Change is a sign of time, not the whole of time. Time is the intelligible aspect of flux, not the whole of flux. Possibility, whatever it is, includes the flux, but the flux may not be exhaustive of possibility. These basic relations are not difficult, but do require further description and argumentation.

Beyond Energy

Assuming there might be more to change than energy (and its observable and non-observable variations) tells us, the question is: What does energy *exclude*? That is a great puzzle, but perhaps not so great that we cannot connect some pieces. Real deletion is one such.

If energy is not identical with existence, perhaps change is? But is there something even beyond change that also exists? There is, I think. Possibility as such has no associated energy, especially when drained of its potency, so that we no longer confuse what Whitehead calls “General Potentiality” with eternal objects (possibility). Such possibility is excluded, therefore, by energy, by hypothesis at least. Perhaps possibility changes? Bergson says it does. Whitehead hypothesizes otherwise. This much, however, we can safely assert: Whatever energy we *use* to erase, delete, demolish, is an energy brought to bear *on* an energy, and all of the energy is (we tend to believe)

still hanging around when we are finished demolishing, etc., presumably at lower entropy. It sounds like nothing is *really deleted*, just simplified (or something like that). Yet, I think we may even grant the universal *applicability* of the conservation of energy, and *real* deletion may yet occur. Conservation of energy is a characteristic of energy, perhaps, but gives no warrant for universal assertions about existence.

Now the stakes in the question of real deletion become clear, I hope. It is about what time might “do” that leaves no trace in change, and about how non-observable change may interact with time. We suppose that we can observe any changes that involve energy, although our powers of observation do seem to reach a limit with quantum transfers of energy. Still, let us suppose that since we can be indirectly aware of a change in these cases, it is quasi-observable. But there is almost surely still change that is non-observable, as is made evident in our attempts to model 11-dimensional strings and such. The question of real deletion goes beyond these limitations. **If there is more to change than we observe, and there is more to time than change, then we may suppose that time is at least twice removed, as an existence, from energy (kinetic variation, mere motion).** The assumptions behind the First Law of thermodynamics ignore the fact that such conservation implies the permanence, wholeness, and self-sufficiency of the cosmos *as energy*; and this assumption requires the truth of the premise that “energy is all that is, all that genuinely exists.” That premise, if true, is not knowable. And I don’t think it is true. At a minimum, possibility exists—and is not energy.¹³

¹³ In a number of public debates with physicists and philosophers of physics, I have had difficulty getting them to understand that anything can exist that is not at least potency. For a summary of one such debate, see my essay (Auxier, 2016, esp. p. 392, note 18). The recent book by the plasma physicist Timothy Eastman is an example of far-thinking philosophy of physics, but not far enough to overcome the crippling limits of this energetic narrowness. A series of debates is available here, *Tim Eastman Unties the Gordian Knot*, July 10 (Session 2) and November 13 (Session 6), 2021, organized by the Cobb Institute, Claremont, CA, <https://cobb.institute/>. This is a series devoted to philosophy and contemporary physics based on Eastman (2020). See 2: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dTfKCFKVzD4>; and 6: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VA7zAavIBMA>.

Possibility

What does it mean to say possibility *exists* and *is not* energy? I speak not of potentiality, which is always defined in relation to the actual. Possibility must be considered apart from its capacity for work (see Auxier & Herstein, 2017).¹⁴ How would one ever *know* about something apart from its capacity to do work? That requires an argument.

The Quest for the Possible

I take it as given that everything actual is also possible. Whether anything exists that is possible and *is not* also actual has been a source of philosophical debate for millennia. Determinists of all varieties defend the negative, but so do some indeterminists, as we shall see. I will address that problem without theology (physico or otherwise), and from the assumption that our *experience* of temporal change is not wholly illusory. I do not intend to have an extended argument with determinists or those who deny the reality of time, such as Einstein. All determinists must have recourse to a theological claim: to know the whole of order as such. I take that to be unempirical and irrational, and I do not think I have to argue that no person knows the whole of the cosmos. I forego further argument. I do this for two reasons: first, if our experience of temporal passage is illusory, the illusion is perfect and thus undiscoverable *as* an illusion; second, if a means of discovering that time *is* illusory were to appear, it might as easily be part of the illusion as in contrast to it. I therefore regard it as self-defeating and silly to deny the reality of temporal experience. So I don't really see this "non-illusion assertion" as a hypothesis. I take it to be a starting point for any sensible thinking about our experience.

It does not follow, however, that our experience is exhaustive of what exists. If something else, beyond our experience, is real and unaffected by time, change, and energetic variation, it might "exist" without being

¹⁴ There is a long discussion of the interrelations of possibility, potentiality, and actuality in Auxier and Herstein (2017), chapters 7–9.

experienced by us (see Auxier, 2013, Auxier, 2014, pp. 89–131).¹⁵ Indeed, given the growing list of things that we take to be real but *not* part of our direct experience, we can safely say that there is always going to be more to nature, or to the cosmos, than our *experience* of it. The history of scientific discovery indicates the high likelihood that we do not currently experience everything that is real. What we may discover in the future that is *currently* beyond our experience is likely to amaze us just as much as the things we have learned about indirectly in the modern era and which we never suspected for most of our time as a species—from pulsars to ultraviolet light, to radio waves, to distant galaxies, to quantum entanglement, we simply have to admit that whatever we think is now part of the universe is sure to be less than there *is* in the universe. To think any other way is unempirical and such a position stubbornly (and unscientifically) refuses to apply the basic lessons of history. Scientific knowing is an unfolding process. Thus, there are surely existences we do not yet experience at all, or even suspect, but which we may learn about through indirect means. Existence includes experience, but experience does not exhaust existence. Time exists beyond our experience (definitely past time did/does, probably future time also), as does change, and there is no logical basis for assuming that time and change are identical.

Considered apart from actualities, the reality of possibilities—their root structures as existences, their meaning, their contribution to order, their accessibility, whether they do any “work,” and many other aspects of possibility—may be available to our understanding through the right kind of inquiry, even though it is their *existence* I am tracking currently. The experience of possibility, if there is any such thing (and I will try to convince you there is such an experience), must be the clue we follow. What has been lacking in the past, I contend, was a sufficiently developed way of thinking

¹⁵ Whether it is a required principle of metaphysics that everything real must be thought of as the experience of *some* experiencer is ably defended in the affirmative by Josiah Royce, and this is one of the least understood aspects of his philosophy. He never argued the “Absolute” was actual, only that it is a necessary hypothesis for doing metaphysics (and to that extent should be treated as “real”). His argument is a good one, but whether one may do good metaphysics without this hypothesis (which he doubted) is an open question. I have done extensive work on this argument and its consequences in Auxier (2013), especially chapters. 2, 5, and 6. The logic of the argument has been closely set out in my essay (2014, pp. 89–131).

about possibility to bring to us a clear part of what we *might* know about this topic.¹⁶

A clarified set of conceptual tools offers some hope for progress in answering our questions, and especially the question of whether possibility does any work. Further, if we should succeed in getting a better handle on possibility, we would have something much clearer with which to *contrast* our actuality and our experience of possibility. I am bold enough to assert that (along with Gary Herstein), I have developed some of those conceptual tools, and I will place a portion of that work before you for your criticism and consideration.¹⁷

Actuality

Let us begin with a new principle, a starting point for thinking: All that *has been* actual, whether particular, general, singular, or universal, always *will have been* actual. A quick conceptual reduction shows the formal point: even if someone seeks to delete or undo what actually *has been*, the act by which it is undone or deleted replaces (and takes on the metaphysical work of) whatever was deleted or undone. By “metaphysical work,” I mean that the replacement work *conserves*, in its form or purpose, the reality of whatever was undone. You can’t *undo* what isn’t real at all. I take that as clear. The actual is always real, even if there is more to the real than what is actual. The real can be “undone,” perhaps, but not removed from its place in the past and the duration of its coming to be that ends with its replacement, its undoing.

In short, if the past is real, whatever has been actual at any moment in the past (define “moment” however you like, but I use it as an abbreviation

¹⁶ Gary L. Herstein and I have provided a long discussion of the habits of logicians, philosophers of science, and metaphysicians to treat possibility as accessible only by the mediation of some concept of necessity. We take this assumption to be both misguided and profoundly unempirical. See our discussion in Auxier and Herstein (2017), chapters 3–10.

¹⁷ There are numerous other parts of this work, which we planned to bring together in a volume to be called *The Continuum of Possibility*, and much of this work has been presented at various other conferences. Whether that volume as planned ever gets finished is an open question, but something akin to it will surely be developed by one or both of us.

for “durational epoch”) always *will have been actual*. Even if the *undoing* (erasure, deletion, demolition) is unintentional, unconscious, accidental, or fulfills other roles and purposes in the fabric of becoming, part of the meaning of undoing, and therefore of its existence, is that it replaced whatever is now gone. This situation need not be known by any knower or discoverable to any experiencer in order to be the case, to “obtain,” as they say (a loose word, but it seems serviceable here). The actuality and replacement, as a complex, could be a part of what exists in the universe beyond our current experience (Buchler, 1989).¹⁸ Lost aspects of the past, no matter *how* lost, are still part of actuality, then, if this principle is followed. It does not matter whether these parts can be recovered. It worth remembering this: If we had to know or experience everything in order for it to be actual, not much would be actual. Nor does the actual deletion and replacement have to be *intelligible* to us in order to *act* as substitute for what was. Something less intelligible, or wholly unintelligible can, in principle, replace something we understand. And vice-versa. So the move from lower to higher forms of intelligibility is, I suspect, the exception that lends hope to our understanding of cosmic order, but the rule itself is probably entropic. We understand the complex (of an aspect of the past and its replacement) by reducing it to the simpler forms, and only rarely do we grasp the complex *in its complexity* in order to see the togetherness of the real. Yet, I think the latter does happen. It is like “insight” and often leads us to describe the experience in mystical terms. But we can do better.

Entropic change (complex to simple) is, at one level more intelligible because the new order is just simpler than the previous order, which is why we like to analyze everything. But at another level, entropic change undermines what we think of as the meaning and/or purpose of our work, our expenditures of energy *upon* energy. Where energy is complex, as in electromagnetic fluctuations (motion from disequilibrium to equilibrium, or various non-linear processes—see Prigogine and Stengers, 1984), we may take the whole (e.g., the field) and build with it, not necessarily understanding *why* our efforts succeed or fail. An easier example is that we may choose a dense wood to build a house rather than a porous wood, under the assumption that density implies strength. That assumption isn’t always

¹⁸ The “ordinal metaphysics” of Justus Buchler, built upon a Peircean framework, gets at this idea nicely.

true, of course, but as a generalization we might adopt it. To know what is strong and durable, and what isn't, one must experiment and generalize. Working with something *as a whole* is guesswork, but it's a start, especially when the full character of the parts is as yet unknown.

Intelligibility, for us, implies a type of complexity adapted to the level of complexity *we* bring to the experiential task. It is simply false to assume that all complexity relates to increasingly mental or even biological forms of order. And simple things can be harder to know (interpret, make sense of) than complex things, sometimes. We humans generally seek to bring about forms of order that are more intelligible *to us* than what came before. Sometimes that involves simplifying, sometimes complexifying. You will really know how (and to a limited extent why) an internal combustion engine "works" when you build one and it runs. Such is the cosmic character of "learning," and insofar as the cosmos (beyond us) "learns," lower entropy is "replaced" (in the sense described above) by less stable but more meaningful localizations of energy. The ideas of "depth" of "value satisfaction" and "intensity," in Whitehead's terminology, well describe the "achievements" (work) of these pockets and eddies of energy (Jones, 1999).¹⁹

Here we have, therefore, a generalization of the principle of the conservation of energy. It has been raised in generality to mean that, apart from the energy involved, it is the reality of change, and perhaps also time (in this case the past, without which the present could not be the exact present that it is, and the future cannot be the precise future it will be) that secures the conservation of *actuality*. These are the demands of Whitehead's Principle of Relativity, and also of Royce's Fourth Conception of Being (see Whitehead, 1922).²⁰ Yet, I use the term "conservation" and not "preservation," because it is not clear, at this point, whether the present somehow reconfigures the past. Extreme presentists deny the past is even real. How they come by such knowledge isn't clear. More balanced presentists (e.g., George Herbert Mead) hold to the full reconfiguration of the past in the present without denying the reality of the past. This problem touches upon the mysterious relation of change to time. I assume "preservation" of actuality implies a strong sense of retaining past structures and forms in the present *as*

¹⁹ This is an enormous topic which I cannot enter into here. See Jones (1999).

²⁰ See Whitehead (1922), and also the summary of the *Fourth Conception of Being* in Auxier (2013), chapters 5–6.

they were in the past. Conservation implies only the sustaining of whatever the “work” achieved, and such change may or may not be observable to us or intelligible to us, and we do not know how complex it may be.

This brings us to a point about the meaning of “the present moment.” Mead and others, such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty, have asserted that the present *does* significantly reconfigure the past, and hence, if they are right, actuality, its structure and meaning, is a moving target, not a static block (see Browning and Myers, 1998, pp. 349–370; Merleau-Ponty, 1962, pp. 410–433).²¹ I think Whitehead and Bergson can accommodate this insight, but I think that they have more comprehensive ideas about time than Mead and Merleau-Ponty.²² In its strongest form, we find the present moment generalized in Bergson’s assertion that the full past is both present and active, and is hence *preserved*. In his view, as I said at the beginning, we do not have *access* to all of the past, but everything actual (in the past) is present and active, and the full past is manifest as the exact structure, configuration, and meaning of the present. The present exhausts the real at every moment, but the present can be overrun by the past, which can configure the future before it becomes present. Thus, the past pushes against the present and the present in its material character resists. I think this view, which we might call “preservation of the actual,” asserts more than our experience warrants. But we could allow it *may* be true, for all we know. It still does not imply that *possibilities* are created by the vital energy available in the present, from the past, pressing against the material character (the tendency to repetition) of the present. I think Bergson oversteps in asserting that possibilities are created by the present moment. It isn’t knowable, even if it happens to be true. Obviously, if Bergson is right, there is no real deletion in the cosmos—a point he makes and defends in the final chapter of *Creative Evolution*.

This principle of the *conservation* of the actual (as distinct from preservation) also does seem to imply that “real deletion” is not a part of the cosmos. Now it will be clear that by “real deletion” I mean something

²¹ See Mead (1998) and Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1962).

²² A recent dissertation shows some very surprising influences flowing from Whitehead to Merleau-Ponty. See Kirkpatrick (2020). Kirkpatrick’s work shows that Merleau-Ponty was studying Whitehead’s work at the end and that it very much informed the final unfinished works that were later published, and deepening Merleau-Ponty’s understanding of time and nature.

stronger than the *elimination* of conserved actuality. Allowing that conservation of the actual is, as far as we know, an exceptionless fact of the cosmos, there may still be “real deletion,” I assert. It just isn’t what we expected. The conservation of the actual does not account for our experience of past possibilities that *never were* actual. We may call these possibilities “might-have-beens.” Are these non-actual possibilities nothing at all? Must we say that if they were never actual, they were also never really possible? That is an extreme position, and contrary to experience and common sense. We *do* experience might-have-beens. Some genuine possibilities just never actually happen. Yet, if might-have-beens can be drained of any potency they *once had*, these possibilities have been “really deleted.” They are “nothing” in the sense Bergson argued against. I say that this draining does occur, and we can experience it. If so, it follows that might-have-beens (which had potency at some point but lost it, whether by being drained of it by our actions, or in some unobserved way having nothing to do with us), may have a relation to possibilities that *never* had any potency at all.²³ And here, perhaps, we find a way of thinking about and describing the difference between “time” (whatever it is or is not) and unobserved change.

Might-have-Beens

Indeed, Bergson says the might-have-beens are “fictions,” and thus, not really *past* possibilities (Bergson, 1988, pp. 161–172).²⁴ They are things we can think about, intellectually, by creating virtual spaces in which what never existed as an actual present is combined in imagination and presented *as if* it had all been simultaneously actual. His ontology supposes that real possibilities are *created* by the freedom immanent in the present, and that those possibilities which do not become part of the next durational epoch

²³ At this point I am pressing hard against Robert Neville’s interesting ideas about “creation *ex-nihilo*.” His arguments must be seriously considered, since they have a direct bearing on the thesis of this essay. I have summarized and provided a critique of this view in an essay (Auxier, 2015).

²⁴ Bergson speaks of these issues in a number of places. The most relevant discussion to the point I am making is in Bergson (1988), especially pp. 168–169 (another place he makes the point about the full presence of the past). In the more common edition of this book (from Dover), these are pp. 210–225.

are understood only intellectually, solely on the basis of their contrast with what is and was (Auxier, 1999, pp. 267, 301–338, 339–345; Auxier, 2017, pp. 39–66; Auxier, 2014, pp. 64–81).²⁵ He emphatically rejects what I am calling real deletion, which he thinks of as “nothingness.” Bergson argues nothingness has no standing in the creative becoming of the universe, and that our thinking about it is simply a mistaking of one expected form of order for another (Bergson, 1983, pp. 231–236). But I think the past possibilities we imagine are not mere fictions and not nothing, but are constructive (even if they have to be *narrated* fictionally) alternatives to what is and what was; I allow that they may have no sense or meaning of their own (it is hard to know), apart from that relation to the actual, as a contrast, but it is not a mistake to think about them in a non-negative way.

The position of Bergson is impossible to refute, empirically, but there is a gap in it. It does not follow from this insight and argument that possibilities *are* in fact created. That can only be a hypothesis, although Bergson treats it as a fact. At most we can affirm the conditional that *if* possibilities are created, *then* we must see them and know them only by the grace of the actual. Bergson errs in asserting this proposition as being true of the cosmos. The same premises could hold if the possibilities are *not* created—i.e., if they are, as Whitehead supposes, uncreated “eternal objects.” Few ideas in process philosophy have come in for more abuse than this idea of “eternal objects.” People insist upon thinking about this idea as Platonic forms, and indeed Whitehead invited them to think that way in a few remarks. But since these commentators feel confident that they know what Platonic forms are, they usually don’t pay close attention to what Whitehead says *about* eternal objects. He says they are possibilities, and he has a quite unusual view of possibilities that is very far from anything Plato said (Auxier & Herstein, 2017, pp. 141–192).²⁶

But whether we follow Bergson or Whitehead, and whether possibilities are created or uncreated, *we* (humans) would still have to know possibilities from the standpoint of the actual. So, what decides between one hypothesis and the other? Are possibilities created? I take it as obvious that we do not *know* all genuine possibilities, and we will never *know* all

²⁵ I have done three fuller studies of Bergson’s ontology: Auxier (1999, 2014a, 2014c).

²⁶ Please see the long discussion of possibility in Whitehead in Auxier and Herstein (2017).

genuine possibilities so long as there is a difference between experience and existence. There is no reasonable way, short of a Peircean idea of truth (in the infinitely distant future), to close the gap between what we do know and what we *might* know (about what *was* possible but non-actual). Perhaps an ideally situated community of inquiry in the infinitely distant future would not only know everything that was actual, but also everything that was genuinely possible and never became actual. It is mind-boggling to consider that idea, but it matters very little to us as we are in the present, empirically, and limited by the *way* the present is “presented.”

And apart from knowledge, proper, the same sorts of limitations upon experience apply to what we find *intelligible* (e.g., imaginable, conceivable, etc.), such as Bergson’s “fictions.” The possibilities that we understand must include the actualities we understand, but such inclusion does not even imply logical consistency, let alone compatible physical co-existence. In fact, part of what *makes* possibilities available to thinking is their incompatibility with what is actual, often implying, with a simple reduction, a contradiction of what is actual. If x is actual, then everything possible but non-actual is *not* x , taken together, regardless of how it is formulated. Yet, x includes *not* x , somehow, as its boundary or limit. This kind of inclusion is modeled as extensive connection in Whitehead’s axiomatic version in Part IV of *Process and Reality*, but a logical version of these modes of inclusion was developed by Susanne Langer in her *Symbolic Logic* (Langer, 1967, pp. 136–156).²⁷ The theory of inclusion *as* extensive connection needs further development, but is advanced enough to see that the mistaken direction in 20th century logic, with regard to interpreting necessity, and our views of possibility have been greatly impoverished thereby.

It is a mistake to read this kind of inclusion (the way in which the possible includes the actual, while access to the possible by finite minds is conditioned by the actual) as necessity, which is how modal logicians have handled the problem of possibility since the time of C. I. Lewis. Nothing in experience forces upon us the reduction of all that is *not* the case to some necessary relation with what *is* the case. There is no warrant for metaphysicizing the so-called “law” of contradiction, and there is no important result

²⁷ See Susanne Langer (1967), chapters 5–6. I have combined Whitehead’s mathematical model of extensive connection with Langer’s logical expression in my own work, Auxier (2021), chapters 20–24.

from a successful *reductio ad absurdum* except to indicate that some prior error in our thinking has occurred (Whitehead's view). And it is false to our experience to claim that what is not actual is therefore *impossible*, even if we were to allow that actuality is, as with Aristotle, defined as that which cannot be otherwise than it is. It can still be the case that actuality includes as its limit that which it is *not*, without our inferring that the possibilities that are thus included are *impossible*. Indeed, that view, popular though it is, implies that what is possible is impossible. Possibilities are more complex than a simplistic reduction to necessity can show.

Actuality

Let us back away from the puzzle for a moment and recall some things about actuality that may help. There may be actualities we find unintelligible at any given moment in time, which means that there are certainly possibilities we find also unintelligible from the limits of any given moment (everything actual is also possible). That means that asserting a perfectly clear limit (to either actuality or the possibilities that include it) in some cases will be arbitrary. We can enter the popular assertion that whatever is actual is knowable in principle (Plato and Aristotle asserted it), but it does not follow that we can always reason with logical security from what we know *now*. Using multiple logics (modes of reasoning) probably helps with this insecurity. Yet, we *start* with what we do know (experience plus its many descriptions), and with what we do find intelligible (including fictional narration, error, and supposition), about both the actual and the possible. When we suppose that we *know* the boundary between actual and possible *is clear*, we go beyond what our principle of "the knowability of the actual" warrants. Clarity and distinctness are arbitrary, and indeed, even theological criteria. The reason is that the "knowability of the actual" is a modal hypothesis, not a fact of any actual cosmos we really know. One cannot treat such a possibility as having the force of actual fact without begging the question. Do we *know* that all actuality is knowable? We do not. In fact, it is far safer to recognize that much that is actual is unknown to us, and much might even be unintelligible to us, as we currently are. What does this limit imply for thinking responsibly about the way that the actual includes

the possible as a limit case? (We must bear in mind that there may be much more to possibility than its role as the limit of actuality.)

Let us recall that the order of generalization moves from particular to general, and so the more particular actualities are the basis of our access to more general actualities. We can subsume or deduce only after we have generalized, although we have allowed, earlier, that we might work with whole complexes unanalyzed, not knowing what they include or how. Thus, generalization from particular to general is the firmest basis for our understanding of what is possible but non-actual. One infers (by generalizing) that the possibilities are always more numerous and complex than the actualities, indeed infinitely so (and let us not forget the *actualities* we don't know, and *their* limit cases, *and* whatever may exist that plays no role in limiting some actuality).

We are now close to understanding "real deletion." We cannot say what it *is*, but I think we can say what it *would have to be*, if it exists at all. We render it determinate thereby, but without presuming to know what we do not know.

We have acknowledged that there are almost certainly actualities we will never understand, *except modally*, i.e., in as an ideally situated community of inquiry the infinitely distant future (for example). If that is right, then possibility both includes and is included by everything we now know, and everything we ever will know. For the sake of having a philosophical account, the question of whether possibilities are created must be judged on its knowability, in my view. Bergson failed to do that, even if his assertions should turn out to be correct. Whitehead succeeded in judging more in keeping with our limitations. Given that we do not, and indeed cannot know, with finality, whether possibilities are created or uncreated, what should we assume?

We get very different cosmologies and ontologies from these two assumptions. In Bergson's account, wherein possibilities are created and might-have-beens are not part of the past but mere creatures of the intellect, fictions, and wholly encompassed by (included in) the present, "real deletion" is not a needed idea or consideration. Everything that ever *was* still *is*, and there is nothing anyone can do about that on Bergson's view. Whether we know the actualities is a contingent matter, and whatever we cannot gain access to about the past is *only* a question of access, not of the existence of something we can never know in principle. Nothing is ever

really deleted, then, just contingently inaccessible. Might-have-beens are present fictions, not past possibilities. This may be true, but it *ontologizes* past possibility *as* present fiction, and even if that is true, it depends on denying the claim that “might-have-beens” qua past, are real. In short, Bergson substituted real might-have-beens, that may exist, for present fictions that definitely can be made, but whether they have any constructive relation to the past apart from our making them in the present, Bergson presumes that they do not (Bergson, 1988, pp. 137–138). Yet, how would we ever know might-have-beens are *not* real (i.e., do not exist apart from our making them—or not making them)? Such knowledge is quite beyond our ken, and so I think that such an ontology lacks philosophical warrant. Bergson is guessing, which has its place, as Peirce rightly insists. But guessing is only one form of musement, and Whitehead is better at the latter, more radically empirical.

On Whitehead’s assumption, that possibilities are uncreated, we might still have reason to speak of real deletion, because “might-have-beens” could *exist* (perhaps not even wholly beyond our experience), and I have to add: these might-have-beens *would* exist in exactly the same way (with whatever complexity and relationality they have) regardless of whether they ever became actual. This assumption opens up for our thinking a vast world of *plausible* narratives about what might have happened but did not, and these narratives actually do some work in helping us understand what is and was actual, along with what might be in the future (Auxier & Herstein, 2017, pp. 252–255).²⁸ The reason is that a plausible narrative about what might-have-been carries with it differing limit cases which can be contrasted with the limit case of what was actual (the collection of possibilities that ingressed and contrasted with the constellations that egressed). **There is an intelligible structure to such contrast. Our contrast becomes a comparison when we futuralize it.** We use this kind of thinking all the time in reflecting on what was actual. It is real work; indeed, it just is *the future of work*, as such, given *any* actual present.

But more importantly, we take this contrast structure that comes from the contrasting of what was with what might-have-been, and, when we do the work of projecting it into the future to understand what *may be* (what has potential, experientially speaking, *now*) and its comparison with what *might*

²⁸ We have made this case with examples and detail in Auxier and Herstein (2017).

be (what does not seem to have potential in the present, but which could come to have it under some projected circumstances). This work must be a comparison; it cannot be a contrast because the future is not definite, even if various determinate orders that apply in the comparison are intelligible to it (Auxier, 2021, pp. 154 ff).²⁹ We do not in fact *know* the future. There is nothing to know. But we *experience* it anyway, in other cognitive and pre-cognitive ways. They have many, many names: prediction, expectation, anticipation, hope, forecast, conjecture, prophecy, pretension, visions, and the list goes on. Our most meaningful dreams for the future depend upon our capacity to *create this contrast* by thinking *about* the past and then borrowing the structure from that work and projecting it into the future *as comparison*. And finally, we come to our goal: **The relation between what is narrated as a plausible might-have-been and its projection into the future is accomplished by our *real deletion* of the limit between what *was* and what *might-have-been* as we *project* the structure into the future. We do more than eliminate (i.e., negativelyprehend) the limit, we delete it, really. In short, real deletion is a condition for imagining the future as not fully determined by the past.**

To assume the non-created status of possibilities (as Whitehead does, and I am advocating) has two immediate consequences: (1) possibilities are genuinely independent of actuality, which, if time is real, is a creative process, i.e., whatever is actual *becomes* actual, which is a transformation from being non-actual but possible—time includes change but is not limited to change; and (2) even God, or the Absolute, or any divinity or superhuman power, has to work within the limits of what is possible. One might as well equate God and possibility, except that it is unclear how anything would *become* actual—why there is something rather than nothing—if one makes this equation. I do not claim to have made any progress on that question here (see Auxier & Herstein, 2017, pp. 220–296).³⁰ In short, however, the divine cannot delete what *was* without knowing that what *was* has been deleted, and hence, the “replacement” of what *was* with some new order or arrangement still retains the trace of what was before it was replaced. The act of replacing was *also* possible, and so, even if we should

²⁹ The technicalities of comparison and contrast are worked out in my work, Auxier (2021), pp. 154–156, 171–174, and following.

³⁰ There is a very long discussion of this problem in Auxier and Herstein (2017).

really delete a past *actuality* (a divine act if ever there was one), somehow, the new work, the replacement, was possible all along, and only carried out on the ground and condition that the really deleted actuality provided exactly the right context for just that work (and no other work). The work itself is the evidence of the reality of what was deleted.

Deleting a Possibility?

But how could a *possibility* be deleted? Whitehead's theory of the elimination of eternal objects is not a theory of real deletion. Bringing an existence like a possibility (or more accurately, a constellation of possibilities, since they never exist alone, as individuals, and indeed, possibilities *are* relations) to real deletion is a different piece of work. The total elimination of a possibility structure, or a constellation of possibilities, would mean that somehow that constellation was never *really* possible. If we allow that, we undermine our own thinking. We say that what is possible is not possible. So there seems to be a certain stubbornness or obduracy of the possible, qua existence. It won't "go away." But such obduracy does not imply that we cannot achieve real deletion of the might-have-been in projecting the future. It means, rather, that we cannot expect such a deletion without forcing it on a constellation of possibilities that form a plausible might-have-been. With each act we pronounce: "begone thou obdurate constellation, be no more," and the constellation obeys. Sort of. It recedes or "egresses" so that we can project its constellational *structure* upon the future. This work is done imaginatively in transforming might-have-beens into new groups of futural may-be's and might-be's.

Sartre's analysis of the "nothingness" of the positional act in the mode of "neutralizing" ourselves over the not-here-ness, elsewhere-ness, and non-existence of what we imagine is, in my view, basically correct,³¹ but the real deletion occurs when we futurize the structural characters of possibilities and wish away, as it were, those constellations of possibilities that must egress in order to leave *as* a may-be what otherwise merely might be (and always was a "might-be"—existed *as* a possibility, uncreated). If we could not do this work imaginatively, it would be impossible for us to form

³¹ See Sartre (1948), Part 1, The Certain, Section 4, for more details.

ends of action imaginatively in the present. We would not be able to envision the ends of our work. **So, in short, real deletion is the work that makes our work a potency, as we imagine it. This insight comes only at the cost of preferring the hypothesis of the uncreated and independent character of possibilities.**

The Uncreated Possible

We must admit that nothing functional, apart from clearer thinking, finally can bring us to decide between these two hypotheses (created vs. uncreated possibilities). The hypothesis I defend holds the promise of better cosmology and/or ontology than the other assumption/assertion (Bergson's). Here I think we can find a reason to treat possibilities as uncreated by hypothesis. Whitehead's hypothesis, that possibilities are uncreated (i.e., eternal objects are eternal), also has the virtue of leaving open the question of whether and how we may create those possibilities as comparisons, unique to our perspectives and as lures to achieve a novel standpoint. My position on these uncreated possibilities, built from Whitehead's view, also undermines the standard models of gravitational cosmology and of reductionist life science. So be it.

An ontology that begins with the idea that possibilities are created will not be able to accommodate the ideas that treat possibilities as indifferent to actuality (they are the same whether actual or non-actual), and there are some very good reasons to see possibility as being indifferent to actuality. Common sense, for one. It doesn't appear to anyone I know that describing something as possible means it must become actual, and if it doesn't it was still possible, either way. If I throw a curve ball, I genuinely might have thrown a fastball, or indeed, I might have refused to throw anything at all. None of this changes when I throw the curve ball. (That is not to say that possibility can be interpreted in total isolation from actuality.)

Meanwhile, a cosmology/ontology that *begins* with the assumption that possibilities are uncreated can easily accommodate an inquiry into the consequences of imagining that the possibilities *are* created. I have done so in this essay. And such an inquiry could be quite exciting. What do *we* add to the universe when we *really delete* a might-have-been, in contrast to the *was*, and then project it *as* a future? In short, the "uncreated hypothesis" is broader than the "created hypothesis" and is more open. Since both could

be wrong (e.g., “possibility” might just be a word with no real meaning or idea behind it, a pathology of language or consciousness, etc.), we cannot decide with finality between the competing hypotheses on the weight of form alone, although considerations of form heavily recommend Whitehead’s approach. And since both Whitehead and Bergson are radical empiricists, we can’t really charge one of them with not *caring* about how experience brings with it the relations theorized, or about appealing to trans-empirical support for their concepts (which both try to refrain from doing). If either does this (and I think Bergson does on a couple of points), it would surely be a weakness, but then the task would be to fix the problem within their basic assumptions (and that can surely be done). If these two thinkers have not adequately worked out all the implications of their own assumptions, charity requires us to assume that the problem could be worked out by someone.

So we are left not only with a formal problem, but also with an empirical one: what evidence does *experience* provide that might be brought to bear on the question of whether possibilities are created? There is some, although it requires both phenomenological and practical considerations.³² Unless we are strong determinists, we take for granted that at least some of our acts could be (and could have been) otherwise. No one is a strong determinist in practice or phenomenologically, so we do have a head start on providing an account of the immediate experience of the possible.

³² For this reason, it is valuable to develop a “process phenomenology.” See Tengelyi (2004), who goes a good way toward developing such a view in his “diacritical method” for phenomenology, drawing from and building upon Merleau-Ponty. He says: “a diacritical difference becomes manifest only with a temporal shift, with a phase delay, and therefore it cannot be, at least in the initial state, exhibited intuitively (as early phenomenology would require), even if it can very well be subsequently exposed” (p. xxix). Several young thinkers are at work on this project of process phenomenology. Anderson (2019) explores this problem from the standpoint of experienced value. It involves a good deal of description which borders on phenomenology, but is closer to process philosophy. Two dissertations by Andrew Kirkpatrick at Deakin University (2020) and Jordan Kokot at Boston University (2022) have tackled this problem of a real process phenomenology with considerable success. The task is difficult because phenomenology has historically been wedded to a narrative about subjectivity that is far too Cartesian for process philosophers, but both Kirkpatrick and Kokot have seen that Merleau-Ponty’s later work opens a door to a new account of subjectivity that is closer to objective temporality.

We seek, then, an *immediate* experience of possibility because clearly we do have a mediated experience of such. Every time I use the word “possibility” in a meaningful way, the mediated version of the experience or possibility is available by courtesy of the word. Thus, I may imagine possibilities (including those I take to be might-have-beens), or I may reflect on possibilities (either in regret, or hope, or excitement, and so forth), and can think about possibilities (even the necessitarian modal logics facilitate this activity), and so on. Therefore, even if strong determinists are correct in asserting that everything genuinely possibly is also actual (e.g., Spinoza, Einstein), we cannot deny that the *word* “possibility” and its field of meaning is still available to us in a mediated way.

But if we can make a convincing empirical case that we do have an unmediated experience of the real existence of possibilities, then that will be the strongest evidence we can have of the concrete existence of possibilities, as included in actual experience. At that point it becomes important to *theorize* their relation to actuality in a way that is applicable, adequate, and logically rigorous—including deciding between the Bergsonian idea that possibilities are created by actual situations (call this “narrow possibilism”) or, as with Whitehead, are indifferent to and independent of actuality (call this “broad possibilism”). In addition, for the former view, I think “real deletion” is an unsolvable problem and calls forth an arbitrary assertion about time, from Bergson. The latter view can offer a satisfactory account of real deletion, so that we may see what insight we have had when we consider that something that once existed really ceased to exist, if only in an act of projection.

Immediate Experience of the Possible

I think that the immediate experience of the possible is a more or less continuous complement and constituent of our on-going, present experience. I believe it can be pointed out in a thousand easy examples. When we anticipate what someone else will say in a conversation, for example, and can be either right or wrong about it, we have experienced possibility. But the nub of the issue is whether we have an *immediate* experience of the *might-have-been*. The reason is that the Whiteheadian hypothesis (broad possibilism) would accommodate the idea of an immediate experience of what no longer has any real potential, where the Bergsonian hypothesis (narrow

possibilism) would, as we have said, see that process as an experience of a fiction. Let me offer, therefore, a pair of examples that I think strongly support the idea that we do have an immediate experience of what might-have-been but can-never-be-actual-now.

You are about to cross a busy street in London. You are from another country. You look to the left, the road is clear, and you begin to step down from the curb. Then, for no reason you can grasp, you hesitate and step back, and just at that second a taxi speeds by, coming from your right, which you did not see or actively anticipate. You would have been hit had you not stepped back. You just cannot keep it present to mind that cars come from the right in London (which is why the government has painted on the street “Look Right” at every crossing of this kind—they have lost a lot of tourists). Now, let us consider your near miss phenomenologically. You realize instantly and immediately that you have had a narrow and lucky escape from harm, and in the few seconds as the car disappears down the road, a certain settling into the difference between the possible and the actual occurs. It is a conjunction, not yet, at this point, a disjunction. The conjunction can (and should) be formalized as a “but.” I might-have-been-killed-*but-I-wasn’t*, *and* here I am. I think this is a maximally unreflective thought—I don’t believe any thought that has been completed is absolutely devoid of reflection (as Bergson does, and must), but that is another argument.

So, you perhaps dwell for a moment in your finitude and you re-experience being-toward-death, and so on. Note also that your body responds afterwards *as if* the possibility now past was still possible—your heart rate increases, you take in a sudden breath, your nerves may tingle, your muscles poise, and pretty much every aspect of your temporal existing prepares for something that cannot *now* happen. I think you have had this sort of experience. But what I want to call attention to is the simplicity of this otherwise complex thought: You can, for a brief moment, experience both possibilities (being hit and not being hit) in conjunction, connected by a “but” even though one conjunct has no potentiality at all. In short, it is a might-have-been, undeniably, and is still being experienced, immediately, as a possibility. It remains in this mode until our bodies settle down.

I suggest that in fact you experience the might-have-been, immediately, *every* time you act. It is just easier to credit the experience in some moments as opposed to others. If you are playing music on an instrument and hit a wrong note, or an unexpected one that even sounds ok, your hands

may attempt to “correct” (slide into the expected place), or you may pass on without attempting that, but either way, you experience the note you did not play alongside the one you did play. Again, it is a “but,” and still it is there. Less dramatic than your close call with the taxi in London, but no less real. The same holds for saying what you did not mean to say. In every moment, in every act, you experience both what you did and what you did not do. The “did not” egresses leaving what you did first as a comparison and then as a contrast. It happens even when you perform the act you anticipated.

Clusters of Possibilities

I want to conclude by saying something about the structure of these possibilities that egress and become might-have-beens. I have delayed explaining the meaning of a “constellation” of possibilities until now because only at this point (in our rather long story) are we in the right position to understand constellations. It is more than a metaphoric use of the word, but we may begin by describing an analogy. It is obvious to anyone who thinks for a moment that most constellations in the night sky appear to us as *Gestalt* patterns because of the topological viewpoint we have from earth. Orion would not appear as a constellation from the viewpoint of a planet circling one of the stars in Orion’s “belt.” Those stars are at wildly different distances from the earth and appear in a “line” as a result of our perspective. Who knows what constellations may include *our* sun, from the point of view of some distant planet?

Constellations of possibilities are like this. They appear associated by intelligible patterns from some point of view—and the association can be so strong as to convince us that the association is more than a function of our perspective. Future possibilities may appear constellated on the basis of the form of order we have extracted from the past, drained of its potency, and projected into the future. This is the fruit of real deletion. That structure, emptied of its contrast of was and might-have-been, reveals a possible future to us. It is a way of saying, with greater detail and reasons, what Hume meant in saying that we humans have a habit of thinking the future will be like the past. Obviously, it may be, and maybe not. But this issue of understanding possibility, apart from recognizing the role of “real deletion” in projecting it, is grasping that some possibilities are constellated, merely, while other

possibilities are *clustered*. As with star clusters, the stars in a cluster actually are close together, from any perspective in the universe. Their proximity is not generated by perspective alone, but something much deeper: proximate existence. There are possibility clusters. They exist. The challenge is recognizing which constellations of possibilities are clusters, and how tight a given cluster is.

Clustering possibilities are lures for what I called above and elsewhere “the collapse of the time function.”³³ All clusters are constellations, but not all constellations are clusters, and here we have our task, normatively speaking: To determine which constellations we see from the present are really clusters. It informs us in a larger way of *what* we are choosing when we choose given possibilities. If we choose to respond *violently* to a given situation, for example, we get the whole violence-cluster of possibilities, not just the violent act. One must deal with all that violence brings, and one has chosen the whole cluster, not just the act. And the same is true with many choices, such as abortion, casting doubt on electoral processes, and indeed, we can see that conspiracy theories try to depict mere constellations *as* clusters of possibilities. The implications of this idea are broad. To give an example, some people pursue education as constellated possibilities, while others pursue a cluster. The undergraduate knowing that medical school is the goal encounters educational clusters. The undecided major encounters only constellations until a path appears, which sometimes never happens.

Mere constellations do not have to happen together, and if you chase a constellation of possibilities, you may get some of what you want, with some wiggle room for avoiding what you don’t want. It is relatively safe, in that you are unlikely to get more than you bargained for. Clusters of possibilities, in contrast, really do exist (and thus happen together), and if you

³³ This idea is explained in some detail in the forthcoming paper I wrote with Mohammad Sayeh, cited above. In short, the idea is akin to the way that a batted ball, seen from the outfield is seen to be hit first, and the sound of being hit lags behind (sound waves are heavier and more difficult to propagate than light) but as the ball approaches the outfielder, the sound and light rejoin completely in the moment of its arrival at the glove. That is the collapse. Time is like this, including many varying aspects of the flux, moving at different rates, but in an “event,” they collapse. The mathematics of this collapse can be modeled with some accuracy. If this idea turns out to describe the actual universe, it resolves many paradoxes in physical science. Demonstrating the reality of proteresis in the behavior of light is a great step in showing the collapse of the time function as basic in physical reality.

chase one possibility in a cluster, you had best be sure you want everything in the cluster. There is reason to suppose that if you can succeed in obtaining part of a cluster, you can probably get the whole cluster, whether you want it or not, so a second task is to learn where the pressure points are in a cluster of possibilities. One might think of the choice of a life partner in saying, “I do.” That is a cluster. If I get one of these, the partner I choose now, the rest will follow. The implications are clear.

In guiding our relation to possibilities, cultivating real deletion is something like a moral imperative. One must choose the key possibility that brings the better rather than the worse. E. S. Brightman called it the “Law of Specification” and Martin Luther King Jr. used it to plan campaigns.³⁴ The bus boycott in Montgomery provided the template for this kind of planning. Integrating the bus system would lead to clustered integration. Integrating Montgomery would lead to integrating the South, and so forth. Similarly, the campaign for better treatment in Chicago failed because King’s group got the wrong pressure point. Specifying the sanitation system led to better sanitation in poor neighborhoods, but nothing else. Pressing the red-lining practices of the housing market proved to be a bridge too far (although with King’s assassination, it did bring the 1968 Fair Housing Act, but sacrificing King was not part of the plan). These are examples of managing clusters and constellations, and all of history could be re-written on the back of this idea.

There are numerous “generalized” ideas, in the sense Whitehead uses the term in the epigraph to this paper. Violence is a possibility-cluster, as I have said. Non-violence is a shining constellation, but probably not a cluster. One must choose non-violence over and over, situation by situation, and it is not clear that time ever bring a person to a point of rising above the repeated choice. Such is the nature of pursuing constellations. They leave one free, but oblige one to keep “working,” in the sense set out at the beginning. Yet, love is a cluster (one that that includes hate). It seems to be the cluster that supports non-violence. Possibilities projected by the work of real deletion help us imagine what we ought to do. Reflection on that process enables us to take control of our act of real deletion.

Whitehead set out a number of idea-clusters in *Adventures of Ideas*, including peace and beauty. He was arguing, in effect, that they were clusters (obviously he does not use this terminology, which is my own), as

³⁴ See Brightman (1933), pp. 171–182, for more details.

could be seen from their descent in Western history. Yet, the close logical analysis of the levels of generality and their points of extensive connection is a bit much for most people to understand. A formal analysis of clusters of possibilities is possible, and we can debate, to good effect, which clusters will contribute the greatest value attainment, and at what cost, in comparison with other clusters. We may develop techniques for finding and choosing clusters as we understand them better. We might discover that something we thought was merely a constellation of possibilities was in fact a cluster (e.g., I may be wrong about non-violence), and with such a discovery, more techniques for the enactment of the full cluster would gradually become clear to us. We would be able to choose our future with a greater degree of confidence that most of what will happen will be preferable to what does not happen.

The main source for our knowledge about clusters and constellations of possibilities is, of course, the past. But in order to study the logical aspects of these possibilities, we need to delete the past as a contrast of was and might-have-been, and project the structural characters of the connections into the virtual space we create for the future. Without this real deletion, we will always be lost in the actualities of the past and will not be able to discern a real proximity of values for a contingent proximity that happened to become actual in the past (perhaps repeatedly). Thus, real deletion is the work that opens for us the modes of extensive connection that enables us to get for ourselves an image of the future.

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From *Metapsychologie* to *Realpsychologie*: Archetypal Imagery in the Psychologies of C. G. Jung and J. Hillman

Keywords: image, archetype, C. G. Jung, James Hillman, archetypal psychology

Słowa kluczowe: obraz, archetyp, C. G. Jung, James Hillman, psychologia archetypowa

Abstract

Although the relation between the theories of C. G. Jung and J. Hillman has been thoroughly analyzed, this paper brings a new aspect of their lineage of thought to academic light. By means of the ideas of psychic Image and archetype, it reconstructs their evolution of thought—here presented in the context of Freudian *Metapsychologie* (with its primary meaning a psychological science replacing metaphysics) and Dilthey's project of *Realpsychologie* (a descriptive psychology of dealing with the real activity of the soul). This study focuses on the years 1912–1979, during which period the independent Jungian school was established, and Archetypal Psychology by J. Hillman was formulated. The text is designed to provide both critical and historical account for depth psychology and psychology of Image.

Psychological truth by no means excludes metaphysical truth, though psychology, as a science, has to hold aloof from all metaphysical assertions. [...] Though we do not possess a physics of the soul, and are not even able to observe it and judge it [...] “outside” ourselves, and can therefore know nothing objective about it since all knowledge of the psyche is itself psychic, in spite of all this the soul is the only experient of life and existence.

C. G. Jung (1976, p. 231/CW5§344)

Introduction: Image in the Depths

This article refers to concepts which very rarely appear in the context of academic psychology. In fact, writing on the soul, images and polytheism seem to be reserved for (sub)disciplines of critical philosophy and religious studies—even if their object of study narrows down only to the field of depth psychology. As each school incorporated into the category of depth psychology takes a different angle on the elusiveness of psychic images, our goal is to get back to the philosophical and practical affinities of this notion as seen by Analytical Psychology and a specific branch of it known as Archetypal Psychology. It is unsurprising that picturing the idea of the soul as consisting of countless inner images is a very complex task for academics—especially for psychologists. The idea of Image reconstructed here ought to follow the Jung-Hillman lineage, linking the Swiss master with his rebellious American student.

In concrete terms, the main goal of this paper is to examine the evolution of the idea of Image from the psychologies of Carl Gustav Jung (1875–1961), Swiss psychiatrist and founder of Analytical Psychology, to James Hillman (1926–2011), American psychologist and post-Jungian thinker and founder of Archetypal Psychology. The shift in meaning and function of the Image is depicted amid the historical zeitgeist and theoretical deconstruction rooted into the individual story of each thinker. The crucial idea presented here is an outline of the changes made by the Archetypal school to classic Jungian thought. While Jung used to work with inner images, treating them as universal expressions of the psyche, Hillman focused his work on their relativity, taking psychology back to antiquity and corresponding our inner worlds of images with a dream-like chaotic Pantheon of gods understood as literalized personifications of archetypal ideas.

While Jung's work is widely known to Polish academics, Hillman's legacy still remains largely overlooked, only appearing on the Polish publishing market with a nearly 40-year delay. From the standpoint of Polish academic psychology, from which the authors are speaking, few scholars have taken on the complex task of bringing Hillman's ideas to university light. Just to name some prominent examples, Archetypal Psychology was referred to by Kudelski (1997), Dudek (2010) and Stawiszyński (2006, 2007, 2012). Here, our view introduces Hillman's legacy as an example of so-called Real-Psychology, previously outlined in the works of Pankalla and Czapkowski (2017, 2020), Pankalla and Kośnik (2018, 2022) and Czapkowski (2017).

This work is an attempt to provide a critical and historical account of the idea of Image as seen by two depth psychologists. In the words of Danziger (2013), modern mainstream psychology is psychology without a soul (psyche); this is the aim of Real-Psychology, to "rediscover the forgotten and uncomfortable concepts of the soul, life, and experience, and acknowledges their realness and relatedness as well as their historical specificity" (Pankalla & Kilian, 2018). The metareflection in psychological research is, however, rarely presented with structured methodology; in fact, critical psychology is a dynamically-evolving field that defies any classification (Teo, 2021, after: Pankalla & Kośnik, 2022). Here, applied methodology starts with a contextual description of each branch of thought, moving to a personal and theoretical background, and narrowing on their relation between image and archetype. Moving to the field of therapeutical implications, Jung and Hillman are compared as two different psychologists using the same concepts in different manner. The metaperspective provided by this text and outlined in the summary focuses on the shift in the philosophical background for both theories.

Mundus Archetypalis: Jungian Insights into the Psychology of Image

C. G. Jung's vision of analytic treatment has attracted large groups of both critics and followers. Just in terms of the most radical views, Jung has been pictured as a prominent academic researcher and therapist (Jacobi, 1973; Shamdasani, 1998), a gnostic philosopher (Hoeller, 1982), a misunderstood mystic and prophetic thinker (Kingsley, 2018), a guru (Storr, 1997) or even a cult leader (Noll, 1997). What is clear is that Jung's early-twentieth-century

empirical attitude combined with his mystic approach resulted in a peculiar system not found anywhere else in the academic psychology of this period. It is questionable whether Jung ever moved from his pre-theoretical phase of thought. Picturing himself as a scholar promoting some views on the psyche rather than as a founder of a coherent intellectual system, Jung never claimed to preside over a group of “Jungians.” What is currently understood as “Jungism” can be attributed to the so-called classical school, trying to present the essence of the master’s thought.¹ The elusiveness of the psychological image presented here has its foundations both in ancient philosophy and in empirical studies over the unconscious dynamics which will be briefly outlined in this paragraph. It is crucial to say that Jung’s view is not heterogenous; his ideas evolve in the course of events, so it is common for some of his notions to change over the thousands of pages of his *Collected Works*, leaving the reader with an impression of occasional inconsistent definitions.

Jung’s Analytical Psychology (or Complex Psychology) focused on four chronologically listed areas (Dudek, 2006, p. 22): (1) the theory of complexes (developed during his Freud-influenced years 1904–1911), (2) the idea of psychological types (presented in 1921 as a first integral thought distinct from psychoanalysis), (3) the archetypal theory (mentioned even earlier, but developed as a main theme after 1932) and (4) the theory of development towards the unity of Self (starting in the 1950s) and the somewhat-linked concept of *unus mundus*, joining his opus with Nobel Prize winner and long-time patient Wolfgang Pauli. Only the third division (along with earlier appearances of the archetypal system) lies in the field of interest for this text reconstructing “Jungian Metapsychology.” Its idea, however, cannot be taken out of historic context.

Born into the poor family of a Protestant Reformed Church pastor, young Carl, from early childhood suffered from loneliness, growing up as he did in the emotionally cool environment of his parents’ marriage (McLynn, 1996; Bair, 2009). Experiencing both his father’s loss of faith and his mother’s tragic descent into depression, Jung was said to have experienced tendencies, uncommon in children, which were interpreted

¹ It is also an important question to be asked in the context of upcoming deliberations on Hillman (Saban, 2014): what is the irremovable essence of Jungian thought if not the soul and its images?

in an extreme way by Winnicott as childhood schizophrenia (McLynn, 1996), which is rather unlikely in the light of Jung's diaries (Shamdasani, 2019). To reconcile the two antagonistic personalities that developed in his teens, he decided to continue the legacy of his grandfather, and chose medicine as his life goal. As he admitted during his *Analytical Psychology* seminar in 1925 (1989, p. 8), "I wanted to catch the intruders in the mind—the intruders that make people laugh when they should not laugh, and cry when they should not cry." His early works focus around the problem of the Unconscious and its self-regulation: occult phenomena like mediumism and hypnotism (following his interest in spiritualistic sessions secretly carried out in his family) as well as cryptomnesia and complexes studied in the way of an association test that brought him international fame (Błocian, 2000). In fact, his background can be read as an attempt to pass on Swiss folk knowledge to science. Jung spent his childhood in rural areas which, according to McLynn (1996) were still rife with superstitions, paganism, or even economically-justified incest. Jung must have faced an environmental shift entering from still intellectually-privileged village presbyterial life into the academic world. From the outset, his academic work was situated on the bridge between Aryan psychology and empirical studies, and can be treated as a return to the indigenous aspects of the mind (in contrast to the universal Greek-oriented psyche by Hillman, as discussed later). Fitting into the landscape of industrially developing Switzerland, his approach faced many problems during the rise of fascism in Europe, with attempts made to appropriate it as a part of the ideology.

To go further into Jung's history also means revisiting classic Freudian Psychoanalysis, presented here as Jung's (and at the same time Hillman's) intellectual background and prototype for his Analytical Psychology project. Before Jung developed his school, he became deeply involved in the Freudian movement which left an indelible—but still hugely overrated (Shamdasani, 2012)—mark on him, as that time it remained the only trend in psychology towards studying the unconscious psychic life. The father-son bond between Freud and Jung was built on academic partnership: Freud provided an original system of analysis and psychotherapy, while Jung provided academic studies which helped to promote Freud's marginalized ideas in the academic world—even outside Europe. Much has been written on their breakup—most of it irrelevant in the current context—but at the core of their arguments lies the vision of Metapsychology, originally

understood by Freud as his project to replace metaphysics with more profound psychological studies (1975a/SE6, p. 259).

The term *Metapsychologie*, first used publicly in 1901 in its meaning above, underwent changes, as described by Pajor (2009), and was retuned in Freud's 1915 (1975b/SE14) work entitled *Das Unbewusste* (in English *The Unconscious*), just to cover the idea of topography and the dynamics of unconscious processes. This work appeared following the severance of ties with Jung. Both pioneers struggled to provide an extensive psychological answer to the problem of metaphysics to which their work needed to respond, due to extending their scope from a clinical to a more humanistic perspective. As Freud's ideas are not a part of this study, it is sufficient to outline his attitude toward the exploration of the Unconscious, also crucial for the Jungian perspective: "Our psychical topography has for the present nothing to do with anatomy; it has reference not to anatomical localities, but to regions in the mental apparatus, wherever they may be situated in the body" (Pajor, 2009, p. 175); included in Freud's so-called Papers on Metapsychology, mistranslated into English as the id-ego-superego relation (Bettelheim, 1983), this lies just beside our imaginal concern. But it was Jung who decided to take another step further than Freud, who had declined to explore metaphysics.

Their disagreement can be seen as a parallel process to the publication of Jung's two-volume text *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido* from 1912 and 1913—a digressive work in which Jung fully outlined his revision of psychoanalysis and distanced himself from Psychoanalysis (mainly though the extension of Freud's sexual libido to generalized psychic energy). It is hard to talk about Jung's *Metapsychology*, as this term needs to stay strictly Freudian, but *Wandlungen ...* at that time was intended to cover issues unspeakable in Psychoanalysis and—historically more importantly—finally provide the first extensive account of psychoanalysis in the USA, even before Freud, under the name *Psychology of the Unconscious* in 1916 (1992²) (Bair, 2009). Apparently (intended or not) it became a response to Freud's then-developed Metapsychologie or even an attempt to go back to

² *Wandlungen und Symbole der Libido* was published in two parts in German in the psychoanalytic magazine *Jahrbuch für psychoanalytische und psychopathologische Forschungen* (vols. 3 (1911–1912) and 4 (1912–1913)). The final edition of this text came out in 1967 as the *Collected Works* vol. 5, revised, enhanced, and renamed *The Symbols of Transformation*.

its original 1901 meaning. The most important change Jung made in the topography of psyche (which, for Freud, was unacceptable due to metaphysic or even occult affinity) was adding the additional layer of psychic apparatus to cover its collective aspect. Dealing with the issues of transcultural psyche, Jung provided an important insight to the psychology of Image. Taking Freud's symbolical approach, he refused to use exclusively the personal meaning of symbols and focused on their even psychoidal existence. Citing Jung (1976, p. 77/CW5§114), “[s]ymbols are not allegories and not signs: they are images of contents which for the most part transcend consciousness.” And, crucially for the background of Image psychology, “[w]e have still to discover that such contents are real, that they are agents with which it is not only possible but absolutely necessary for us to come to terms” (Jung, 1976, p. 77/CW5§114). Combining these words with Freud's previously cited comments, we can address Jung's Psychoanalysis as a method for examining this universal realm of ideas, independent from bodily functioning. This is the symbolic life that exists above conscious functioning.

Jung developed his theory towards the ego-Self dichotomy; the first being the center of the conscious part of the psyche, and the second governing the unconscious realm, linking its personal and collective aspects. Taking the metaphor of Jung (as described by Jacobi, 1973), the ego is an island emerging from the boundless ocean of the psyche. What inhabits this ocean can be called archetypes. As stated before, Jung's definitions of archetypes vary depending on the period from which they were published—noticeably, late Jung mixed their philosophical features with biological aspects. As an initial view, let's continue, in the words of Jung (1976, p. 232/CW5§344):

The archetypes are the numinous, structural elements of the psyche and possess a certain autonomy and specific energy which enables them to attract, out of the conscious mind, those contents which are best suited to themselves. The symbols act as transformers, their function being to convert libido from a 'lower' into a 'higher' form.

This passage originates from *Wandlungen* ... and shows Jung from the period before his emotional crisis caused by the 1914 breakup with Freud. According to Adams (2008, p. 107), “[b]oth Freud and Jung acknowledged the existence of archetypes, which Freud called phylogenetic ‘schemata’, or phylogenetic ‘prototypes’.” The Oedipus complex was the first discovered (or invented?) archetype, on which Freud decided to build

his system of treatment. Taking the explorations further cost Jung his friendship with Freud.

After the publication of Jung's *Liber Novus* (2009) and his personal notes in *The Black Books* (2019) we no longer need to speculate as to the contents of this monumental calligraphic volume bound in red leather, which illustrates his pioneering self-therapeutic work concentrating on images and fantasies. He linked poetic works and visionary art (such as, e.g., Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*) with facing the unconscious potential; as Shamdasani says (2009, p. 63), "[h]e held that these works stemmed from the collective unconscious. In such instances, the creative process consisted in the unconscious activation of an archetypal image. The archetypes released in us a voice that was stronger than our own." This leads us to the fundamental archetype-Image distinction. In a later work from 1946, Jung (1981, p. 213/CW8§417) distinguished archetype *per se*, being a purely hypothetical, incognizable, psychoid entity, and archetype *in se*, being an Image, or "representation" (Jung, 1981), an inner or outer expression of this form. This leads us to the conclusion that the interchangeability of the terms "archetype" and "psychic images" is partially possible. According to Adams (2008, p. 107), Jung "spoke of archetypes as if they were images. Sometimes, he distinguished more precisely between archetypes as unconscious forms devoid of any specific content and archetypal images as the conscious contents of those forms." This means that he moved their attributes to the "categories of the imagination" (Adams, 2008, p. 107).

Also important in presenting Jungian points is that although it separates archetypes from instincts, it also attributes the evolutionary function of the unconscious. As Jung states in his famous 1935 Tavistock Lectures (Jung, 1980, p. 41/CW18§84):

The brain is born with a finished structure, it will work in a modern way, but this brain has its history. It has been built up in the course of millions of years and represents a history of which it is the result. Naturally it carries with it the traces of that history, exactly like the body, and if you grope down into the basic structure of the mind you naturally find traces of the archaic mind.

This passage raises the ever-recurring issue of combining the philosophical with the medical approach which Jung faced his entire life, finally adding evolutionary significance to the idea of archetypes.

According to Adams (2008, p. 107), “[p]hilosophically, Freud and Jung were neo-Kantian structuralists who believed that hereditary categories of the psyche imaginatively inform human experience in typical or schematic ways.” Another perspective on Jung—preferred by the authors—is also possible: he was struggling to move Psychoanalysis from the Aristotelian approach popular in 19th- and 20th-century psychology (Stachowski, 1992) to Neoplatonic metaphysics, sometimes awkwardly mixing it with medical biologism and evolutionism. As he stated: “I very much agree with you that we have to grapple with the knowledge content of Gnosticism and Neo-Platonism. These are the systems that contain the material which are destined to become the foundation of the theory of the unconscious” (Jung to Lang, 1918, as cited by Shamdasani, 2019, p. 67 [v. I]). In the light of this passage, it is even likely that Jung deliberately built his system on Neoplatonic ontology. Just to name some of the philosophical studies, there are remarkable similarities between the systems of Jung and Plotinus (Barnes, 1945; a text published during Jung’s lifetime and still relevant despite his as yet unwritten and unpublished texts) and Jung and Pseudo-Dionysius (Henderson, 2014). This in turn has crucial meaning for the psychology of archetypal image postulated here. It also puts into question the purely scientific, meta-psychological approach to his work which was negated by Hillman’s usage of his terms.

Mundus Imaginalis: Into the Postmodern Visions of Image

There is probably no better introduction to Archetypal Psychology than that given by James Hillman, its founder, (or godfather, as he used to call himself). His school was founded with the “intention of moving beyond clinical inquiry within the consulting room of psychotherapy by situating itself within the culture of Western imagination” (2004a/UE1, p. 13). In his essential work *Re-Visioning Psychology*, Hillman (1975, p. xi) says:

Here I am working toward a psychology of soul that is based in a psychology of image. Here I am suggesting both a poetic basis of mind and a psychology that starts neither in the physiology of the brain, the structure of language, the organization of society, nor the analysis of behavior, but in the processes of imagination.

The passage above shows that the connection with biological affinity is cut. The term “Archetypal Psychology”, was first used by Hillman in his 1970 essay *Why Archetypal Psychology?* (2004c/UE1) to distinguish his artistic, cultural and historical approach from Jungian thought, which was built on clinical ground (Hillman, 2004a/UE1, p. 28). Apart from its therapeutic (or sometimes anti-therapeutic) inclinations, Hillman’s thought was designed to become a cultural movement incorporating, in a later phase, themes such as the pro-masculinity movement or gerontology. Concerning its extensiveness, this text refers to Hillman’s archetypal opus from the 1960s and 70s.

In terms of the essence of Hillman’s thought, it would not be an overstatement to say that he retains the psychodynamics of depth psychology (emphasizing the unconscious mechanisms governing the psyche), at the same time rejecting most of the causality it goes with (just sticking with the physical-archetypal co-occurrence). His work can be described as a bridge between Greek antiquity, the Renaissance and Romantic thought. This philosophical mixture, however, is treated with a postmodern attitude. There are three main inspirations for Archetypal Psychology (Pankalla & Kośnik, 2022): (1) the Neoplatonic tradition represented by Plotinus, Ficino and Vico (cf. Hillman, 2021/UE8), (2) the Jungian school of thought, (3) the legacy of Henri Corbin, the famous Islamologist who equated *mundus archetypalis* with *mundus imaginalis*, hence preparing the ground for transferring the principles of the Unconscious to the power of imagination. All these personae were named by Hillman as archetypal psychologists who anticipated his writings.

In a similar manner to Jung’s thought, Hillman’s ideas were children of their time. Facing financial problems, the Hillman family ran a hotel business. His mother, Madeline, a dominant and ambivalent figure, was the daughter of a prominent rabbi, Joseph Krauskopf, whom James never met as he died three years before he was born. Even Hillman himself, admitted “She wanted me to be big, like her father” (Russell, 2013, p. 25, after Tacey, 2014b, p. 489). She put pressure on him to seek fame, calling him the “golden boy” among his three siblings. James spent his teenage years during World War II, joining the US Navy and finally moving to Europe, starting studies in English Literature in Paris and Dublin. His European period was marked by his psychotherapeutic training in Zurich’s C. G. Jung Institute, where he gained a reputation as a “bad boy” and “free spirit” (Russell, 2013, p. 386);

an extreme illustration of this was probably his sexual involvement with one of his patients which ended up with his returning to America. Meeting and talking to Jung in person in 1954 exacerbated his Icarus complex (Russell, 2013, p. 386), making him irritated as he saw Jung surrounded by admirers.

The social changes in America of the 1960s and 70s were the perfect basis for Hillman's psychology. According to Tacey (2014a, p. 479), the hero myth and Jungian individuation, so important in the Jungian metaphor of individuation, faced extensive social devaluation in the times when Hillman's theory was beginning to arise: "[a]t this time we were witnessing the breakdown of European colonialism, the decline of monarchy, the rise of civil rights, black rights, women's rights, homosexual rights." In this age of relativity, Hillman's trickster attitude expressed the spirit of this time—just like his *Puer* papers marking the 1967 Summer of Love in San Francisco (Russell, 2013, p. 590).

Archetypal Psychology may be considered as one of three main (post) Jungian schools of thought, set by Samuels (1985) among the classic school (not "orthodox"; sticking to the understanding of Jungian concepts as carried out by Jung) and the British developmental school of Michael Fordham (taking a similar direction to that followed by Kleinian psychoanalysis while redefining Freud's ideas). A different classification is offered by Kudelski (1997), who placed the archetypal approach in the "'third generation' of orthodox Jungian school," which, in opposition to the "second generation" trying to systematize their master's thought, provided a new understanding of old terms. Nevertheless, the idea of treating the archetypal school as an integral, uniform discipline is arguable since there is no fixed distinction between the current archetypal psychologist and other widely-understood post-Jungians. This fact led Tacey (2014a, p. 467) to call archetypal psychology Hillman's "dream of a post-Jungian future that was never able to be realized." What is important among the terminology controversies surrounding the archetypal school is that it should actually be called "imaginal" psychology, as in fact it is based on Hillman's understanding of the imagination and not on Jung's idea of archetype (Odajnyk, 1984, after Tacey, 2014a, p. 467). In fact it places the soul (psyche) in a central place, making it a basic perspective and a starting point for any psychological thinking.

Re-Visioning Psychology was Hillman's breakthrough opus, both personal, bringing him out of depression, and professional, being a solid

follow-up in his work towards establishing the Archetypal school. In his groundbreaking work, adapted from his Yale University *Terry Lectures* materials, Hillman criticized current psychology, proposing his own, antiquity-inspired idea of Soul. So central and omnipresent in his work, the soul was presented with a more poetic attitude than scientific:

[b]y soul I mean, first of all, a perspective rather than a substance, a viewpoint toward things rather than a thing itself. This perspective is reflective; it mediates events and makes differences between ourselves and everything that happens. Between us and events, between the doer and the deed, there is a reflective moment—and soul-making means differentiating this middle ground. (Hillman, 1975, p. x)

In his 1964 debut book, *Suicide and Soul*, Hillman was already suggesting the separation of the psychiatric and psychological approaches, emphasizing the role of psychology as the science of the soul and the role of medicine as the science of the body (1978, p. 19). In this view, the soul belongs exclusively to humanistic, or even religious cognition (1978, p. 46):

The soul is a deliberately ambiguous concept resisting all definition in the same manner as do all ultimate symbols which provide the root metaphors for the systems of human thought. “Matter” and “nature” and “energy” have ultimately the same ambiguity [...].

One of the most controversial of Hillman’s revisions of Jungian psychology is the rejection of Christianity which, especially in his later phase, was a central point of Jung’s work. Continuing with the words of Tacey (2014a, p. 476, “[a]long with religion, Hillman threw out Jung’s topic of Christ as a symbol of the Self [...]. Also deleted were Jung’s interests in good and evil in the concept of God, and he threw out God too, replacing God with many gods.” This decentralized view situates humanity not on an endless journey towards unity but emphasizes that the current state is always the final state. According to Samuels (1985), the Hillmanian view interprets the rise of monotheism as a metaphor for the limitation imposed on contemporary Western culture’s imagination; in social terms, monotheism may be interpreted as totalitarianism. As he states (1975, p. 26), “Polytheistic psychology refers to the inherent dissociability of the psyche and the location of consciousness in multiple figures and centers.” Additionally, Hillman, in his personifying manner, addressed loosely-connected (or

even fragmented) parts of the soul with Images, being irreducible expressions of archetypes (Hillman, 2004c, 2004d/UE1). After Corbin, *mundus archetypalis* is, at the same time, *mundus imaginalis*. The boundaries of the soul are the boundaries of the imagination; what is unconscious is at the same time imaginal.

This leads us to Hillman's (1975, p. xiii) vision of archetype, functioning as an adjective rather than a verb:

Let us then imagine archetypes as the deepest patterns of psychic functioning, the roots of the soul governing the perspectives we have of ourselves and the world. They are the axiomatic, self-evident images to which psychic life and our theories about it ever return. They are similar to other axiomatic first principles, the models or paradigms, that we find in other fields. [...] All ways of speaking of archetypes are translations from one metaphor to another.

In other words, Hillman denies any scientific cognition of archetypes itself; in fact, even a scientific approach is one of "dominant fantasies that govern consciousness" (1975, p. xiii). Archetypes are, similarly to the Jungian view, recognizable only through Images, with the exception that the reality postulated by Hillman is neither true nor untrue, and the phenomena recorded by the individual are "fully experienced, but wholly imaginary": dreams, behaviors, emotions or symptoms (Stawiszyński, 2007, p. 11). This means that there is no archetype per se (Hillman, 2004a/UE1). As our perception is limited by the means of our body, our functioning is limited by pre-cognitive Images. The Image, as seen by Hillman, does not refer to the construct of perception or some inner truth. The source of any existing Image is the innate activity of the soul. Even the Soul consists of images, while being one of them. For Hillman (1975, p. 23), "Man is primarily an imagemaker and our psychic substance consists of images; our being is imaginal being, an existence in imagination."

The motto of imaginal psychology is "stick to the image," which means not to interpret it but treat it as it is, and make it a basic reference point. This rule is drawn from Jung (1982, p. 149/CW 16§320, after Adams, 2008) who stated that "[t]o understand the dream's meaning I must stick as close as possible to the dream images." In Hillman's view, Images are not what we see, but what we perceive.

Sailing Over the Styx: The Imaginal Work against Ego

Taking a distanced perspective, Hillman's school has met with extensive—and often justified—criticism, as summarized by Tacey (2014a, 2014b) in a rather “orthodox” Jungian manner (Paris, 2014). His main reservations can be summed up as follows: First of all, Hillman's relation to Jung remains in many ways controversial. He was accused of copying Jung, misreading his texts, ignoring too many important aspects of his legacy, and marginalizing his authorship in his writings. Secondly, his psychology was claimed to be selective, non-historic and focusing only on the “pagan” antiquity and Resistance, which resulted in his omitting the Christian aspect of human psyche, so vitally outlined by Jung and—more significantly—culturally relevant (even for non-Jungians) in the context of the analysis of western humanity's condition. Thirdly, the often emphasized relativity of his ideas can be seen as leading to the rejection of any objective point of view. It makes his work beyond criticism and—in consequence—outside the academic world. Most of all, Hillman's theory is assessed by Tacey (2014b) to be deeply submerged in his personal history and family issues, with Hillman unconsciously acting out of his mother-induced inferiority complex and the absence of his father. Just to give an example, depicting Jung as old-fashioned (Tacey, 2014a) puts Hillman in the Oedipal dilemma of father assassination—just as Freud had interpreted Jung's relation to him. An important point was also made by Adams (2008), who claimed that “[...] the archetypal school embraces what Jung tries (never, he admits, entirely with success) to avoid—that is, what he calls ‘metaphysical concretism’,” which in Hillmanian thought is distinctive in dressing archetypes in the faces of ancient gods. His “anima fascination” leading to polytheism, “personifying, aestheticism, and an anti-heroic stance” (Tacey, 2014a, p. 481), are considered to be crucial points in early Jung's ideas, which he finally overcame on his journey to psychological maturity. To quote Tacey (2014a, p. 481), “[f]or Hillman, however, these are not transitional but final positions. It thus seems that Hillman is reverting to an earlier stage in Jung's thinking and calling it new.” Nevertheless, those weakest points of Archetypal Psychology, settled in different context, may be considered also as its advantages.

Undeniably, in the light of current academic psychology, Hillman's Archetypal legacy has no value due to its ambiguity. Hillman's view has also lost its connection with Freud's Metapsychologie. But, taking another view,

it links the clinical approach with a different perspective, not considered but also valid as a method of cognition. Wilhelm Dilthey (1833–1911), a German philosopher preceding Freudian psychology, was an author of a qualitative research perspective which he referred to (1982, p. 364) as *Realpsychologie*. Being a historiosophical method, Real Psychology presents studies of human nature as based in historical evolution; it studies the contents of the human soul, the connections occurring, and activities (Pankalla & Źmidziński, 2015; Pankalla & Kilian, 2018). His project, anticipating other descriptive methods, was an attempt at creating humanities-based science which does not deny natural sciences but exposes their insufficiency for a multi-level understanding of human functioning. In 1849, Dilthey (1977, p. 41) referred to explanatory psychology as follows:

The first distinctive character of explanatory psychology is [...] its synthetic or constructive procedure. It derives all the available data of inner experience and its extensions from a limited number of well-determined elements. The emergence of this constructive tendency in psychology is historically connected to the constructive spirit of the physical and natural sciences of the 17th century.

Therefore, psychology may describe, analyze, interpret, and, consequently, lead to understanding the content of the soul. Dilthey treats human life as individual and total, encapsulated inside the individual and social history, i.e. leading the cultural context (Pankalla & Kośnik, 2022). Characteristically for Dilthey, along with Jung and Hillman, they recognized psychic events as real and irreducible. The (meta)cultural view addressing the archetypal structures as presented by Jung and Hillman have been characterized by Pankalla and Czapkowski (2017) as the self-named Real Cultural Psychology. Continuing this perspective, our deliberations can be relieved from the academically-induced shame of not maturing to medical psychology.

Just to take our imaginal perspective to the ongoing clinical field, we must first consider Hillman's attitude to the helping professions. His approach differed over the years. He started as a prominent Jungian analyst and eventually he quit consulting in the 1980s to "make contact with the world by working with groups, and doing 'public speaking, teaching, publishing and writing'" (Tacey, 2014b, p. 429). Nevertheless, Hillman's system—despite promoting an anti-therapeutic and anti-psychiatric attitude—is claimed to be

used by Jungian psychotherapists in their clinical practice (Samuels, 1984). Hillman's psychotherapeutic inclinations were even presented by Butler (2014), who provided an outline of applied psychotherapy according to the archetypal movement. If there is any strictly Hillman-inspired therapeutic work, it must be work focused on images. According to Samuels (1985, p. 199), "the business of analysis is not to cure the soul but rather to facilitate that soul-making mentioned just now—not to 'deal with' deep problems but rather to let problems become deeper." Let Hillman (1975, p. 75) speak again: "By regarding our symptoms as the accidents that brought us into therapy rather than as the *via regia* into soul, we neglect their importance in soul-making." As with Jung, the goal of analysis was establishing the ego-Self relation; Hillman's purpose was to weaken (or relativize) ego.

Imaginal therapeutic work is based on dream analysis and active imagination, which is opposed to interpretation, seen rather as a "translation into the language of the waking life" (Hillman, 1979, p. 10). "It is dayworld style of thinking [...] that must be set aside in order to pursue the dream into the home territory"; "[w]e must go over the bridge [to the dream reality] and let it fall behind us" (Hillman, 1979, p. 13). Hillman equated the Unconscious (or rather Imagination) with the dream world or—mythically speaking—the Underworld. It is a matter for the analyst to go with the patient (lat. *patiens* = the one suffering) to their inner Imaginal reality; the analyst's role is to become Charon and help the patient sail over the Styx safely. But serving the mythical role of psychopomps and leading souls towards the Underworld to regain their deeply-hidden inner healing images is not just Hillman's idea. It brings the profession of psychotherapy back to its roots of religious (lat. *religio* = go beyond) and shamanistic meaning (see Pankalla & Czapkowski, 2020) and opens up the issue of ethical values in helping professions, which is beyond the scope of this text.

In Hillman's words, "the wound and the eye are one and the same"; "we hurt because we have no insight and when we gain insight we shall no longer hurt" (1975, p. 107). Image work is closely connected with the Jungian school, even as a method which helped to form this branch during Jung's crisis after his breakup with Freud. Although it serves a different role for Jung and Hillman (integration vs disintegration), it supports the imaginal function of the psyche, opening the doors for self-development towards the archetypal or artistic aspect of the psyche.

Coda: (Re)Imagining the Discipline

The original metapsychological writings of Sigmund Freud were created to provide a structural and topographical model illustrating the dynamics of the psyche. Any philosophical deliberations were only a means of understanding the mechanism of pathology occurring in the inner encounters between the conflicted structures; it was not a thing of Freud's Psychoanalysis to debate over the ontology in a different context than seeking father-like figures. Despite promoting similar assertions, Jung moved psychoanalysis a step further—into the gnostic system, appealing to the inborn religious tendencies of the soul, which Freud (in Jung's view) tried to marginalize. Although Jung did not use the term of metapsychology in his writings (obviously reserved for his rival and ex-father figure), he filled this philosophical gap created by Freud. Hillman eventually deified the metapsychological ideas of archetypes and Images, which were meant to be a theoretical estimation of the functioning of the psyche, but became the realm of a polytheistic, non-religious and non-academic system of soul-making. This is the turning point when Real Psychology begins, treating the psychological and spiritual life as real and unquestionable, sticking to the individual meaning, not replicable, not reducible. Presented in this context, depth psychology changed its function radically, from providing the prerequisite philosophy in order to analyze the pathologies of the mind straight to becoming an "observer of innate images" and corresponding inner and outer realities as complementary.

This brings our consideration back to the idea of Image as a turning point for the presented paradigm shift. From biological to imaginal, from interpretable to irreducible, from clinical to god-like, from pathological to soul-full, from scientific to relative. This evolution also reflects the *senex-puer* dynamics that Hillman spoke of. With his *Re-Visioning...*, Hillman breathed new life into the psychology of the 1970s. He tried to derail psychology, which was heading in a soul-less direction and turn it back to its antique sources. This single fact can be seen as a sufficient argument against treating Hillman's legacy as "often brilliant but sometimes disappointing footnotes on Jung's opus" (Tacey, 2014a, p. 467) or "a dream of the past" (Tacey, 2014b, p. 499). Just as Jung says (2009, p. 143), "[t]he words that oscillate between nonsense and supreme meaning are the oldest and truest."

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Abbreviations used in the text

CW—*The collected works of C. G. Jung*

SE—*The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*

UE—*Uniform edition of the writings of James Hillman*

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Imago Dei in St. Thomas Aquinas: A Philosophical and Anthropological Analysis of Man Created in the Image of God

Keywords: image, imago Dei, human, Thomas Aquinas

Słowa kluczowe: obraz, imago Dei, człowiek, Tomasz z Akwinu

Abstract

Image as a philosophical concept has a long and complex history that begins as early as antiquity. Christian scholars included it in their philosophical studies in the form of *imago Dei*. In this paper, I analyzed the works of St. Thomas Aquinas to determine the anthropological consequences that follow from the idea of human creation in the image of God. I first establish that humans as beings created in the image of God participate through their intellect in God's nature. I then present three stages of human participation in God. Subsequently, I defend the classical theory of Aquinas against contemporary reinterpretation of his thought. I argue that Aquinas rightly claims that only the intellectual part of the human soul is, strictly speaking, created in God's Image, while the human body (and other irrational creatures) resembles God in the likeness of a trace.

Introduction

The concept of image is an important category in contemporary philosophy and anthropology. Many writers, such as Henri Bergson, Carl G. Jung, and Joseph Campbell, used this concept in their philosophical inquiries. Nonetheless, it must be noted that this concept had been present in European philosophy since its ancient beginnings—*eikon*, the Greek equivalent of the Latin *imago*, was used by Plato in *Sophist* (1921) and in *Timaeus* (1888), and it was also used by Plotinus in *Enneads* (1980). This concept was also present in the Christian philosophy and theology of the ancient and medieval eras. Christian writers inspired by the Book of Genesis included it in their philosophical and theological studies in the form of the *imago Dei*. In *Adversus haereses* St. Irenaeus of Smyrna claims that one must distinguish an image that signifies ontological participation in God (*methexis*) from likeness (*mimesis*) that concerns a moral change in a human being (1857). Tertullian claimed that only likeness to God can be destroyed by sins, whereas the image of God embedded in humans is imperishable (1894). An important contribution to the study of this concept in the early centuries of Western philosophy was made by St. Augustine of Hippo, who connected it with a comprehensive analysis of the Holy Trinity (1887).

This paper focuses on the theory of *imago Dei* proposed by a scholar of the late medieval period, St. Thomas Aquinas, one of the most important thinkers in the history of Christian philosophy. Aquinas was greatly influenced by St. Augustine's *On the Trinity*, yet he combined it with classical Aristotelian philosophy. My aim in this paper is to reconstruct Aquinas's position on this matter in order to present the moral and anthropological consequences that follow from it. Moreover, in the paper, I shall defend the classical Thomistic understanding of the *imago Dei* against some contemporary interpretations and revisions. Most notably, objections formulated by Dr Montague Brown in the article *Imago Dei in Thomas Aquinas* (2014).

In the study, I will approach the question of *imago Dei* both historically and systematically. On the one hand, it will include an analysis of Aquinas's position and a study of contemporary literature dedicated to this topic (Aguas, 2009; Boyd, 2007; Bray, 1991; Bujak, 2010; Clines, 1968; Dziewulski, 2010; Eitenmiller, 2017; Fabro & Bonasea, 1974; Jiang, 2018; Kupczak, 2015; McFarland, 2001; Van Nieuwenhove, 2001; O'Neill, 2018; Peterson, 2016; Schoot, 2020; Spencer, 2018; Waldron, 2012; Vainio, 2019). On the other

hand, it will include an analysis of contemporary reinterpretations and critiques of Aquinas. In this part of the study, I will defend the classical Thomistic approach against the objection according to which not only the human intellect is created in the image of God but the whole human being—a unity composed of soul, body, and spirit.

The study will consist of four parts. The first will include a reconstruction of Aquinas's position on Man's similarity to God. In the second part, I will describe the most important anthropological and moral consequences that follow from the Christian and Thomistic understanding of this matter. The third part will include a presentation and refutation of the objections of Dr Montague Brown. Brown states that: (i) every intellectual act of a human being is carried out by the whole person, not only by their intellect, (ii) Aquinas wrongly claims that Man participates in God as in an alien nature. Additionally, Brown attempts to show that Aquinas contradicts himself when he states that only the rational part of a human soul participates in the Image of God. The fourth part is the conclusion of the whole study.

Aquinas on the creation of Man in the image of God

Any research into the concept of the Image of God must start from its source—the Old Testament, namely the Book of Genesis. In the first chapter of the Book, it is written:

Then God said, "Let us make man **in our image**, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the cattle, and over all the wild animals and all the creatures that crawl on the ground." God created man in his image; in the divine image he created him; male and female he created them (New American Bible, Gen 1, 26–27).

These two verses play a crucial role in the Christian (and Jewish) studies on the nature of human beings and their position in the world. The concept of *imago Dei*, embedded in those verses, constitutes one of the most important clues in determining the unique character of humans among all of the creations. St. Thomas Aquinas recognizes its relevance and presents his understanding of this matter in the framework of Aristotelian philosophy, rethought and modified by him in many aspects.

Aquinas most extensively discusses this issue in the first part of *Summa Theologiae* in question 93, entitled: *The End or Term of the Production of Man, As to the Image and Likeness of God* (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93). The title itself specifies that the study of the concept of *imago Dei* is considered in the horizon of a human being as a creation of God and that it is constituted by some kind of likeness between God and Man.

St. Thomas Aquinas points out, after St. Augustine, that an image contains a certain degree of likeness to its object. Therefore, the likeness of one thing to another may constitute an image (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 1, co.). However, not every likeness between two objects is a sufficient reason to determine that one is the image of the other. Aquinas gives the example that it is impossible to state that one egg is an image of another egg because one is not an imitation of another. Even though there is a certain likeness between them, it is not the same as that between an image and its object (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 1, co.). Similarly, generic relations and accidental features of objects cannot constitute an image (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 2, co.). For example, no one will say that an apple is an image of an apple tree, even though one is a product of another; or that a blue flower is an image of a blue cup just because they have the same color. Aquinas states that the only constituting reason of an image is the likeness in *species* (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 2, co.). For example, a painting can contain an image of a certain thing, because it imitates the specific feature of this thing (for example, shape, when it comes to the material objects).

If so, how does this apply to the main question of this study—in which sense are people created in God’s image? Aquinas claims that different types of beings are similar to God in different aspects and only some of them were created in the image of God. Inanimate objects are like God, because they exist, and living creatures are similar to God because they live. However, those two types of beings were not created in the image of God because the degree to which they are similar to God is not sufficient to constitute an image. Those beings are not like God regarding the species of those beings and God. Only the *intellectual* being, i.e., Man, is created in the image of God because they are like God when it comes to their *species*. Human beings are not like God only with regard to their existence or life, but also in their wisdom. And because “what shares in wisdom both lives and exists,” human beings are “unsurpassed among created beings” (Augustine, 1975,

q. 51).¹ As such they are capable of attaining the highest goods (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 2, co. and ad 2). It is of course evident that they do not have the same nature as God and because of that, they are not *images of God*. Rather, they were created *in the image of God* and participate in God as in an alien imitate, “as the image of the king is in a silver coin” (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 1, ad 2). Only Christ shares His nature with God and can be called an image of God:

And even though our gospel is veiled, it is veiled for those who are perishing, in whose case the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, so that they may not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (New American Bible, 2 Cor. 4: 4).

The Father and the Son have the same, identical nature, which is why Christ is a perfect image of God. However, human beings are imperfect images of God, i.e., someone created in His image, for they are like God when it comes to the qualities of their intellectual nature (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 2, co.). Being created in the image of God means that humans participate, to a certain extent, in God’s attributes. Such participation constitutes similarity between them (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 2, ad 1 and a. 3, ad 3). The ways in which one object participates in another are demonstrated by Aquinas in the following paragraph:

For instance, man is said to participate in animal, since it does not have the account of animal in its full generality. Socrates participates in man for the same reason. The subject likewise participates in its accident, and so does matter in form, since the substantial or accidental form, which is common in virtue of its account, is determined to this or that subject. The effect is similarly said to participate in its cause, especially when it isn’t equal to the power of its cause—for example, when we say that air ‘participates’ in sunlight because it doesn’t receive it with the brightness there is in the sun (Aquinas, 1992, 2, n. 24).

One can distinguish the following types of participation: (i) *logical participation*, when a species participates in its genus; (ii) *real participation*, when, for example, matter participates in its form or fire participates in heat; (iii) *causal participation*, when, for example, effect participates in its cause

¹ See also (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 9, co.).

(Eitenmiller, 2017, p. 693). Man, as a being created in the image of God, does not participate in God according to the first type presented above, for it is evident that humankind (as a whole) is not a species of God. Also, it cannot be said that humans participate in God as in the case of real participation, because Man is not an *accidens* of God. Only the third type of participation can connect human beings with God. As Melissa Eitenmiller points out, Aquinas understands this participation causally, for God is a self-subsistent being (Eitenmiller, 2017, p. 693; Aquinas, I, q. 4, a. 2, co.), and all creations participate in Him in this way, for He is the source of their existence.

Moreover, it must be noted that one can distinguish two additional types of participation: (i) univocal-predicamental (ii) analogous-transcendental (Eitenmiller, 2017, p. 694). The first type of participation concerns such objects as, for example, “humanity,” in which all the humans participate on the account of their identical form. Yet, the participated thing is not a self-existent being but exists only if its bearers exist. The second type of participation is fundamentally different. It is a relation in which:

the participants have in themselves only a “down-graded likeness” of the participated thing which subsists in itself, outside of these, either as a property of a superior subsistent, or certainly, as a pure and subsistent formality in full possession of itself (Fabro & Bonasea, 1974; after Eitenmiller, 2017, p. 694).

As Aquinas says, *to participate* is to receive partially what is present universally in something else (Aquinas, 1992, 2, n. 24). Analogous-transcendental participation applies to the participants which have in themselves a down-graded attribute of the participated thing. The participated thing is a self-existent being, transcendental from the participants. Then, it can be said that all creations participate imperfectly in God, and all of their attributes, granted to them as creations, are deficient variants of God’s attributes. The extent to which they participate depends on the potencies of every being so that different beings participate in God to the extent proper to their natural potencies (Aquinas, 1895, II-II, q. 2, a. 3). It is then clear that only human beings are created in the image of God because they imitate God in the species of His nature.

Aquinas states that all material beings participate in God, but not in the same way as humans. They resemble God “by way of a trace” (Aquinas,

1895, I, q. 93, a. 6). Aquinas explains the difference between likeness as an image and likeness as a trace in the following way:

We may easily understand the reason of this if we consider the way in which a trace, and the way in which an image, represents anything. An image represents something by likeness in species, as we have said; while a trace represents something by way of an effect, which represents the cause in such a way as not to attain to the likeness of species. For imprints which are left by the movements of animals are called traces: so also ashes are a trace of fire, and desolation of the land a trace of a hostile army (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 6).

A trace is similar to God, for it represents Him as its cause, while an image indicates that God and the participant are similar when it comes to their species. All material things, as well as all irrational creations, are similar to God by the likeness of a trace and only the human intellect is similar to God by the likeness of an image.

Such recognition raises the question of whether human bodies were created in the image of God. Aquinas states clearly that it is impossible to claim that the human body resembles God in His species and that it is created *in the image of God*. However, he also recognizes the peculiar status of the human body, because as the body of a rational being, it is, in a certain sense, inclined upwards, i.e., towards heaven, and “represents the image of God in the soul by way of trace” (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 6, ad 3). That is why the human body is something more than the material body of an irrational being. Yet, on the basis of its nature, it remains the same as all other material things and irrational beings.

What’s more, the fact that, strictly speaking, only the human intellect is created in the image of God is even more evident when one notices that human participation in God enables them also to partake in the internal life of the Holy Trinity (to a certain extent).² Aquinas claims that the image of God is embedded in the intellectual part of the human soul, both as to the Divine Nature and as to the Trinity of Divine Persons (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 5, co.). Aquinas states that participation in the image of the Trinity follows the:

² This part of Aquinas’s theory is deeply rooted in the works of St. Augustine (St. Augustine, 1887, VII, 2).

procession of the Word from the Speaker, and of Love from both of these [...] so we may say that in rational creatures wherein we find a procession of the word in the intellect, and a procession of the love in the will, there exists an image of the uncreated Trinity (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 6, co.).

A human's mind partakes in the image of the Trinity by the corresponding procession of the word when he or she understands and a procession of love when he or she wants (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 7, co.). The image of the Trinity manifests itself through acts of cognition and love and exists in human powers and habits (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 7, co., ad 1 and ad 2).³ It must be pointed out that the procession of the Trinity has an *internal* character and only the human intellect can imitate it (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 27, a. 1–3). All other types of human vision—corporeal and spiritual (imaginary)—are always connected with external objects (exterior body or species preserved in memory; Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 6–7).

Moreover, the human soul, rational in its essence, is not only the form of the body (*forma corporis*) but also a separable intelligence (even if it is separable only in language and thought). It is the capacity of human beings that fundamentally differentiates them from all other creations.⁴ In the hierarchy of beings, intelligence places Man in-between brute animals and angels. As Seamus J. O'Neill rightly points out, Aquinas considers the human creation in the image of God in the context of the perfection and fullness of the world. God created the most complete and plentiful world in which there are no gaps between different types of beings. That is why Man is the sole creature (of this world) whose soul is not only their form but also a separable intelligence. That is why they are between animals, irrational beings whose souls are only the forms of their bodies, and angels, who are pure intelligences (O'Neill, 2018, pp. 23–24).

The Image of God has three stages of realizing itself in human beings. As Aquinas states:

³ The Trinity is firstly found in the acts of the soul, and secondly in the habits because acts of love are more perfect than the virtual potency to carry out such actions.

⁴ Intellect is the only unrestricted power when it comes to the possible objects of its acts. It differentiates it from the senses (both human and animal) that can perceive only the objects proper to their nature (e.g., sound for the ear, colour and shape for the eye).

Now the intellectual nature imitates God chiefly in this, that God understands and loves Himself. Wherefore we see that the image of God is in man in three ways. First, inasmuch as man possesses a natural aptitude for understanding and loving God; and this aptitude consists in the very nature of the mind, which is common to all men. Second, inasmuch as man actually and habitually knows and loves God, though imperfectly; and this image consists in the conformity of grace. Third, inasmuch as man knows and loves God perfectly; and this image consists in the likeness of glory. Wherefore on the words, “The light of Thy countenance, O Lord, is signed upon us,” (Ps. 4:7) the gloss distinguishes a threefold image of creation, of re-creation, and of likeness. The first is found in all men, the second only in the just, the third only in the blessed (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 4, co.).

Firstly, one can distinguish a natural stage in getting to know the image of God (*imago creationis*). Such a natural image realizes itself by “a natural aptitude for understanding and loving God.” It is common for everyone because it is constituted solely by the intellectual part of the human soul. Such an aptitude consists of an openness to know and love God, as well as the natural potency to do it.

The second stage of participating in *imago Dei* has a supernatural character and is founded by the grace of God that came to the world with Jesus Christ (*imago recreationis*). On the account of the fundamental role of Christ, this stage is also called *imago Christi*,⁵ for every believer is tasked and destined to follow the path paved by Christ. Aquinas states that it realizes itself when a person *actually and habitually knows and loves God*.⁶ This is different from the first stage because only the faithful are capable of realizing it properly. The main way in which Man can participate in the grace of Christ is by partaking in the divine sonship, analogously to the sonship of Christ. Without excessively delving into theological questions connected with this issue, it must be said that salvation is granted to those who partake in the sacraments of the Church—the Mystic Body of Christ—and most importantly in the baptism through which Man participates in the

⁵ *Gratia Christi*, the grace of Christ is a necessary fundament of the salvation of Man after the original sin of Adam and Eve. Before that human beings needed only the grace of God (*gratia Dei*).

⁶ The habitual acts of cognition and love are realizations of habits that Man can develop throughout his life (Aquinas, 1895, I-II, q. 49, a. 4).

Passion and Death of Christ and in the Eucharist, which is participation in Christ's Sacrifice.

The third and last stage of participating in the image of God occurs "as man knows and loves God perfectly" (*imago similitudinis*; Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 4, co.). Such participation is not available for anyone in this world and awaits only those who partake in God's Glory after death. As Aquinas states:

[The] ultimate and most complete participation of His Goodness consists in the vision of His very essence, in virtue of which we live in society with Him as His friends, since beatitude consists in that sweetness (Aquinas, 1933, III, d. 19, a. 5).⁷

This is a beatific vision, granted to those who participated in the grace of Christ during their lives and whose holiness was recognized after their passing.

Anthropological Consequences of the Imago Dei

The theory of Man's participation in God has great theological and philosophical relevance in itself. But it also provides an important insight into Man's nature, origin, and purpose in life. In this part, the most important anthropological consequences of human creation in the Image of God will be discussed.

The first important issue follows from the three stages in which human beings realize the image of God. The first stage is within reach of everyone because it is constituted by the intellectual part of the human soul (and all humans are intellectual beings). At the most basic level of human nature, there is the aptitude to know and love God. Such an aptitude is complemented by two higher stages of participation in God, but already at this first stage, a human is presented as *capax Dei*, someone capable of comprehending and loving God. This is true even if a certain person has never been introduced to the Christian faith. Of course, it is an aptitude to know and love God, not any deity. This is clear because as someone created in the image of a Perfect Being, we cannot desire anything that lacks such perfection.

⁷ See also (Eitenmiller, 2017, p. 698).

Additionally, as every human partakes in God's Being (*Esse*) they also participate in other transcendentals, such as God's Goodness, Beauty, and Truth (Aquinas, 1970, 1, q. 21, a. 5). Of course, all creations partake in these transcendentals, but human beings are capable of doing so in a fundamentally different way. Humans can recognize the Goodness, Truth, and Beauty of the Creation, and also have the chance to realize this through their acts carried out in accordance with natural law. They can also develop dispositions—both moral and intellectual—that enable them to do this constantly and with ease. But as beings created in the image of God, humans cannot settle for goods and truths available by the means of natural reason. They strive for the eternal truths that enable them to achieve the beatific vision after their deaths. This might be a trivial thing to say, but as beings created in the image of God, humans cannot please themselves in worldly matters but must look toward eternal community with God.

The dialogue between Divine Persons, described in the first part of the study, is analogously transferred into the domain of the individual. As such an individual is capable of communicating with God, other people, and their community.

Secondly, it is important to point out that a human, an intellectual being created in God's image, is understood as someone *sui iuris*, i.e., someone that can act in their name. This fact is connected with a deeper feature of every human being that they are *capax iuris*, a person capable of being a subject of rights (Aquinas, 1895, I-II, q. 93, a. 5). In this aspect, human beings distinguish themselves from animals, for the latter are never subjects of rights in a direct way. They are rather objects of Man's rights, for example, the rights of their owners. However, one might also say that wild animals "have" rights in the sense that they, as the objects of human actions, must be treated in accordance with the universal order in which Man must govern the world. Tasked with governance over all other creations, Man cannot abuse his or her power (Aquinas, 1895, II-II, q. 64, a. 1).

Finally, as someone responsible for their actions, an individual human is not fully determined by the circumstances in which he finds himself. They have the freedom to choose good or evil, and decide what actions they are going to exercise. This freedom of a human being is constituted by an inviolable dignity common to all human beings, beings created in the image of God.

Defence of the Classical Thomistic Position

The next part of the paper focuses on the contemporary approach to the question of Man's creation in the image of God. Many authors inspired by Christian personalism claim that the creation of Man in the image of God concerns not only the intellect of humans but the whole human being—body, soul, and spirit (International Theological Commission, 2004). Moreover, some Thomistic scholars also give such opinions and claim that the classical Thomistic position on this matter should be fundamentally revised (Brown, 2014). In this section, I will only focus on the objections presented by Thomistic scholars, for the task of comparing Aquinas's position with many different types of Christian personalism is entirely unfeasible within this study.

Montague Brown claims that Aquinas, who stated faith and reason cannot contradict each other, proposes a theory of *imago Dei*, in which such contradiction exists. He makes four arguments in favor of this statement. Firstly, we shall reconstruct those objections, and, secondly, present the replies. The arguments made by Montague Brown show that the intellect itself is insufficient to constitute an image of God in humans and prove that the whole human being—body, soul, and spirit—is created in the image of God.

I. Every intellectual act of a human being is carried out by the whole person, not some part of him. Then the whole person is created in the image of God (Brown, 2014, p. 5)⁸.

II. Aquinas contradicts himself, when, on the one hand, he states that natural reason can give us knowledge about the essence of God (but not about the internal life of the Trinity); on the other, however, he claims that on the basis of natural reason, we can only know that God exists, not what is the essence of God⁹. Brown states that Revelation is the only way in which a human can get to know the essence of God and of the Trinity. The intellect

⁸ A similar argument was made by Mark K. Spencer, who approached the issue of the image of God from the perspective of “phenomenological Thomism” (Spencer, 2018, pp. 14–18; also O’Neill, 2018).

⁹ Moreover, the threefold relation of Divine Persons transferred to the internal life of the human intellect can lead to inaccurate reverse interpretations of the Divine Persons (Brown, 2014, pp. 5–6).

can only tell us that God exists, and as such is insufficient to constitute an image of God in humans.

III. Aquinas wrongly claims that a human participates in God as in an alien nature; in opposition to Christ who has the same nature as God (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 93, a. 1, ad 2). Even after the Fall, the nature of human beings is unchanged; and that is why it is said that all things were created in Him (Brown, 2014, p. 6).

IV. The most basic stage of partaking in the image of God—*imago creationis*—which realizes itself as a natural aptitude to know and love God is contradicted by Aquinas himself when he considers the blameworthiness of pagans for their rejection of God (Aquinas, 1895, II-II, q. 10, a. 1). He states that they can be blamed for their rejection only if they know that the rejected thing should not be discarded. But it is possible only if they have a natural presence of Christ in them (*instinctus dei*), which exceeds the natural aptitude to know and love God (Brown, 2014, p. 7). If so, then in human nature as a whole there exists an instinct for God, and “not just in volitional and intellectual potentialities of our natures” (Brown, 2014, p. 8).

Ad I. The analysis of the image of God in Man must first consider the constituting reason of this image, not the whole creation it is embedded in. Only the intellect of a human being imperfectly imitates the Divine Nature of God and constitutes Man as the highest creation in the hierarchy of beings (aside from angels). To equalize the reasonable part of a human being with his or her bodily parts is to abandon the hierarchy of beings presented by Aquinas.

This objection also raises the question of whether it is justified to extrapolate the consequences of a certain quality of any being onto the whole being and all its parts. It seems incorrect to claim that if one part of a bigger whole has a certain attribute, then all parts of the same whole also have such attributes. We can say that a human being was created in the image of God because a human is a person with a rational soul (still the intellect is a constituting reason for Man’s participation in God). But it is incorrect to claim that all other parts of a human being were created in the image of God, just because they are also parts of the same whole. It can be only said they are the parts of a bigger whole that were created in the image of God.

Ad II. Brown rightly points out that natural reason opens Man to the image of God as the First Cause and that Man’s intellect is not capable of “discovering” the Trinity on his or her own. Yet, Aquinas claims that it is within the reach of people’s natural reason to know that God is a self-subsistent

being, a Being (*ens*) whose Existence (*esse*) is its Essence (*essentia*), so that Man can know the nature of God naturally (Aquinas, 1895, I, q. 2 i 3). Moreover, Brown does not show why the whole human being would be capable of discovering the nature of the Trinity (if it is impossible for the intellect) and why humans' actual knowledge about the Trinity is so crucial for human creation in the image of God. What instead follows from Brown's argument is that human beings are incapable of knowing God in any other way than through Revelation. But such a statement is entirely false (or at least clearly inconsistent with the philosophy and theology of Aquinas).

Ad III. Brown seems to mistake the nature of God in the Trinity with the nature of Man. When Aquinas claims that a human participates in God as in an alien nature, he means that the nature of humans and the nature of God are different. Christ is the Son of God, who is both perfectly divine and perfectly human, someone with two distinct natures that at the same time remains indivisible. Christ is an image of God because the Father and the Son are of the same nature (*homousios*). Yet, the Nature of the Incarnated God is not the same as the nature of human beings. Christ embraces human nature to bring salvation to humanity, but Man is not deified to the nature of God.

Ad IV. Aquinas states in *Summa Theologiae* (II-II, q. 10, a. 1) that in every person there is an "inner instinct" towards God. This instinct is indeed directed to God in the Trinity. But the non-believer is not consciously striving for God in Trinity, because they cannot know about the Trinity on the basis of their natural reason. Aquinas only distinguishes two meanings of unbelief and claims that only the deliberate rejection of known faith constitutes unbelief in a strict sense, while the "faultless" unbelief is a result of the sin of the ancestors (and as such is a punishment for this person). It does not suggest that the whole human being is created in the image of God.

Brown does not present any strong arguments in favor of the reinterpretation of Aquinas's theory of *imago Dei*. Moreover, Brown's revised version of this theory carries the following risks: (i) animals, i.e., beings devoid of intellect, can be falsely elevated to the level of beings created in the image of God; (ii) human beings become dangerously similar to animals, for their intellect is equalized with their body and lower faculties of the soul; (iii) the hierarchy of beings presented by Aquinas becomes obsolete (O'Neill, 2018, p. 25); (iv) the status of angels becomes problematic because the intellect is understood only as a part of a soul, not as separable intelligence.

Lastly, to state that the intellect is insufficient to constitute the image of God in Man and that it needs other parts of the human soul and the human body is to forsake the image of the Trinity; or to fall into the heresies of Arius or Sebellius (O'Neill, 2018, pp. 27–28).

Conclusion

To finish the article I would like to draw a few conclusions that stem from this analysis:

1. Man's intellect is created in the image of God, for it imitates God in the species of His Nature.
2. Human intellect imitates the internal life of the Trinity.
3. The human body and irrational animals resemble God in the likeness of a trace. Yet, the human body is different from animal bodies because it is inclined towards heaven.
4. Aquinas distinguishes three stages of realizing the *imago Dei* in human beings: (i) *imago creationis*; (ii) *imago recreationis*; (iii) *imago similitudinis*. They are reachable accordingly for: everyone, the faithful, and the blessed.
5. As a being created in the image of God, a human partakes in all transcendentals.
6. As a being created in the image of God a human is: (i) capable of knowing and loving God; (ii) responsible for their own actions as someone *sui iuris*; (iii) capable of freely choosing and deciding what goals they want to achieve and what kind of life they want to lead.
7. The final goal of a human being is eternal life in the community with God, not a good and prosperous existence on earth.
8. The internal life of the Trinity is analogously transferred into the domain of an individual who is capable of communicating with God, other people, and their community.
9. To claim that a whole human being is created in the image of God is to forsake the image of the Trinity in Man and the Thomistic hierarchy of beings.

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Imaging the Absolute: Can Philosophy Visualize Abstractions?

Keywords: Imagery, iconology, Jacob Böhme, Romanticism

Słowa kluczowe: obrazowanie, ikonokogia, Jacob Böhme, romantyzm

Abstract

This article consists of three parts: the first gives a synthetic outline of intellectual tendencies in post-Renaissance thought (Hermeticism, Alchemy, Kabbalah, which generated the iconic turn (emblematics, iconology). Its essence boils down to the integral relationship of the motto (lemma), the engraving (imago), and the poetic text (subscription). The second part is a more detailed analysis of one of the illustrations contained in the first volume of the German edition of Jacob Böhme's works from 1682 (Gutenberg Project). The epoch, aesthetic tastes prevailing at that time and the Theosophical content of the work allow us to read this illustration from the point of view of iconology. The third part is devoted to two issues: First, one of the central themes in German idealism was the discussion around the notion of the absolute—whether the absolute can be grasped in concepts (Hegel) or in internal intuition (Schelling). Romanticism was dominated by a tendency to a subjective and speculative approach to the absolute. The philosophy and art of Romanticism was modeled on, among other things, medieval German mysticism and Böhme's theosophy, seeking in these sources the best representation of what is unrepresentable, i.e., the absolute. Secondly, philosophical and artistic Romanticism developed a new type of imagery–language images. The dilemma that resulted from the

discussion in German idealism—the notion or inner vision—from the modern point of view should be solved by a compromise: word and image.

Preliminary Remarks

This consideration concerns the ability of philosophy to visualize abstract content. The concept of the absolute contained in the title is an indication that we will be talking about German philosophy, in which this concept occupied a leading place in the philosophical debates of German idealism. In this case, we are dealing with a specific, commonplace, intuitively understandable intellectual climate as well as the conceptual apparatus and style of philosophizing which is characteristic in the idealistic search for the meaning of philosophical reflection. And it is in this context that the term *absolute* appears; an extremely vague concept and marked by various influences from mysticism, Hermeticism, and Spinozianism, to natural philosophy and political theology. It is most clearly visible in the Romantic philosophy of nature and the concept of genius, as well as in Schelling's philosophy of identity and in Hegel's concept of the objectification of the absolute spirit. The perspective of the absolute, at least in Romantic thought, presented a certain tempting vision of understanding the world in terms of the harmony of what is ideal, unconditional, and binding, and what is material, temporal, and sensual. This perspective was obviously marked by metaphysical speculation.

The initial thesis is that European thought willingly used the language of symbols, images, and metaphors, especially when it was dealing with issues that were difficult to imagine and inexpressible conceptually. Over time—when the word and concept referring to the knowledge obtained from the study of nature (i.e., actually from the Enlightenment) began to dominate—the iconic image, in particular Baroque iconology with its exuberant symbolism and encrypted content, receded into the background. However, when it comes to using the image in the narrowest sense of the word, i.e., in the form of an illustration, diagram, or drawing, it lived and developed dynamically. It seems that only the insufficient technical possibilities for editing in the old epochs prevented a wider use of these forms of expression.

The fundamental question that arises from this presentation of the matter is: Does philosophical abstraction, which is a higher form of human consciousness, give exhaustive knowledge about the world and humankind, or is it just an illusion of “pure reason,” which thinks that by itself, that is, a priori, a person discovers one riddle of the world after another? There is much evidence that the great systems of German idealism operated precisely in such a cognitive perspective. By resigning from imaging, philosophy has, in a sense, limited the field of its activity. Because, after all, not being a science *par excellence*, it aspired to refer to the most important issues. Karl Jaspers was very apt about this specific position of philosophy:

Philosophy wants to grasp the eternal truth. Wasn't this truth always the same, one and complete? Perhaps—but we do not receive it unambiguously as property in a generally applicable form. Being reveals itself to us only in time, truth—in temporal manifestation. In time, however, the full truth is not available objectively. Neither the individual nor history can capture it except in a passing phenomenon. (Jaspers, 2012, p. 117)

The Renaissance Iconic Turn

Regardless of the assessment of the Renaissance and the post-Renaissance era, it is known that in many respects it was a time of dynamic and profound changes in the consciousness of modern humanity (humanism, art, reception of antiquity), which gave an impulse to the development of modern philosophy. In some respects, however, it brought much misery to Europe (religious wars, and the madness of the witch trials). One thing is mentioned relatively little, especially among philosophers, yet it is important from the point of view of the proposed topic. Along with the Renaissance, a new form of imaging in art developed, in contrast to the essence and form of imaging in the Middle Ages.

This new trend was largely due to the process of synthesizing Greco-Christian-Egyptian Hermetic knowledge with classical alchemy and Kabbalah. The translator of *Corpus Hermeticum* was a Florentine, Marcilio Ficino (1433–1499), who, by the way, was also the translator of *Corpus Platonicum* and many Neoplatonic texts. At the same time, the process of developing Christian Kabbalah was taking place. Giovanni Pico della Mirandola

(1463–1494) should be regarded as an advocate of this trend. These four elements—Hermeticism, Alchemy, Platonism, and Kabbalah—are, in a sense, the theoretical basis for the new imagery. The “practical” interpretation, on the other hand, would be the art of deciphering hieroglyphs. The accidentally-found work *Hieroglyphica*, by the Greek philosopher Horapollon (5th/6th century AD) was published in 1505, along with, interestingly, Aesop’s fables. Horapollon explained the meaning of nearly two hundred hieroglyphs, which was a great impulse for the further exploration of secret signs, along with their references, primarily to transcendence (Kuder, 2017, pp. 261–264).

Also of key importance, and perhaps above all, was emblematics. The precursor of this new art is considered to be Andrea Alciato (1492–1550) and his *Il Libro degli Emblemi* (1531) (Alciato, 2018) (See Alvan, 2007). The three-part synergy of the motto, i.e., the lemma, the engraving, i.e., the imago, and the poetic text, i.e., the subscription, gained the status of theory of the poetics of the emblem. The meaning of emblematics boiled down to finding a connection between a word and an image, not on the basis of simple meanings, but via a game of meanings, a riddle, a rebus. The emblems did not always represent the highest level of poetics and graphics, but were instead an expression of aesthetic tastes and the “mass culture” of the time (Daly, 2016).

The last issue is iconology. The content of the image will be available only when the symbols that make up the image are correctly read. Iconology is inextricably linked to Cesare Ripa (1555–1622) and his classic work, *Iconologia* (1603) (Ripa, 2012; Thaler, 2018). The philosophical keystone for the iconic turn in post-Renaissance thought was the parallel development of the theory of imagination and the theory of metaphor. As a consequence, imaging reached its apogee in Baroque aesthetics. With the help of a sign, symbol or metaphor, a deep bond between humanity and nature was expressed; moreover, attempts were made to visualize various relationships between objects and concepts. By activating poetic fantasy and painting skills, attempts were made to cross the border of rationality, to discover what is elusive (Mühleisen, 2012, pp. 246–248). The above-mentioned elements, treated in a complementary way, explain the reasons why, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century, iconographic representations of a symbolic nature spread widely in European culture—they were used by artists and philosophers to express what is difficult to express; they were also used by secret societies to pass on secret knowledge (Roob, 2014).

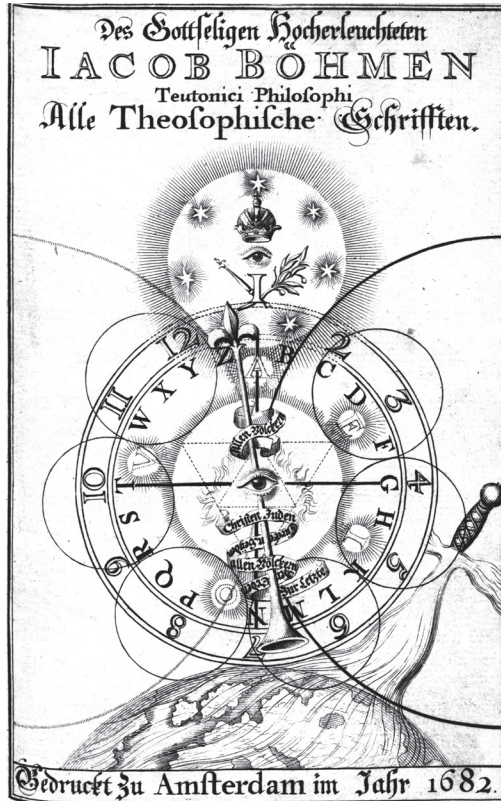
The Case of Jacob Böhme

We should start with depicting the most important symbols for a European, namely, those referring to what is inexpressible in words, i.e., God, who was known to be impossible to visualize in any form, especially in anthropomorphic form. And how to express what is infinite and most perfect? The Jews used the Tetragrammaton, i.e., text notation—four successive letters: jod, he, vav, and he, JHWH, together meaning “Jahve,” or “Jehova” (Roob, 2014, p. 100). In the same way of thinking about God, Christianity visualized the deep abstraction of Divine Providence as an eye in a triangle, the Holy Spirit as a Dove, or the Holy Trinity as a triangle. It was the competence of the artist and his invention to give these symbols a more or less elaborate aesthetic layer. An example of mature and sophisticated forms of imaging in European modern thought are the illustrations of hermetic-alchemical literature, in particular by Georg von Welling (Roob, 2014, pp. 322–326) and the works of Jacob Böhme (Roob, 2014, pp. 240–249). A beautiful album with secret figures of the Rosicrucians deserves a separate recommendation (*Geheime Figuren der Rosenkreuzer aus dem 16ten und 17ten Jahrhundert*, 2016).

Jacob Böhme’s theosophy is undoubtedly one of the most interesting philosophical phenomena of the pre-Cartesian era. In general, Böhme used the language of symbol and metaphor, which even then, i.e., at the beginning of the seventeenth century, was extremely difficult to understand, and he was writing about the most important things: what is the nature of God, how was the world created, what is humankind’s dependence on divine things, and where are humans going. He relied on one source, namely the *Holy Scriptures* (Weeks & Andersson, 2019, pp. 16 ff.). Of course, he also used a certain amount of knowledge and concepts that he successively adopted from his well-educated friends. But biblical hermeneutics and creative imagination were of key importance to him—thanks to them, he built impressive verbal images with metaphysical content.

When the German edition of Böhme’s works was published in Amsterdam in 1682, each of the eleven volumes was issued with beautiful illustrations. It is worth noting the extensive symbolism and deep metaphysical imagery contained in the engravings. Only one exemplary illustration will be discussed below, namely, the one that opens the first volume of *Alle Theosophische Wercken* (Böhme, 1682; Roob, 2014, p. 249). All quotations

refer to the first, introductory, four-page part of the volume *Vorbericht wegen der Figur* (no pagination).



This digitized image comes from a book held by the University of Wrocław Library, catalogue number 308025

The deep Theosophical meaning of the whole illustration is described in this way:

In the figures there is hidden both the entire Sacred Scripture, which flows from the mouth of God through his holy teachers, prophets and apostles, as well as the sole purpose of repentance and piety. Hidden prophetic speeches, riddles and stories show where the miracle of Divine

wisdom is revealed. They tell the past, illustrate the present and foreshadow the future. Neither great diligence nor wisdom of itself can understand and guess them at a glance. Because in this figure there remains hidden the divine wisdom in its dignity. And it can only be given to a wise and understanding heart that seeks and discovers wisdom.

The whole thing consists of several complementary elements, which only when taken together give full and true knowledge about the world. The middle part illustrates two eternal principles: the world of darkness (Finstern–Welt) and the world of light (Licht–Welt). The mystery of creation unfolds between them. But the shape of this eternal divine creation and revelation cannot be directly grasped or illustrated. This is possible only, as the author pointed out, through the principle of light and darkness, “because everything spiritual is hidden, there is an indirect way through the cross which is the signature or determination of the Eternal, Divine and temporal generation of all beings.” Böhme’s concept of the birth of being takes place in the dialectic of processes, in other words, in the processes of qualitative transformation: in “what ascends” and “descends,” “what is above” and “below,” in “light” and “darkness,” in “spirit” and “flesh,” in “life” and “death,” in “fire” and “water,” in “air” and “earth.”

Another important part of the pictorial composition is the seven circles, one of which stands out—placed at the very top in the form of a radiant sun. The other six, touching circles, however, have several meanings: the 7 properties of nature, the 6 days of the creation of the world and “the Sabbath as the crowning of God’s creative act,” the 7 seals of the Apocalypse, the 7 periods of time, and the 7 requests from the Lord’s Prayer.

The central circle, the “radiant circle of the sun,” means the grace of the Word of God. The first circle (in which the numbers 2 and 3 are contained) represents the properties of fallen human nature. “Killing Abel starts an endless process of crime and hatred.” Those of the six circles that penetrate the radiant circle of the sun signify the grace of the Word of God reaching the prophets and saints. The seven circles also refer to “the seven qualities in nature” (Weeks, 2014, pp. 48–51).

The sign of God’s Providence in the center, enclosed in a fiery triangle, means the all-seeing eye of God. This symbol also refers to humankind, namely the inner eye that allows a human to see the mysteries of God and his or her will “depending on the time and the revealed end of history.”

The broad context is carried by Kabbalah numerology. The “7” at the intersection of the cross plays a special role in this case; it means the essence or “sacred element of divine corporeality,” from which all things come. The second meaning of “7” is Adam, created in the image of God, placed in paradise as the king of all creation, who lost his unity with God because he reached for the forbidden wisdom of knowing good and evil. His vanity has forced him into the wheel of time—he has lost his greatness and dignity and will remain so until the last hour, until the end of time. When and how this moment will come, no one knows. The third meaning of “7” is Jesus, the highest love and unity of God, who shared the fate of fallen man and died on the cross for love of man. “After the end of time, he will reign as the Divine Monarch of peace for eternity.”

The trumpet symbol carries a deep biblical message: “But that when the days come when the trumpet call of the seventh angel is about to be sounded, then God’s mystery, as He had announced the glad tidings to His servants the prophets, should be fulfilled” (Rev. 10:7).

“I tell you a mystery. We shall not all fall asleep [in death], but we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the [sound of the] last trumpet call. For a trumpet will sound, and the dead” (1 Cor. 15:51–52).

For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a loud cry of summons, with the shout of an archangel, and with the blast of the trumpet of God. And those who have departed this life in Christ will rise first. Then we, the living ones who remain [on the earth], shall simultaneously be caught up along with [the resurrected dead] in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so we shall always be with the Lord! Therefore comfort and encourage one another with these words. (1 Thess. 4:16–18)

The fiery sword—or the sword of justice—was used to guard the gates of Eden right after the expulsion of Adam and Eve. The Bible mentions angels armed with fiery swords, with which the beast will be finally defeated. For this reason, the fiery sword is the dividing weapon between paradise, “the world of fire of love” and the earth, “a world of punishment.” It therefore means the condemnation and the effectiveness of God’s word and judgment: “So [God] drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the Garden of Eden the cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep and guard the way to the tree of life” (Gen. 3:24).

The central position of the world clock hand in the figure refers to the real world and means the near end of times and the beginning of the reign of the Holy Spirit. The number “1” illustrates the Divine Unity as the beginning of all— “Divine Monarch of peace for eternity.” The scepter and the crown signify eternal and unchanging majesty and refer to God.

The internal alphabet A. E. I. O. U. means “nature’s open speech.”

This illustration has all the characteristic features of seventeenth-century emblems. The motto sounds extremely sublime: “All the theosophical works of the pious and highly enlightened Jacob Böhme, the German philosopher.” The imago has the sophisticated character of a complex pictorial composition. The subscription, usually short, in this case takes four pages, and unlike poetic emblems, does not require the reader to guess the complex symbolism and play on meanings, but to contemplate it deeply, to understand the divine plan that the author of the work reveals to the reader. In addition, the subscription refers directly to the *Holy Scripture*, indicating that the lemma and the imago remain in the closest connection with it. The subscription is also a summary of the main theses of Böhme’s theosophy.

Speculations on German Idealism

In the eighteenth century, the exuberant forms of Baroque aesthetics and the visualization of metaphysical content, mentioned above, slowly disappeared; and even if they were present, they were usually sparing in graphic form. Even the editions of books, including the German *Fraktur*, took on more simplified forms, becoming easier to read, especially for us today. Philosophy increasingly focused on the word-concept, on an abstract and scientifically justified description of reality. Nevertheless, until the time of the Napoleonic Wars, in the German states, but also in France and Russia, various currents of secret knowledge (Rosicrucians, esoteric Freemasonry) developed quite intensively, which continued to cultivate old esoteric knowledge and image symbolism. Therefore, they referred to the contemplation of classical Hermetic figures, their complex symbolism, and the knowledge that was hidden behind them (Geffarth, 2007, pp. 225–241).

The philosophers of German idealism, Hegel in particular, were above all a sublime abstraction referring to the essence of the world and cognition.

Philosophy, then still identified with science, *de facto* meant an ordered system of abstract concepts derived in accordance with the rules of classical logic, such as in *The Science Of Knowing* by Johan Gottlieb Fichte. Hegel was a master of abstraction, for whom concepts resulting from successive abstractions ultimately led to the absolute, i.e., the conceptual approach to the process of objectification of freedom and spirit in the world, i.e., the truth that can be realized in only one way: “The true shape in which truth exists can only be the scientific system of that truth” (Hegel, 2018, p. 5). Another formulation, “the true is the whole” (Hegel, 2018, p. 11), defined the whole as the conception and realization of the absolute. But even in this extreme rationalist idealism based on dialectical thinking there is a trace of emblematics and metaphysics of figures. This is commonly referred to as the metaphysics of the triangle—“God’s Triangle”—with the word “spirit” i.e., the spirit, repeated three times, and with a sequence of mysterious magico-astrological symbols that Hegel had among his papers. Whether he took it seriously or not is unclear (Knapp, 2001, pp. 317–318).

Arthur Schopenhauer was one of the first to notice the cul-de-sac into which philosophy tends to seek salvation in conceptual abstraction. He aptly noticed that philosophers willingly created complex structures of abstract concepts and had the impression of their compatibility with reality; and it seemed that through concepts, one came to the essence of the world. A simple thought experiment proves that it is possible to create abstractions in relation to reality, but it would not be possible the other way around—it is impossible to reconstruct the world from abstract concepts. Schopenhauer presented a graphical diagram illustrating a certain weakness of general concepts. Namely, while observing all the rules of correct thinking, reasoning, and even logic, it is possible to construct a procedure for moving from one abstraction to another, to finally obtain a paradoxical result—the transition from the general concept of “Good” to its opposite, “Bad” (Schopenhauer, 2010, p. 74).

Schopenhauer proposed a “true philosophy”—the antithesis of Hegel—whose essence would be a model of mystical cognition, a state of quietism, exactly like that developed by Baroque mysticism (de Guyon, Fénelon, Böhme) (Schopenhauer, 2010, pp. 417–418). To achieve this state, conceptual abstraction is unnecessary ballast. “True Philosophy” also postulated the rejection of the vague concept of the absolute and the recognition of the will as the driving force of the world and—this is the key moment—opposing the

will to live through the act of negation and the ethical reorientation of humankind. The will can be defined as a negative absolute: a dark force, unreasonable, acting without purpose. The *World as Will and Representation* ends with the significant statement: “[F]or everyone who is still filled with the will, what remains after it is completely abolished is certainly nothing. But conversely, for those in whom the will has turned and negated itself, this world of ours which is so very real with all its suns and galaxies is—nothing” (Schopenhauer, 2010, p. 439).

The attempt to build philosophy only on abstraction and concept was not fully successful because it faced strong opposition. Schopenhauer was only one of many opponents, but a very interesting one, because he was able to see all the weaknesses of contemporary philosophy. Much more important was the very strong philosophical and artistic current—Romanticism—which programmatically dissociated itself from Enlightenment rationalism and focused on the so-called inner view, introspection, poetic fantasy, penetration of myth and the sphere of language, and even unconscious “viewing”—quite the opposite of Hegel.

Particularly noteworthy is Schelling, whose thought was creatively developed over different phases. In the context of these considerations, the moment when Schelling, at the stage of the philosophy of identity, made a radical interpretation of the absolute as the identity of “ideal” and “real” in the Spinozian spirit deserves attention: “Neither A or B can be posited in itself, but only the same {identity} with predominant subjectivity, alongside {predominant} objectivity and the quantitative indifference of the two” (Schelling, 2002, p. 364). This quite intricate abstraction was vividly expressed in the following way (Schelling, 2002, p. 365):

$$\begin{array}{ccc} + & & - \\ A = B & & A = B \\ \hline & & A = A \end{array}$$

In the period of the so-called philosophy of freedom, Schelling went even further—justifying the moral choice between good and evil, he took over the entire structure of Böhme’s metaphysical description of the world: the emanational concept of God, the original form of being as the *Ungrund*, and the principle of light and the principle of darkness as the poles of ontological processuality. What attracts attention is the language of the dissertation

on freedom, a language full of obscure metaphors and dark images that are difficult to understand for a reader unfamiliar with the context of Baroque theosophy:

The yearning is not the One itself but is after all co-eternal with it. The yearning wants to give birth to God, that is, unfathomable unity, but in this respect there is not yet unity in the yearning itself. Hence, it is considered for itself, also will; but will in which there is no understanding and, for that reason, also not independent and complete will, since the understanding is really the will in will. Nevertheless it is a will of the understanding, namely yearning and desire for the latter; not a conscious but a divining will [*ahnender Wille*] whose divining is the understanding. We are speaking of the essence of yearning, considered in and for itself, that likely must be brought into view, although it has long been repressed by the higher things that have arisen out of it, and although we cannot grasp it by the senses but rather only with the mind and [in] thought. After the eternal act of self-revelation, everything in the world is, as we see it now, rule, order and form; but anarchy still lies in the ground, as if it could break through once again, and nowhere does it appear as if order and form were what is original but rather as if initial anarchy had been brought to order. This is the incomprehensible base of reality in things, the indivisible remainder, that which with the greatest exertion cannot be resolved in understanding but rather remains eternally in the ground. The understanding is born in the genuine sense from that which is without understanding. Without this preceding darkness creatures have no reality; darkness is their necessary inheritance. (Schelling, 2006, pp. 28–29)

The publishers of the translation of *Philosophical Investigations into the Essence of Human Freedom* have rightly included a few supplementary texts by the leading philosophers of the time (Böhme, Baader, Lessing, Jacobi, Herder), which allow the modern reader to better understand the broad context of the discussion on the absolute (Schelling, 2006, pp. 81–130).

Romantic philosophy turned to the creative language of the Baroque with its evocative imagery. Other types of images begin to play a key role, namely, “linguistic images,” through which, in a different way from Baroque iconographic representations of a symbolic nature, they also sought to “directly represent the world.” In this sense, “The linguistic image would be a metaphor for the living, pictorial properties of language, a metaphor for

trying to get language as close as possible to the directly representational power of images” (Borgards, 2003, p. 10).

This tendency, i.e., language images, characterized the whole of German Romanticism. In this way, one fundamental thought was explicated, in contrast to the rationalism of the Enlightenment, that it is not only about the mathematical and physical description of the world, but also about its metaphysical sense. In this case, the word “metaphysical” did not mean thinking that was theologically marked, but one that “was, is and will be before and after physics” (Goethe, 2016, p. 70). Goethe emphasized one more element in particular, namely the complementary and multifaceted understanding of the world: “ideal-real-symbolic-identical” (Goethe, 2016, p. 156).

Romanticism reached out to Böhme, mysticism, Neoplatonism, Hermeticism, and Theosophy to broaden the spectrum of philosophical and artistic experience, to go beyond a purely external description of reality: “If you want to penetrate into the heart of physics, then let yourself be initiated into the mysteries of poetry” (Schlegel, 1991, p. 103)—this is Friedrich Schlegel’s diagnosis. Romanticism—philosophy, poetry, and prose, as well as art—sought a seemingly paradoxical representation of the unrepresentable—the absolute. The construction of complex linguistic images is best seen in the poetry of Novalis (*Hymns to the Night*, 1800) and in his poetic novels (*Heinrich von Ofterdingen*, 1802; *The Novices at Sais*, 1802). In painting, however, the transformation of language images into painting images was perfectly realized by Philipp Otto Runge. His visualizations of Böhme’s theosophy are noteworthy, in particular the unfinished series *The Four Times of the Day*, of which *The Morning* (1808) was completed (Roob, 2014, p. 241).

Final Remarks

The synergistic unity of lemma, imago, and subscription was the basis of Baroque iconology, and it was also, from a contemporary point of view, an interesting and original attempt to build a synthesis of word and image, an “iconic turn” specific for that time. The effects of this turn are best seen in various currents of German idealism, especially in Romanticism. Romantic language images were a tool that allowed attempts to penetrate areas that had not hitherto been focused on, or at least no attempts had been made to integrate them into the cognitive structures of the subject: myth,

unconscious, fantasy. Human orientation, human existential dilemmas, and cognitive dilemmas gave hope of crossing the border between the possible and the impossible, between life on this side and death on the other, as in Schelling's dialogue *Clara* (Schelling, 2002).

From time immemorial, humankind has used images to express complex abstractions that could not be expressed in words, because such words had not yet been invented. Abstraction appeared along with the progress of civilization and the development of science, especially mathematics (geometry), and now inseparably accompanies humanity. The question is, do abstract concepts solve all problems? They certainly solve the problems of science and are necessary for its further development. Images, on the other hand, have little influence on the development of science; but they are necessary for humans. Romanticism drew attention to this key fact.

Today, when the merits of the dispute over the absolute only marginally occupy the attention of specialists, another important issue remains open—the possibility of visualizing abstract content. Here, a huge perspective of modern research and applications opens up: psychology (treatment of developmental disorders); pedagogy (viewing methods); statistics (graphs); the didactics of individual sciences, including multimedia presentations in PowerPoint. The use of imaging in the teaching of philosophy opens up new possibilities for the perception of complex philosophical problems. In this context, attention is paid to modern propaedeutic books containing illustrations and various forms of depicting abstract content, difficult to capture in verbal communication.

To the question asked in the title, can philosophy visualize abstractions? The answer seems clear. Abstraction and image are the two poles between which our thinking and understanding of the world in which we live lie. Thus, this dilemma can be solved in the formula: image and word.

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Images of Paradise, Images of Utopia: The Search for Community

Keywords: image, imaginarium, utopia, paradise, millennialism, revolution, community, exclusion

Słowa kluczowe: obraz, imaginarium, utopia, raj, millenaryzm, rewolucja, wspólnota, wykluczenie

Abstract

The aim of this article is not only to discuss specific images of paradise and utopia, which appear in various forms in European imaginaries throughout history, but also to show the connections of these images with political discourses aiming at changing the status quo and constituting a perfect, harmonious, and non-antagonistic community. The creation of such a community—despite the universalist visions that the imaginarium of paradise and utopia implies—is often based on the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. Mechanisms of this type are above all characteristic of maximalist political visions and ideas that seek to solve all human problems definitively and completely. Such aspirations are linked with revolutionary attempts to realize utopia or to build the kingdom of God on earth.

Introductory Remarks

The subject of paradise and utopia is very extensive. Therefore, reflection on it can take place in various interpretative perspectives (e.g., historical,

theological, biblical, literary critical, socio-political, or anthropological). In this text—due to the wide field of theoretical references and possible interpretations—reflection on the problems of paradise and utopia will be linked with the domains of images and imagination, along with the anthropological and sociopolitical fields. On a more general plane, a close relationship between them can be seen. On the one hand, the heterogeneous “family of images”(Mitchell, 1986, p. 9), as well as the imagination itself and its power, cannot be understood without an anthropological context. On the other hand, if we want to grasp the specificity of the human being and its “being-in-the-world”—also in the political world—we cannot ignore the order of imagination and the images it creates.

Stopping for a moment at twentieth-century anthropological approaches, it should be noted that they treat imagination not only as a condition of specific human activity (i.e., the production of images), but above all as the very condition of human consciousness and existence. Imagination is something that distinguishes human beings from other beings, as well as from the world of things (Jonas, 1962). As far as anthropological approaches are concerned, the phenomenological analyses of imagination proposed by J. P. Sartre are pioneering in this field. He conceived imagination as the transcendental condition of human consciousness. As he points out, “There could be no realizing consciousness without imaging consciousness, and vice versa. Thus imagination, far from appearing as an accidental characteristic of consciousness, is disclosed as an essential and transcendental condition of consciousness” (Sartre, 2004, p. 188). Another author who particularly strongly emphasizes the fusion of humankind with the world of images is Hans Belting:

From the perspective of anthropology—as he writes—we are not the masters of our images, but rather in a sense at their mercy; they colonize our bodies (our brains), so that even if it seems that we are in charge of generating them, and even though society attempts unceasingly to control them, it is in fact the images that are in control. Images both affect and reflect the changing course of human history. They leave, for example, no doubt about how changeable human nature is. Societies discard images that they have invented themselves as soon as they no longer do their intended service. Instead of reinventing themselves, people reinvent the images they live with. (Belting, 2014, pp. 1–2)

According to Belting, images are always “images of humans.” The deliberate ambiguity of this statement implies that, on the one hand, images are our products, and on the other hand, images reveal or show humans and their being in the world (Belting links the problem of the image with the subject of the body privileged by him). It can be said that various images of humans show us who—in both the individual and the socio-political dimension—we are, who we were, and who we want to be. It seems that on these levels relating to historical time and memory, our current social and political situations, as well as expectations, anticipations, and imaginations, one can situate social and political imaginaries of paradise and utopia.

These images of paradise and utopia, as well as the myths and symbols associated with them—forming the field of the socio-political imaginarium (Wunenburger, 2020; Taylor, 2004)—change their forms and incarnations throughout history; but as some scholars have shown, they are rooted in a certain fundamental matrix or archetypal sphere of the human being. As Mircea Eliade points out, human dreams of paradise—which the Romanian author calls longing for paradise—belong to archetypal intuitions born at the moment when humans realized their place in the cosmos (Eliade, 1978). Ernst Bloch captures the essence of human being in terms of creating utopian meanings and projects. Utopian dimensions manifest themselves in many hope-filled human imbalances—in our individual actions, in the field of music, architecture, medicine, and of course in the domain of political and social discourses. The main point of reference in Bloch’s reflections on utopia is the category of “Not Yet,” which has two dimensions, the “Not Yet Conscious” and the “Not Yet Become” (Bloch, 1986). “Concrete utopia is thus an essential constituent part of an essentially unfinished reality, and a category whose reference is human action in and on the world; it is both real, and Not Yet” (Levitass, 1989, p. 28). As Bloch points out, “the concrete imagination and the imagery of its mediated anticipations are fermenting in the process of the real itself and are depicted in the concrete forward dream; anticipating elements are a component of reality itself” (Bloch, 1986, p. 197).

The aim of this article is not only to present specific images of paradise and utopia, which appear in various forms in the domains of European imaginaries throughout history, but also to show the connections of these images with the domain of political discourses aiming at changing the status quo and constituting a perfect, harmonious, and non-antagonistic community. The creation of such a community—despite the universalist

visions that the imaginarium of paradise and utopia implies—is often based on the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. Mechanisms of this type are characteristic above all of maximalist political visions and ideas that seek to solve all human problems definitively and completely. Such aspirations are linked with revolutionary attempts to realize utopia or to build the kingdom of God on earth.

The issues discussed in this article will concern historical examples. Of course, this raises the question of the need to create images of paradise and utopia in the contemporary world, which is not free from global challenges (e.g., climate crisis, migrations, the development of new technologies, the hegemony of global capitalism). Let us confine ourselves to just two observations, for the answer to this question would certainly require a separate consideration. First, as we have seen, some authors maintain that the need for utopia and the dream of building an earthly paradise has its anthropological basis. In other words, it is an impulse constantly present in human beings, which evokes taking specific actions in the social and political domain. Secondly, as Chiara Bottici writes, “[T]he state of societies being far from perfect guarantees that there will always be the possibility and the need for utopias” (Bottici, 2011, p. 1735).

At this point, it is necessary to mention the main philosophical and political inspirations in the light of which the issue of the (im)possibility of community will be addressed. The first source is an antagonistic perspective that exposes the motif of conflict and exclusion as the very conditions for the constitution of a community, a certain “us.” In this perspective, the leading place is occupied by the thought of Carl Schmitt (Schmitt, 2007) and Helmuth Plessner (Plessner, 1994), as well as post-Marxist continuations of Schmittian optics (Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe). Laclau writes about the “impossibility of society” (Laclau, 1990, p. 89) as a harmonious and non-antagonistic community in the context of the antagonism underlying every social order and hegemonic attempt to establish a closed and non-antagonistic social whole. Such attempts, regardless of their political and ideological content, indicate the utopian will to establish society as a reconciled community. The will to establish “society-as-a-whole” is present in every particular political discourse that tends to universalize itself. It can be accomplished only through the hegemonic shaping of the social field. It consists in the exclusion of specific identities, forces, or social sectors that, for one reason or another, cannot enter the hegemonic social order (and

as excluded elements will threaten it). In other words, every community in its essence is always entangled in the antagonistic logic of “us” versus “them.” Therefore, the desire for community is always doomed to failure.

Another source of inspiration is Roberto Esposito’s interpretation of community as a necessary and, at the same time, impossible being. The awareness of this connection between the necessity and impossibility of community is, as Esposito observes, present in the philosophical tradition, at least since the time of Rousseau. Rousseau emphasizes that “the community is both impossible and necessary. Necessary and impossible” (Esposito, 2010, p. 53). Esposito identifies the antinomian relationship between the necessity and impossibility of community in relation to anthropological approaches showing the fragility and mortality of the human being (Kant, Heidegger), and also in relation to the political dimension. Therefore, when we try to establish, create, or realize a community, we always change it into its absolute opposite: the community of death and the death of the community.

In these considerations, a perspective is adopted whereby imagination is not peripheral to politics. Rather, it is politics that is peripheral to the imagination and the images it produces. This type of observation can be supported by many examples from political philosophy and political practice. Let us confine ourselves here to enumerating some twentieth-century authors who emphasize the role of imagination and various phenomena of imagery in political and social contexts: Georges Sorel (the myth of the general strike); Antonio Gramsci (common sense and the theory of hegemony); Ernst Bloch (the concept of utopia); Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (the symbolic universe); Benedict Anderson (imagined communities); Jean Baudrillard (the simulacrum); Jean-Jacques Wunenburger (the imaginarium of the political sphere); Charles Taylor (modern social imaginaries); Cornelius Castoriadis (the “magma” category); Bronisław Baczko (social images, ideas-images); William J. T. Mitchell (images defining our historical moment; images of a terrorist).

Journeys of Imagination

At the end of the fifteenth century, the inhabitants of the Old World faced a peculiar cognitive-theological problem. As Claude Lévi-Strauss put

it, “The Garden of Eden was found to be true, for instance; likewise the ancients’ Golden Age, the Fountain of Youth, Atlantis, the Gardens of the Hesperides, the pastoral poems, and the Fortunate Islands. But the spectacle of a humanity both purer and happier than our own (in reality, of course, it was neither of these, but a secret remorse made it seem so) made the European skeptical of the existing notions of revelation, salvation, morality, and law” (Lévi-Strauss, 1964, p. 78). Columbus believed that he had discovered an earthly paradise, that garden of delights, as Cardinal Pierre d’Ailly, author of one of Columbus’s favorite books, *De Imago Mundi*, used to say. The Fathers of the Church also described paradise so early, referring to the founding text of *Genesis*.

A special kind of connection between the real and imaginary worlds—and imagination in this union is the force constituting the ways of describing, perceiving, and experiencing past, present, or future events—occurs before Columbus’s discoveries.

As Tzvetan Todorov writes:

News reaches European writers through stories whose authors are either travelers themselves or chroniclers who stay on the spot and collect oral information. It must be stated, even if it seems paradoxical, that stories precede travel. Starting from the late Middle Ages, more or less fanciful stories have attracted the interest of readers and aroused curiosity. You can learn, for example, that an Irish monk, Saint Brendan, spent seven years to reach the earthly paradise, encountering all dangers and supernatural creatures on his way. At the beginning of the fourteenth century, Marco Polo, after returning from China, published the work *Libro delle meraviglie* (...), the title of which is the most justified, despite the fact that it describes supernatural phenomena. A little later, John Mandeville writes *Viaggio d’oltremare*, an intricate tangle of facts and fantastic ideas. He also describes Paradise on earth. In the same epoch, compilations, *Cosmographies* or *Immagine del mondo* (as the famous *Imago Mundi* of Cardinal Peter d’Ailly), collections of information about all the countries and peoples of the Earth, multiply. These works are therefore generally known and prepare the ground for the stories of new travelers, for whom they are a source of information. Columbus set out, carrying letters to the Great Khan, described by Marco Polo. Vasco da Gama does the same for Prester John, a legendary figure who lives, according to Mandeville, in India. (Todorov, 2001, p. 342)

In the Western imaginarium, from the twelfth century until the seventeenth century, the above-mentioned Prester John was identified with a Christian king, ruling “somewhere in Asia” (or in Ethiopia), near the earthly paradise. The imaginarium of the mythical land of King John is very rich and diverse—among other things, it is crossed by a river from the earthly paradise, which carries precious stones; and from above flows the water, which has its sources in the earthly paradise (whoever drinks this water three times on a fast basis will never get sick and will be fashionable throughout their life). The work on the political myth of Prester John’s power was a response to the political and existential demand of the Latins settled in the East, who, after the First Crusade, felt the uncertainty of their situation and hoped that some powerful Christian ruler from Asia would be able to attack Islam from the East.

It should be emphasized that in the medieval imaginarium, a prominent place was occupied by islands—first of all, the Happy Islands (whose existence was attested to by the authority of Homer, Hesiod, Plutarch, and Horace) and the Island of St. Brendan. The motif of the happy island, on which utopian thought located earthly paradises, is reversed in revolutionary theatre—after the world victory of the revolution, the island inhabited by kings and the overthrown pope “can only become an image of the negative state of nature, of Hobbesian universal war” (Baskiewicz, 1993, p. 23). On this island, the force of nature, in the form of the element of volcanic fire, is to complete the work of judgment on European despots (Maréchal, 2008).

The imaginarium of the Garden of Eden in the Renaissance era appears in the form of discourses about erotic paradises (an imaginary journey to the island of Cythera, where “nymphs worship Cupid”). First of all, utopian discourses appear in the form of accounts of travel in time and space showing imaginary communities and ways of their lives. Utopias merge with images of a mythical paradise and the Golden Age of humanity as an escape from an unjust social order (Delumeau, 1995). Utopias are attempts to regain what is lost or to create a new order in the more or less distant future (revolutionary and counter-revolutionary thought will also have to face the problem of time). As can be seen, in utopian imaginations there is not only the problem of space (the alleged place of the earthly Paradise), but also, or above all, the problem of past or future time. The images of paradise are not images of the present world. Worth emphasizing is that the

story of the Garden of Eden is then associated with a discourse expressing hopes for the universal emancipation of the human community—utopias show, as Jean Delumeau emphasizes, that “the fusion with the myth of the earthly paradise has formed in some the belief that the garden of Eden at the dawn of time was enjoyed not only by the first pair of parents, but also by the whole of humanity. So why not count on the golden age to return?” (Delumeau, 2020, p. 29) Here we touch on a key moment related to the images of paradise and utopia—even if they operate with a certain universal message, this universality will be universality with a flaw. In other words, it will not include all those particularisms (social groups, identities) which, for one reason or another, will not conform to the vision of universal happiness and harmony, and, moreover, the realization of this vision will often demand their physical elimination.

The Age of Enlightenment marks the end of the search for an earthly paradise. For Rousseau, paradise was identified with a state of nature in which the “primitive human race lived happily amid a bountiful nature” (Delumeau, 1995, p. 226). It was an image founded on the “nihilation” activity of consciousness. This could be rendered as follows: if society is a negation of the state of nature, then individual consciousness is a negation of society. At the same time, this negation of negation takes place in the field of subjective experience: the state of nature can be reproduced in individual experience, and especially through solitary contact with the natural world (which is why Rousseau delves into the forest of Saint-Germain). The image of nature as a “nihilation” of existing relations triggers at the same time the political and social search for new ways of development and harmonious integration of man with society (such as the transition from individual rebellion to collective utopia). Kant embarked on a journey “on the wings of imagination” (Kant, 2007, p. 163). It is a journey in which he used a Holy Bible as a map; and reason, based on experience, is the guiding thread in it. He placed the first humans “in the place secured against the attack of predators and richly provisioned by nature with all means of nourishment, thus in a garden, as it were, in a zone that is always temperate” (Kant, 2007, p. 164). Exodus from Paradise as humankind’s first abode (as illustrated by reason) is nothing other than the passage from the uncouth of a purely animal being to humanity, from enslavement through instinct to the direction of reason. In other words, it is a transition “from the guardianship of nature into the condition of freedom” (Kant, 2007,

p. 168). It is, in fact, the path of progress that leads from evil/a fall to goodness and perfection. This is certainly not an easy path: human, abandoning the maternal bosom of nature, is pushed into a world where many worries, hardships, and evils await him in history. Paradise will be only a fruit of the imagination, a place where man can indulge in idleness and waste. Between human and the image of a paradise as a “place of pleasure” stands the disciplining reason, which forbids a return to the state of nature.

With the Enlightenment, evil leaves the pre-historical time, whose figurative-symbolic matrix is the story of Paradise and the fall of the first parents, and dwells in historical time. The civil order and history are at the same time the place where the power of reason is an opportunity to progress and to eliminate evil, backwardness, and barbarism. This, of course, involves various projects—more or less—radical projects for the reconstruction of the prevailing social, political, and cultural orders that generate historical evil. The Enlightenment inaugurates “the voluntaristic utopias of a just state” (Baczko, 2001, p. 153). As Bronisław Baczko writes, “A history that has been desacralized is projected with promises which, of course, it can never keep. As if by a paradoxical turn of events, the golden age of reason had revived nostalgia for the lost Paradise, and the Enlightenment was followed by its deep shadow” (Baczko, 2001, p. 154).

From Paradise to Social Utopias

Anthropological, political, and religious longings for paradise translated into utopian hopes for its recovery or restoration, or hopes of creating a new earthly paradise on earth. These were messianic discourses that emphasized the moment of “punishment and reparation in cosmic terms,” (Kleszcz, 1997, p. 70) as well as a strong connection between sacred history and secular history within a certain historiosophical model. In the messianic imaginarium there is a strong desire to change the socio-political reality (the appearance of the messiah through whom earthly harms, injustice, oppression will be eliminated; the coming of the kingdom of God on earth). Such aspirations were associated with millenarian ideas, which, as can be seen from the example of Christian millenarianism, have undergone a gradual secularization in modern times, consisting in the elimination of supernatural and religious elements. Eric Voegelin describes this process as

the “immanentization of the eschaton,” i.e., the incorporation of the process of salvation into the material and secular realm of history and human activity (Voegelin, 1952).

The eighteenth century brought with it two ideas derived from messianic views: the idea of progress and the idea of revolution. An excellent expression of the first is Condorcet’s thought, which—and it is worth emphasizing on this occasion—in the historiographical perspective also refers to the power of imagination and images. His vision of a rational, pluralistic community of “deliberating” citizens is not free from utopian images that drive the emancipatory work of human reason in history; images that give consolation and importance in the struggle against a world still full of superstitions, crimes, and injustices. This imaginary world, contemplated by the philosopher, is “Elysium created by reason and graced by the purest pleasures known to the love of mankind” (Condorcet, 1976, p. 281). In addition to Condorcet, a similar belief in the progress of humankind can also be seen in Kant or in the thought of Adam Smith and in the nineteenth century in Hegel, Lessing, Comte, George Sand, Owen, Fourier, Michelet, Marx, and others.

In turn, the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution shattered the perspective of historical continuity (dividing the time into “before” and “after” the revolution) and evoked a sense of a new beginning and faith in the creative, emancipatory abilities of humans. Hannah Arendt applies this “pathos of novelty” especially to the French and American political and social revolutions (Arendt, 1965, pp. 26–28).

At the beginning of the French Revolution, there appears an image of the triumphant sun scattering the “Gothic system” cloud. The political imagination has a dualistic character; it is night and day, light and darkness, death and resurrection. It reflects the division of society into two antagonistic camps: people and the *ancien régime*. The images describe and identify the political enemy: the nobly born, then King Louis XVI, and then everyone who is not virtuous in the Jacobin sense. The image of the enemy is built up through the words “alarmist,” “furious,” “federalist,” “anarchist,” and “terrorist”—these words create the image of the enemy. “Words came in torrents, but even more important was their unique, magical quality” (...) Certain key words served as revolutionary incantations. Nation was perhaps the most universally sacred, but there were also “patrie, constitution, law, and more specific to the radicals, regeneration, virtue, and vigilance”

(Hunt, 2004, p. 31). The revolutionary imaginarium is *de facto* a millenarist imaginarium, in which the world becomes an arena of struggle for extremely antagonistic forces. And just as before the revolutionary regeneration was to be the work of the divine messiah or God Himself, who uses people as His instruments in the struggle against the forces of the Antichrist, so in the era of the French Revolution, the people themselves have an almost divine omnipotence and desire to create the kingdom of God on earth.

Romantic messianism will take over a series of revolutionary-Jacobin images, created in the collective imagination and fueled by poetry and literature. Historical rebellion (which is also a metaphysical rebellion) appreciates the Promethean myth of humanity's self-determination and in the romantic narrative meets images of the struggle of good and evil, Christ and Satan, or—last but not least—human beings with God. Romantic messianism often took the form of nationalistic messianism, which the biblical messianic scheme filled with “national” content, e.g., the ideas of Polish messianism, the people-messiah, the ideas of Poland which is the “Christ of nations” and which will initiate worldwide harmony, put an end to all injustice and suffering in history.

And as for the imaginarium of the proletarian revolution in the USSR, we have here images of the enemy (external and internal); striving to create a new human (or even a proletarian “human-robot” as Alexei Gastiev, the Bolshevik engineer and poet proclaimed in his biomechanical utopia); the use of images (both mental, internal, and external artifacts) in the service of propaganda and visual pedagogy; or quasi-religious images of a charismatic leader.

Critical Insights

The above, briefly outlined messianic discourses and visions concerning the recovery of paradise, the return to “original innocence,” or the realization of the “kingdom of God on earth” can be viewed from critical perspectives, which is to say, “formal” (Wunenburger), “anthropological” (Cioran), and “anthropological-political” (Camus).

As for the former, according to Wunenburger, utopia itself—regardless of its historical emanations—is nothing more than a petrification and a limitation of the playing field of the imagination. As Andrei Simut argues:

Wunenburger aspires to produce an all-encompassing theory that would provide not only the precise definition for every key concept such as “imaginaire,” “imagination,” “sacré,” “imaginaries du politique,” myth, symbol, utopia, but also their function, their relations towards one another. At a closer look, all these terms can be placed on a general map, around a triangle in the following way: on the top of the triangle is the concept of “imaginaire,” which also encompasses the inner part of the triangle; on the bottom side, on the left edge the concept of utopia and on the right edge the reason (Western Reason, political reason/“la raison politique”). The bottom side of the triangle stands for the crisis of imaginary and imagination, caused by the limitation imposed on the Western thought by utopia (since the Renaissance) and reason (since the Enlightenment). In the center of the triangle, at very core of imaginary are placed “la sacré,” the myth, the symbol, and the ritual. (Simut, 2012, p. 2)

As can be seen, that approach shows an abstract-philosophical understanding of utopia. Wunenburger “insists that to denounce the imposition of the totalitarian utopia is a false debate. Wunenburger places utopia on an abstract, general level, as an archetype and a construct in contrast with the imaginary” (Simut, 2012, p. 3). So his theory is a generalization of the utopia and transcending its visible and particular manifestations (historical, political, or literary ones). But what does Wunenburger’s statement about utopia as a limitation of imagination mean? Utopian discourses, argues Simut, like discourses appealing to the power of reason, seek to absorb the whole diverse field of “dream production.” The domain of freely created images is then petrified—it freezes in a certain rhetorical form (a trip to an island or a journey in time, an account of this journey highlighting the contrasts between the present world and the world of utopia), an ossified system of meanings and symbols, as well as a carefully planned scheme of organizing social existence (free time, everyday life, celebrations, etc.).

It is also worth mentioning the strictly organized architectural order. If we were to look at the plan of Plato’s colony (shown at the beginning of the sixteenth century in the drawing *Anonymous Destailleur*), Johann Valentin Andreae’s *Christianopolis*, the city of the Sun of Campanella, or utopian projects that were created on the eve of the French Revolution, the hegemony of geometry, order, “barracks” style of buildings can be weighed in. Everything is transparent, visible; there is also a division into center and periphery. There is no escaping the collective “Us.”

Jean Starobiński writes:

Some of the pre-1789 writers who drew up principles for a perfect society complemented political doctrine with novels about government. They felt a need to add images to ideals, to plan an ideal city. Like all Utopian cities, theirs was based on the laws of a simple and rigid geometry. Its regular quadrangular or circular form made it divisible into either strictly equal juxtaposed parts or similarly symmetrical rings arranged round an omnipotent center: Equality in independence alternated with equality in dependence. It was as if the great ideas of equality by nature and equality before the law could be given immediate spatial expression by means of rule and compass. In a universe of signs, geometry was the language of reason. It made use of forms of every kind in their beginning, their principle, and applied them in a system of points, lines, and constant proportions. Any excess or irregularity appeared as an intrusion of evil: Advocates of Utopia avoid superfluity. (Starobinski, 1982, p. 69)

During the French Revolution the idea of harmonious and empty space prevails. “The Champ de Mars! This is the only monument that the Revolution has left. And the Revolution has for her monument—empty space. Her monument is sandy plain, flat as Arabia,” writes Jules Michelet in his famous work *History of the French Revolution* (Michelet, 1847, p. 9). Revolutionary space is the space of new public celebrations: *Fête de la Fédération*; *Culte de la Raison*; *Culte de l’Être suprême*. The French, like the earlier Greeks, become a nation of spectators (following the French example, Lunacharsky also noted the importance of a revolutionary celebration).

Utopian imaginaria, as Wunenburger emphasizes, have an anticipatory character; they sell the present tense but also accurately, not to say in detail, concretize the images of shared space and time. In this sense, they are an imaginative limitation or scheme imposed on the open field of possible ways of anticipating the future. Wunenburger’s criticism of utopia coincides to some extent with Cioran’s view. First of all, Cioran notes that utopia deforms the true status of humans (and human imagination) and degrades them to a being that ignores the present and is focused on the utopian future: “Cioran underscores the mutation of man into a creature obsessed with history which is due to the utopian displacement of happiness in the far future, depriving man of living in the present” (Simut, 2012, p. 4). This is also evident in the thought of Albert Camus introduced in *The Rebel*,

when Camus criticizes the revolutionary form of historical rebellion, which in the twentieth century ended in totalitarian enslavement.

Camus notes:

Revolution without honor, calculated revolution which, in preferring an abstract concept of man to a man of flesh and blood, denies existence as many times as is necessary, puts resentment in the place of love. Immediately rebellion, forgetful of its generous origins, allows itself to be contaminated by resentment; it denies life, dashes toward destruction, and raises up the grimacing cohorts of petty rebels, embryo slaves all of them, who end by offering themselves for sale, today, in all the marketplaces of Europe, to no matter what form of servitude (...). The men of Europe, abandoned to the shadows, have turned their backs upon the fixed and radiant point of the present. They forget the present for the future, the fate of humanity for the delusion of power, the misery of the slums for the mirage of the eternal city, ordinary justice for an empty promised land. They despair of personal freedom and dream of a strange freedom of the species; reject solitary death and give the name of immortality to a vast collective agony. They no longer believe in the things that exist in the world and in living man; the secret of Europe is that it no longer loves life. Its blind men entertain the puerile belief that to love one single day of life amounts to justifying whole centuries of oppression. (Camus, 1974, pp. 304–305)

For Cioran, Wunnenburger, and Camus, utopia is a version of a controlled paradise.

“Fantasies of Salvation”

The title of this paragraph is taken from Vladimir Tismăneanu’s book. By outlining the political, social, and cultural landscape of post-communist countries, the author highlighted motifs concerning political myths as imaginal and symbolic discourses redefining and integrating the shattered identity of the societies of the former Eastern Bloc. The imaginary of post-communist identities as national communities is created by a certain range of mythical or mythogenic elements.

Thus, political mythologies revolve around such major themes as the Golden Age (innocence lost, glorious patriarchal beginnings, the fall

into modernity); victimhood, martyrdom, treason and conspiracy; salvation and the advent of the millennium; charismatic saviors (who can be heroic individuals, allegedly predestined classes, or biologically defined races); and ultimate bliss in the form of revolutionary chiliasm, when leader, movement, nation, and mankind become one, whether in life or death. (Tismăneanu, 1998, p. 9)

In the post-communist world, we are dealing with various types of mythical messianic discourses, which both express longing for the “golden age” or “paradise lost” and have a compensatory character and show the possibilities for building national communities (strongly entangled in the ultra-political logic of inclusion and exclusion) in a fragmented reality after the collapse of “Leninist civilization” (Jowitt, 1992). Disillusionment with democratic pluralism and the free-market economy triggers a feeling of lost unity and community, which is being transposed messianically into a call to reclaim them, to revive utopias, to heroic mobilization, to reject liberal-democratic values “in the name of collective dreams of salvation” (Tismăneanu, 1992, p. 35). The idea of a return to the “golden age” is present especially in the myth of ethnic nationalism, which according to Tismăneanu turns out to be the strongest alternative to liberalism in Eastern Europe. In his opinion, the longing for lost certainties explains the growing nostalgia for the national and cultural values of the pre-communist period, as well as “the resurrection of the messianic myth of the Nation (the People as One), and the burning belief in its regenerative power” (Tismăneanu, 1992, p. 8).

It is also often noticeable that anti-liberal and anti-Western ideologies are distinguished by a characteristic syncretism—they combine the longing for social equality typical of communist society with an authoritarian or even fascist tradition. At the same time, they reject parliamentary government, democratic order, the rights of sexual minorities, and women’s rights. They glorify images of the past, along with the cultural and social values of the communist and pre-communist periods, both customarily identified with the worldview of the left (social, not cultural) and the right (in terms of historical politics, morality, national axiology). Although Tismăneanu’s descriptions of the post-communist world relate to the period immediately after the 1989–1991 revolution, they are still largely valid. This can be seen especially in the pictorial, symbolic, and mythical contexts accompanying the war in Ukraine, as well as in the political ideas of restoring the former glory and given borders of the USSR.

Post-communist forms of messianism seem to reflect a particular perception of reality. It is always about the optics of emphasizing dualities, contrasts, antagonisms, differences between “us” and “them.” The current reality is opposed to the non-existent world—what “is” always opposes what “should” be. According to Tismăneanu, the post-communist world is prone to a tantalizing combination of religious instinct and nationalistic self-identification. This results in all sorts of “pseudo-chiliastic” myths and images of national and moral regeneration. As he writes:

I use the term “pseudo-chiliastic” because the salvation these myths promise is one based on exclusion and marginalization of the very category of otherness. It is not a universalistic call for the unity of mankind in the glory of redemption but rather a call to achieve self-esteem by destroying and stigmatizing those who are different. The purity of the race, allegedly tarnished by aliens, gays, or cosmopolitan vermin, are themes that emerge in the discourses of new political movements from Zagreb to Bucharest, from Budapest to Saint Petersburg. (Tismăneanu, 1992, p. 63)

The examples of the post-communist world clearly show that messianic ideas appear in moments of destabilization, disintegration, and socio-political crises. For example, according to Kenneth Jowitt, the period 1989–1991 was one of destabilization and the formation of new identities, which resembles the formless earth from *Genesis*:

Jehovah’s response to a world “void and without form” was twofold: he created boundaries between and “named” the new entities. His task was greater, but ours is comparable—to respond to a world that will be increasingly unfamiliar, perplexing, and threatening; in which existing boundaries are attacked and changed; in which the challenge will be to establish new national/international boundaries and “name”—identify—the new entities. (Jowitt, 1992, p. 264)

In this perspective, it can be said that messianic ideas are a form of interpretation of the world. The world that exists is not the real world—the real world is the one yet to come. They make it possible to recognize the true meaning hidden under the layer of intricate and opaque political and social reality and show the ways of commitment to regain lost unity or the “golden age.” At the same time, as can be seen especially in the example of the former Yugoslavia, messianic ideas are associated with political

myths that constitute a call for ethnic cleansing. These myths—such as Serbian political myths—offer, among other things, images of a political messiah and a savior, as well as images of a “golden age” (Milošević & Stojadinović, 2012).

Conclusion: “Us” Versus “Them”

Images of paradise and utopia with a strong charge of emotions, feelings, hopes, and longings (which is certainly crucial when it comes to initiating and mobilizing political actions, protests, strikes, or revolutions) are inscribed in the imaginarity of the community. This community appears in retrospective projections as a “paradise” or “golden age of humanity,” in which human relationships were direct, harmonious, and lasting (or “in accordance with nature”). It can also manifest itself in the discourses of utopian anticipations. In each case, we are dealing with a kind of communion, synthesis, or fusion of all members of the community—the identity of each is founded on identification with the body of the community. Once again, one could refer to Laclau’s position to express a kind of play between the particular and the universal. A particular vision (retrospective projection, utopian anticipation) aspires to become a universal model or model in the light of which the immanent identity of a given community should be formed. In this sense, the community is to be founded on the homogenization of all its components and the removal (exclusion, physical elimination) of all those elements which, in the light of one or another particular criterion elevated to the rank of absolute criteria (ethnicity, nationality, sex, religion), must be considered alien, hostile, heterogeneous (non-immanent). A community founded on the exclusion and annihilation of others is, as we have said, a “community of death” and a “death of community.”

In the mythical kingdom of King John, only Christian virtue was to reign (“There are no poor people among us. We do not know what theft, flattery, greed and division are”) (Delumeau, 2020, p. 21); but it was also supposed to be a Christian military power directed against Islam. The sixteenth-century Reformations discussed original sin. Luther and Calvin claimed that humans had completely lost the capacity for the slightest good deed if God substituted His own will for their will—though God did this only for the “chosen.” Against this background, the question of earthly paradise was considered

“a memorial of our disobedience”; and the present was stigmatized. The content of the millenarian belief was that between the time in which we live, with its misfortunes and crimes, and eternity after the Last Judgment, the kingdom of Christ will reign with the resurrected “righteous” (these elects, as claimed in the first centuries of Christianity, are martyrs persecuted for their faith). The revolutionary continuators of the ideas of Joachim of Fiore (the apocalyptic imaginarium and the reign of “children” when the period of the history of the Spirit begins), who will resort to violence, clearly identify the enemies of the Christian-communist community and also describe what revenge on the enemies of Christ will look like. Particularly significant here is the figure of Thomas Müntzer, “the first plebeian revolutionary” (as Engels called him), who proclaimed that the atheist has no right to life if there is an obstacle for “pious people.” Jacob Taubes points out:

Joachim’s theology of history is taken to its conclusion by Thomas Müntzer’s theology of revolution. Müntzer and the Anabaptists want to bring about the *ecclesia spiritualis* on earth. Inevitably, the problem of violence arises in Müntzer’s work, and his theology justifies the use of force in a good cause. The theology of revolution is the theology of violence. (Taubes, 2009, p. 86)

As Bernard Rothmann, one of the spiritual fathers of the “New Zion” in 1530s Münster used to say: “We ‘chosen ones’, allies of the Lord, ‘we must work with Him and attack the ungodly on the day indicated by the Lord’” (Delumeau, 2020, p. 92). One of the acts of millenarian violence was the “Calabrian conspiracy” initiated by Campanella to establish a communist theocracy. During the civil war in seventeenth-century England, there is also talk of the “reign of the saints” who did not surrender to the Beast. The colonization of the Americas was an opportunity to create earthly paradises and utopias. In the eyes of the Franciscan missionaries, the multitudes of Indians in South America were to be the best part of the Christian world because of their natural predispositions, although some proclaimed the need to Christianize them through “moderate coercion” (communities gathering natives, under the leadership of the Franciscans and the power of viceroys, were called “utopias”). Indian communities were to be an earthly paradise but also a visible punishment for sin-stricken Spain. Among other things, “theological nationalism” is developing in North America, in which the gulf between the paradisiacal New World and the

Old Continent is to be highlighted: “In the whole world there is no country more free from fornication [than our country] and more distant from the degrading vices born of impiety” (Delumeau, 2020, p. 123). American patriotic millennialism identified the enemy with England and foreshadowed the coming of a New Eden in the United States. As for the revolutionary ideas of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, here the enemy was primarily class and/or a national enemy. Classic examples of the realization of the utopia of universal brotherhood, equality, and freedom are provided by the Jacobin dictatorship. The enemy is identified in this case either with the internal enemy (all those who do not meet the strict criteria of revolutionary virtue) or with the external enemy (the slogan “homeland in danger”). In the USSR, the mythical happiness and prosperity of a classless society was to be established, of course, after the elimination of all real or imagined enemies. In Nazi Germany, paradise appeared as the reign of blue-eyed and fair-haired *Übermensch*. As we have seen, even the times after the collapse of “Leninist civilization” were not free from mytho-political narratives about the golden age and the new messiah, which were based on the logic of inclusion and exclusion.

As you can see, ideas about a different, better world are created in a specific social, political, or cultural context; or—to be more precise—they arise in the field of current social, political, or religious antagonisms, as well as intersecting discourses fighting for hegemony (according to Laclau’s approach). For this reason, utopian images, like the imaginings of Paradisiacal reality, emphasize both current conflicts and hopes of overcoming them. Of course, a utopian vision pushed by a given social group or political force may be a dystopian vision for another, just as paradise may turn out to be “hell” or a nightmare for others.

As Zygmunt Bauman writes:

[U]topia is an integral element of the critical attitude, which always materializes in a group-specific form, representing a group experience and invariably partisan yearnings. A vision utopian to one group may well be dystopian to another (...) Utopias, therefore, help to lay bare and make conspicuous the major divisions of interest within a society. They contribute to the crystallization of major socio-political forces, thereby converting differences of status into differences of action. (Bauman, 1976, p. 15)

Thus, it is clear that the imaginarium of utopia and paradise is entangled in the mechanism of inclusion and exclusion mentioned at the beginning of the text, which inevitably accompanies conflicts and struggles in socio-political life. The particular ideas of certain socio-political groups and forces offer a model of a different, better world (the golden age, the kingdom of God on earth); but in the end, the supposed universality of this model will always be paid for by the exclusion, stigmatization, or physical annihilation of all those who do not conform to this model. The homogenizing tendency present in the utopian and paradisiacal imaginarium, therefore, consists in collective eudaimonism, uniformity, exclusion of difference, and the possibility of change. The images of paradise, as well as of utopias, show that these are not realities accessible to everyone, but only to those who are like “us.”

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The Problem of the “Primeval Mind” and Symbolic Thinking in Early Anthropological-Philosophical Approaches

Keywords: symbol, image, symbolic thinking, primeval mind, development of thinking, “mythical thought,” “savage mind,” Cassirer, Lévi-Strauss

Słowa kluczowe: symbol, obraz, myślenie symboliczne, umysł pierwotny, rozwój myślenia, „myśl mityczna”, „myśl nieoswojona”, Cassirer, Lévi-Strauss

Abstract

The article examines the concept of the “primeval mind,” the “savage mind,” and “mythical thought” in the approaches of early (Tylor, Lévy-Bruhl) and later (Lévi-Strauss) anthropology with some philosophical approaches (Vico, Cassirer). The aim of the research is to demonstrate the common elements of these notions and to consider certain approaches from the point of view of contemporary research on the presence of the image in culture, indicating how much these early concepts help to understand the relationship between imaging and thinking, as well as its importance and impact on the “omnipresence of the image” in our culture.

Introduction

We can observe an interest in the relationship between symbolic and abstract thinking; these relationships can be viewed from the perspective of various academic disciplines and their specific approaches, for example:

“Paleoanthropologists have long sought to explain the origins of modernity and modern thinking. Debates about their origins usually include the terms ‘abstraction’ and ‘symbolic thinking,’ often proffered without clear or operational definitions” (Coolidge & Overmann, 2012). The problem of the origins of thinking is pivotal from the point of view of many disciplines. In many sub-branches of anthropology, this is sometimes seen as very distant in the development of the species—the beginnings of symbolic thinking are sometimes related to the interpretation of artifacts from 32,000 years ago; and nowadays (neuroanthropology) it is understood in connection with the evolution of the human brain, the “neurological substrate”—especially in the area of the intraparietal sulcus and the angular gyrus due to their role in numerosity and abstraction—which connects it with perceived objects, and hence also generating the ability for high-symbolic thinking (Coolidge & Overmann, 2012). There have been many previous attempts to portray the concurrency and interactions between socio-cultural and biological factors. Turner and Whitehead (2008) note “the feedback relationship between these two types of representation—the collective and the cortical—and which demonstrates that collective representations can have well-defined cortical representations” (Turner & Whitehead, 2008, p. 43), emphasizing the reciprocity of relationships and the profound influence of social factors: “Even our basic perceptions are colored profoundly by our social experience” (Turner & Whitehead, 2008, p. 44). The history of research into symbolic thinking is, however, of a different nature. It started first with noticing its specificity.

The “primeval mind” and “traditional culture” feature among the basic issues in anthropology. Nowadays, however, the first of these is rarely used—currently, mainly in reference to the history of anthropology, especially the evolutionist current, but also in relation to the central dispute of modern times, which concerns in general the possibility for anthropological cognition, representationism and the question of how we can even think about “getting to know the other” living in a different culture and the networks of meanings created within it. If the study of the diversity of cultures, the “interest in the Other” (Tokarska-Bakir, 2006), and “the theoretical approach to the ‘us-them’” relationship (Burszta, 1992) focused the attention of the developing anthropology, then along with the category of “primeval mind” (Burszta, 1992, p. 7) we are at the very center of this science and of the possibilities of knowledge which she believed

she was or was realizing, and of contemporary critics of them, which in science and philosophy eventually led to a "crisis of representationalism." A specific basis was also the diagnosed "crisis of tribalism in its pure form" (Burszta, 1992) and the questions of whether anthropology as a science is possible at all. Its foundations discussed nowadays are the classical empiricist theory, the positivist paradigm of the theory of cognition; and there was also support from evolutionist psychology and functionalism in sociology (Turner & Whitehead, 2008, p. 44). This foundation permeated anthropology from its origins to the 1950s and 1960s. Since then, this science has been accompanied by many decades of discussions over itself and its theoretical foundations, and their certain discreditation (Radomski, 2016). This criticized not only the status of its foundation, but also its contribution to political domination, ethnocentrism, and its entanglement in colonialism (Radomski, 2016), emphasizing that it is a discourse entangled in the context of one's own culture (Burszta, 1992, p. 9). However, its potential for commitment and emancipation is not denied. Nowadays, anthropology is still convinced that anthropological knowledge "allows us to better understand our world," enables discussion "in a long conversation about humanity," and bridges "mutual understanding and respect."¹ There are, however, many problems in this mission of anthropology: the already marked dispute over representationalism, but also others, such as the aging of experience and its meaning, the knowledge that flows from it for successive generations, a direct threat from the "Other," or the phenomenon of infotainment (Tokarska-Bakir, 2006). One can also admit that in the face of contemporary political events, war, refugees, and migrations, the problem with Otherness is already a pressing central problem.

The "Primeval Mind"

The first approaches to the problem can be found in treating the activity of the mind in the cultures of tribal societies as "lower" or "childish." Some forms of this attitude have a long history in European thought and one can observe such reasoning, for example, in the approach of G. Vico. His thought is understood as a kind of anti-naturalistic turn of the eighteenth century,

¹ See European Association of Social Anthropologists [EASA] (2015).

in which the sources of new approaches are “triple”: the history of human nature is linked to universal history: “Thus our science becomes at the same time the history of ideas, customs and beliefs of the human race. It is a triple source of principles of the history of human nature, which are principles of universal history ...” (Vico, 1966, pp. 160–161 § 368). Human nature in some features, writes Vico, is shared with animal nature. We must know through the senses. “Enormous” is the scale of sensuality, rich in imagination, and just as great in the initial inability to reason. It is awakened by delight and admiration. The nature of the mind in these initial stages of humanity is similar to the nature of children—“[T]hings admired are assigned a substantial being” (Vico, 1966, p. 167). Primeval humans are therefore “like children of mankind.” They are ruled by imagination stimulated by sensual motives, combined with passions and directing the mind toward the material element. Thus, the features of the mind of primeval people are: sensuality, active imagination, emotionality, and curiosity that stimulates cognition. The beginning of individual life and the beginning of cultural development are similar. A story, a myth, and a fairy tale (*fabula*); the first stories refer to reality in a metaphorical, not mirror-like way. They are the imposition of the internal operations of the mind and the perception of reality external to it in a certain unity. Thus, the mind itself and reality are reflected in the formations of the mind. Imagination triggers the so-called fantastic universal (*fantastico universale*), which gives rise to images of surreal beings; the divine figure is like a fantastic universal, and this one resembles the gods: “There are amazingly many Jupiters, because every pagan nation had its own Jupiter” (Vico, 1966, p. 170).

Imagination, then, is the main driving force of the mind; and structures organize all its creations. This conception remains in nineteenth-century evolutionist interpretations. In ethnopsychological terms, ethnology searched for material to describe the universal laws of human thinking manifested in various cultures. However, quick efforts were made to draw attention to the qualitative distinctiveness of the psyche and mentality in so-called primeval cultures. Tylor and Frazer consider the imagination to be unbridled (freaks of the imagination; Tylor, 1896), rich but creating according to certain types. The effects of its operation, however, do not deserve to be believed because these effects are not based on the systematic observation of the processes of nature. They find fantastic causes in the attempts of their imagination to meet cognitive goals. So the original mind

is imperfect, gives fantastic causes of phenomena, trying to answer general questions. Tylor believed that the imagination was "playful, wild and rich" and that it influenced the creation of a "mythological mood of mind" in which there are some attempts to explain natural processes. The primeval human is a "simplistic philosopher" who projects their states of mind and life into the image of the all-living nature (animism) on the images of the external world. The very mythological mood of the mind is to some extent a relic, which persists, for example, in poetry by a certain inertia in the higher stages of cultural development. The *primal mind* is guided by imitative and contact magic. This kind of magic is based on false analogies in relations between objects. A human's imagination is ruled by fear and ignorance in the knots of "constantly changing phantasmagoria." The primal mind is then the "enchanted land of magic and myth." Its state is no longer directly available to us because we are no longer able to think like primeval humans.

L. Lévy-Bruhl's concept of the pre-logical mind rose to another level of consideration. His work developed in primeval societies (*société inférieure*, lit. "lower"; Lévy-Bruhl, 1992), and is guided by polysynthetic perception (through various sensory channels) and mystical participation, i.e., by perceiving "facts" as manifestations of the action of the spiritual continuum constituting the essence of reality. "Facts" in external processes "merely exist." They have no power to shake their beliefs about this spiritual wholeness. The prelogical mind connects data together in a certain associative whole; the rules for organizing data are so-called collective representations, passed on by the power of tradition from generation to generation, imposed on an individual, universally respected and strongly associated with the emotions of fear and adoration, and with the motoric sphere. Memory and emotions play a role of psychological importance in the formation of collective representations. There is no principle of contradiction in them. The power of the emotions evoked exceeds the logical value much later in the development of cognition. There is no division into the object and the subject of cognition yet ("Les primitifs voient avec les mêmes yeux que nous: ils ne perçoivent pas avec le même esprit"; Lévy-Bruhl, 1910, p. 38)—"Primevals see with the same eyes as us: they do not perceive with the same mind"). "Pre-logic" is "other logic."

Wundt's ideas sound similar—and within the framework of evolutionism. The myth-creating mind responds to the needs of humans to reduce the fear of the unknown world and tame it by giving it a specific shape and

name. Just as pointing out that myth is intended to (incorrectly) explain natural phenomena or (veiled) present distant historical events, psychological views of it as a tool for reducing anxiety and “taming” reality—all these sets of explanations were also criticized. Cassirer noted that the type of psychological explanations “appropriated” the area of myth, and its influence led to its being treated in the perspective of “objective cognitive nullity,” as if it were not an insight into reality external to the mind, but only an internal game, with a feeling of anxiety and fear against the unknown world. Psychological approaches to the myth, however, went beyond the horizon of “fearful mytho-genesis” and falsifying the image of the world, or extra-world escapism. There are far more complex approaches among them, which still renewing the question about the primeval mind in a new framework. Structuralism and psychoanalysis were considered to be trends contributing to a change in the contemporary perception of symbolic culture and myth (Wunenburger, 2005). What was discovered as the structures ordering the work of the imagination and its leading influence on the operation of the primeval mind, psychoanalysis discovers in a different perspective and also in the activity of the mind of the individual as demarcation features of the unconscious. The primeval mind is the unconscious mind. In this sense, it is not simply something biologically and culturally transcendent in terms of evolution, the ancient *archai* of the human being, but its still-active and determining evolutionary bio-cultural basis. Structuralism, on the other hand, having rejected the already discredited concept of the evolutionary stages of cultural development and mind, pointed to the specificity of the savage mind based on intellectual motives and binary oppositions in our thinking, trying to build a “mythological bridge” over the gap between opposites. Human thinking is always the same, but in the savage mind it faces specific objects: the contradictions of our existence and questions of an eschatological nature. Thus, both psychoanalysis and structuralism rejected the hypothesis of “earlier stages,” which would be “crossed” in the modern mind. In psychoanalytical terms, the unconscious is an evolutionary heritage; but it has not been deactivated by the level of developing abstract thinking and rules of logic, and in structuralist terms the “savage mind” (*la pensée sauvage*) is at the same time human thinking in general but confronted with particularly significant contradictions of human existence.

So gradually, instead of reflecting on the specificity and imperfection of the prelogical primeval mind, a long process of attempts to

characterize the specificity and demarcation features of symbolic/mythological thinking began. The depiction of “mythical thought” in Cassirer’s philosophy was of great importance.

Mythological/Mythical Thinking

Cassirer’s approach to “mythical thought” (Cassirer, 1977) is set in a different, neo-Kantian background for the activity of symbolic forms. Myth is one of the pure symbolic forms mediating between the mind and the world—“it lives in a world of pure forms that are considered completely objective” (Cassirer, 1977, p. 35). Mythical thought is a flywheel in the process of the development of human consciousness. It is obvious to Cassirer that the stage that follows is an ethical thought in which the foundation of spirituality is not so much a simple *bios*, but *ethos*, moral awareness. Thinking in myth is specific; it has some distinctive features: (1) associating occurs according to the principle of temporal contact (*post hoc ergo propter hoc*); (2) it also occurs according to spatial contact (*juxta hoc ergo propter hoc*); (3) it considers parts as equal to the whole (*pars pro toto*); (4) it freely determines the causes of phenomena; (5) what is spiritual is understood as material substance; (6) the function of intuition dominates in cognition; (7) myth is closely related to magic. In its reflection on myth, philosophy should “try to grasp, in concreto, the particular way in which, within each scope, what is sensual becomes a carrier of meaning” (Cassirer, 2004, p. 53).

So what is the value of mythological thinking? Is it only inscribed in the history of culture as some chronological—or even coexisting with—abstract thinking?

From a different philosophical and anthropological perspective, Lévi-Strauss adds value to the savage mind as to the thinking of modern humans. A myth is the result of an intellectual impulse, i.e., an attempt to find an answer to the question of how contradictions relate to each other, and not a vague creation derived from “cloudy feelings,” and even tries to organize and find expression for them (Lévi-Strauss, 2000). So it is also the result of the mind’s operation of juxtaposing contradictions and connecting them. It is a logical tool that operates on the extremely difficult problems of existence. Humankind therefore “has always thought well,” and the myth itself is “for thought.” It enables the articulation and

naming of “unformulated states” (Lévi-Strauss, 2000). Magical thinking is not a start, a beginning, a sketch, he writes, but a related, parallel system that deals with phenomena other than science (Lévi-Strauss, 1962a, p. 26).

Although it rarely goes to the realities at the level to which the objects of interest of modern science belong, the intellectual procedures and methods of observation that occur on both these levels are comparable. In both of these cases, the subject of thought is the entire world, at least as a set of means for meeting needs. (Lévi-Strauss, 1962a, p. 8)

But the pragmatic goals are not overriding: “But here is the point that its first goal is not a practical goal. It meets intellectual requirements prior to or alternative to meeting needs” (Lévi-Strauss, 1962a, p. 19).

He calls magical thinking (in reference to the works of M. Mauss and H. Hubert) “gigantic variations on the principle of causality” (Lévi-Strauss, 1962a, p. 21). Lévi-Strauss even suggests that magical (etiological) thinking should be considered as an expression of unconscious understanding of the truth about causation as the principle of the world. “It seems, then, that man started with the most difficult things” (Lévi-Strauss, 1962a, p. 23), i.e., the principles of organizing the whole of reality, and then narrows down its field of research.

Naming and understanding are related to needs. Lévi-Strauss also emphasizes the savage mind’s perceived taste for “objective understanding of the states” of the outside world and “intense attention” directed at its own environment. These are the least appreciated qualities of the “savage mind.” He tries to show (quoting H. C. Conklin) a high degree of integration with the environment and an extremely rich knowledge of plants and animals— “[T]here are two separate ways of scientific cognition, both of course being a function of two strategic levels on which nature can be attacked by scientific cognition. One corresponds to the level of perception and imagination, the other is more distant from this level ...” (Lévi-Strauss, 1962a, p. 28). Magical thinking and myth use intellectual *bricolage*: that is, explanations and connections that they have in their availability. The *bricoleur* talks about himself and life by choosing what is around, and what he has with him (Lévi-Strauss, 1962a, p. 37). Mythical thought moves and shifts its elements in search of meaning.

Although Lévi-Strauss wrote that he hated traveling and travelers and that one can devote “six months of travel, privation, and sickening physical

weariness merely in order to record an unpublished myth, a new marriage rule, or complete list of names of clans names" (Lévi-Strauss, 1962b, p. 17), he was one of those researchers who recognized a value in the savage mind. Myth is also thinking that is interested in the outside world, based on observation and the search for the causes of phenomena, generalizing thinking and looking for order and meaning.

The image of the "primeval mind" can be brought out in many conceptions of philosophical, anthropological, and psychological thought. The name for this image is not the same everywhere. Behind the specificity of the operation of thinking in symbolic culture there are many terms: the primary mind, magical attitude, "prelogical thinking," "mythical/mythological thought," "symbolic thinking," and even in some way referred to in a different horizon, the "savage mind," "myth-logic." These point to some different primeval mind working in a different way from the modern one or some other pole of mind or the same mind, but operating on different objects. Symbolic culture in traditional (tribal) societies is different from the contemporary one of industrial, post-industrial and now, digital society. The difference studied by anthropologists was recognized as resulting, inter alia, from a different mind operation or from an altered mind pole or from different objects of thought.

Common Features in the Concepts of Mythical Thought

It can be seen that the demarcation features of the mental process reflected in all these concepts can be grouped according to some similarities. This process operates on images, combining them into groups of spatial or temporal coexistence; the *pars pro toto principle* works, and the principle of identity does not function; there are coexisting contradictions (Lévi -Strauss) (the principle of *coincidentia oppositorum*, Wierciński, 1994).

Many of these features are characterized negatively. This negativity is treated as the absence of certain rules of formal logic (Nowicka, 2007). These semantems are characterized by the ability to stimulate emotions and even worship attitude and motoric activity; they strongly affect the systems of understanding and action. This is always linked to the relation of an individual's activity with socially shaped meanings (Holl, 2018, p. 3).

Is this thinking? Can these operations be considered the cognitive process of association and inference operating on symbols, images, and judgments? The neurobiological approach, which recognizes the archaic lineage of images and their relationship with feelings, as well as the influence of perceptual images, establishes an even stronger relationship between images and the very process of thinking as a movement, a sequence of transformations of perceptual representations and the result of the activity of unconscious memory searching operations. Even when it comes to the currently designated main aspects of thinking, the dynamic and motoric aspect, as related to processuality and goal orientation, are certainly noticeable in mythical thinking, while the operational aspect is definitely different from the abstract one. “Symbolic thinking” is understood as operations on symbols and signs aimed at a communicative and cognitive goal; what thought operates is translations of affective-emotional experiences. It seems that many types of thinking, if not all thinking, must be based on the manipulation of symbols. Coolidge and Overmann noticed this contiguity of abstract and symbolic thinking:

Abstraction is generally considered the act or process of deciding that something has a general quality or characteristic apart from its concrete realities or specific properties. Common definitions of symbolic thinking (symbolization) are similar: something used for or regarded as representing something else, where the symbol can be arbitrary (possess no qualities of the represented object). In this regard, symbolization can be viewed as a more concretized category of abstraction, because abstraction is more often considered in the context of mental representations without external or physical referent, though there is certainly some kind of internal concept or referent. (Coolidge & Overmann, 2012, p. 204)

Symbolic thinking is, however, earlier; and the operations themselves between these types of thinking vary greatly.

The Anthropology of Image and Iconosphere—Recapitulation

We are participating in a new type of culture that produces new forms of work and communication, and even the time and space of work-related practices. This creates a new field for anthropological research—discussion

communities, and relationships between online and offline reality, as well as large data collections of texts, photos, and videos. It is becoming possible to perceive polyphony and dialogicality; there are also very individualized forms of records of experiences and of reaching the majority of the world’s population, “access to what is more intimate and personal” (Miller, 2018).

With its early questions about the activity of the primeval mind, anthropology for a long time could have been based on the permanence and very slow changes in research and formulated conclusions about traditional cultures, the territory of which began to “shrink” over time; now, however, it is faced with the problem of rapid change as such, a “flood of novelty” within its own culture. One of the seemingly obvious conclusions is the domination of images in the space of communication; even the phenomenon of “viral” images on the one hand, and ideas on the other hand, quickly create patterns of normativity. The problem of mythological thinking allows us to better understand why images are becoming the most important carriers in the space of cyberculture, presenting a certain continuity of imaging, “image-active thought activities” (Kwiatkowska, 2013, p. 174; named after H. Bredekamp) and pictorial practices and their significance in the connection of an individual’s activity and socio-cultural spaces.

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Androgyny and a Dream: Gaston Bachelard’s Question about a New Anthropology

Keywords: Androgyny, anima, animus, dream, psyche, anthropology

Słowa kluczowe: Androgynia, anima, animus, marzenie, psyche, antropologia

Abstract

Androgyny as the idea of unity and wholeness appears in the thought of Gaston Bachelard in the context of a poetic dream. It is in this dream, as we learn from “Poetics of Dreams,” that the reconciliation of *anima* and *animus*, female and male in one psyche, takes place. Bachelard calls the *anima* dream the philosophy of androgynous existence, which shows us a double idealization of humanity. The *anima* and *animus*, confirming the androgyny of the psyche, are Self-moments. This dual nature of mental being is expressed through two antagonisms represented by the function of reality (adaptation to reality and social life) and the function of irreality (the loneliness of dreams); supervised thought (criticism, censorship) and free dreaming (liking, acceptance, attachment); work (effort) and rest (relaxation); anxiety (project, anticipation) and peace (presence in oneself), especially around the duality that crystallizes in the distinction between the scientific mind (*l’esprit scientifique*) under the sign of the *animus* (concepts, knowledge) and the poetic mind (*l’esprit poétique*) *anima* (images, communion of souls). Androgyny, understood as the integral life of the psyche, is for Bachelard both a perspective and valuable, and he identifies attempts to seek it with the question of the meaning of human existence. The study of the dream shows its fundamental importance for the

balance of the psyche. The power of images understood in this way then creates the art of living. In this sense, Bachelard becomes a precursor of a new perspective in the field of reflection on the issue of the image—it turns out that the image is responsible for the relationship between man and the world.

I am alone, so there are four of us.
Le 'double' est le double de son double.

Gaston Bachelard

The concept of androgyny, the combination of male and female characteristics in one being (Greek *andro*—male, *gyne*—female), in the broader understanding of the idea of unity and whole, appears in Gaston Bachelard's thought in a non-obvious way. He does not recall the mythological story of the bisexual Hermaphrodite—the son of Hermes and Aphrodite, with whom, after an unsuccessful attempt to seduce him, the nymph Salmakis merges into one character in the water; nor the myth of Androgyne from the Platonic *Banquet*, telling of the primeval spherical, two-headed, four-handed and four-legged being, male and female at the same time, so powerful that the gods, out of fear of her, decide to separate her into male and female.

Instead, Bachelard wrote *La Poétique de la Rêverie*, in which he devotes an entire chapter to *anima* and *animus* (Bachelard, 1960, pp. 48–83). He is guided by the understanding of the archetype of androgyny as the primordial cosmic unity that existed as a whole before the division took place (Singer, 1976, p. 20). This whole is a combination of opposites and often explains the cosmological myth that represents the origin of the world from a sexless or gender-specific deity. This duality appears in Bachelard's poetics. In it, he focuses primarily on the poetic dream (*la rêverie*), daytime and conscious, so significantly separated from sleep (*le rêve*), this tavern of phantoms, dragons, lizards, after which there is a need for a break. "The rest of the night does not belong to us. It is not a good of our being. Sleep opens up an inn of phantoms in us. In the morning we have to sweep the shadows; psychoanalysis to ask for backward guests, and even from the depths of the abyss to ask monsters from another era, dragons and lizards, all these unassimilated—non-digestible—animals of male and female Fusion" (Bachelard, 1960, p. 54). The dream study turns out to be extremely

feminist, pointing to the positive aspects of the female element. The dream is made of *anima*: It gives peace and relaxation, eludes criticism and competition; but it is in it that the dreaming self meets its *animus*. Male and female are united in the form of one I; what's more, during a dream, this dream self discovers its *anima* and its *animus*. This is an interesting idea that multiplies the existence of our self in search of fullness. From the *Poetics of Dreams*, we also learn about the multiplicity of the human condition: The human of the day (*l'homme diurne*) and the human of the night (*l'homme nocturne*), the thinker *cogito* and the dreamer *cogito*, the human of poem and the human of theorem. This multiplicity may be a contribution to the attempt to present a new anthropology: androgynous, holistic, total, which in my opinion echoes Bachelard's analyses.

The Androgynous Psyche

The terms *anima*, *animus* immediately bring to mind Carl Gustav Jung's depth psychology. They are one of the many archetypes—Great Mother, Sage, Shadow—with which we have the ability to adapt to the world. The Self (*le Soi*) functions as a true matrix of archetypes. *Anima* and *animus* as bisexual archetypes reveal ideas of complementary opposition. *Anima* is the female archetype; *animus* is the male. They are their opposites and are rooted in the unconscious of each person, i.e., each man carries an imprinted image of femininity; each woman has an image of masculinity. The *anima* understood as the *psyche* is the opposite of the *animus* understood as the *logos*. Nevertheless, their combination brings unity. In his *Psychology of Transference* and in *Mysterium Coniunctionis*, Jung writes about the Self not understood as the center, but the whole, encompassing the consciousness and the unconscious, as an alchemical *complexio oppositorum*, the unity of opposites. He uses this alchemical term alternately with *unio mystica*, *coincidentia oppositorum*, *coniunctio*. “*Coniunctio* is an image given a priori, which has always occupied a prominent place in the history of the development of the human spirit. If we look at the ancient history of this idea, we find two sources in alchemy: Christian and pagan. The Christian source is undoubtedly the teaching about Christ and the Church, the Bridegroom (*sponus*) and the Bride (*sponsa*), with Christ having the role of the Sun (*Sol*) and the Church the role of the Moon

(*Luna*). The pagan source is, on the one hand, the idea of sacred nuptials (Greek: *hierós gámos, hierogamyi*), and on the other, the wedding union of mysta and deity” (Jung, 1997, p. 14). For Jung, this is the true fulfillment of the Self in the process of individuation. The process of becoming oneself takes place through recognition and getting to know the Other precisely in the context of *anima* and *animus*. It is the realization of the masculine and feminine in each person, it is a mental whole that goes beyond the biological and sexual level. He understands the term *androgynia* no differently. In depth psychology, it is the unity of femininity and masculinity, the spiritual fullness of both sexes. The unity of man and woman is considered a symbol of the spirit (divinity, transcendence). The cultural and social aspect of androgyny expresses the love of a man and a woman, marriage, and gender partnerships. The state of androgyny is the goal of marriage and spiritual development (for a woman, the unconscious includes the male element, and for a man, the female element). The ritualistic aspect of androgyny, often found in dreams, is expressed by the wedding ceremony. A natural symbol of androgyny in dreams, religion, or art is the circular serpent (ouroboros). The unity of femininity and masculinity can be expressed in dreams by the harmonious complements of bipolar symbols (yin and yang, sun and moon, earth and sky, night and day, etc.), (Jung, 1967, pp. 198–223).

Bachelard thinks a lot like Jung. He invites us to think of male-female duality as a gender duality present in every human being: “Man and woman speak in the solitude of our being” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 60). Each human soul contains a significant difference in relation to the action of two mental forces. Bachelard calls them *anima, animus* to escape from physiological, sexual, or social reductionism. He believes that this duality appears at the level of mental life as a constitutive category for our loneliness and our intimate existence. He repeats, after Jung, that the human *psyche* at its beginnings is androgynous. It also emphasizes that the unconscious is not a repressed consciousness but a primal nature that “holds up the powers of androgyny within us” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 70).

Bachelard uses the terms *anima, animus* to make us aware of the dual nature of mental being. They are expressed through two antagonisms presented by the function of reality (adaptation to reality and social life) and the function of irreality (the loneliness of dreams); supervised thought (criticism, censorship) and free dreaming (sympathy, acceptance, joining); work (effort) and rest (relaxation); anxiety (project, anticipation) and peace

(presence in oneself)—especially around the duality that crystallizes in the distinction between the scientific mind (*l'esprit scientifique*) under the sign of the animus (concept, knowledge) and the poetic mind (*l'esprit poétique*) the sign of anima (images, communion of souls). In the words of Bachelard, from the introduction to *La Psychanalyse du Feu*: “Initially, the axes of poetry and science are opposite. Philosophy can only wish to render poetry and science complementary, to bring them together as well-founded opposites. We must therefore oppose the exuberant poetic mind with the stern scientific mind—antipathy towards the former is healthy caution” (Bachelard, 1938, p. 12). From *La Poétique de la Rêverie*: “Two dictionaries should be organized, one for the study of science, the other for poetry” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 13) and “two opposing fields of mental activity, which are reason and imagination” (Bachelard, 1960, pp. 46–47). He therefore calls for the separation of reason and imagination, concept and image. There must be clearly defined boundaries, both objective and methodological, between science and poetry (or art in general). Everything that in the field of scientific cognition is an element related to the imagination, toward which humankind—as a scientific subject—must be extremely careful, appears in a completely different light when we enter the domain of poetic creativity. Imagination does not succumb to the disciplinary power of reason here.

There is thus a significant problem regarding the unity of the human mind. Gilbert Durand, a student of Bachelard and a critic of his thoughts, believes that Bachelard's philosophy deals with the problem of the “psyche divide into ‘noumenotechnics’ of science and the happy awareness of phenomenological poetic inadvertences” (Durand, 1980, p. 7). The subject can therefore transform the world in two ways. He has at his disposal the objectification of science, which is oriented toward the practical and technical mastery of nature, or the subjectification of poetry, which brings the world closer to the ideal or leads humans to (fleeting) happiness and freedom “from-the-world,” offering a moment of rest on the basis of a poetic moment and respite.

The following question arises here as to whether the duality of the human being should be limited to its two activities of the mind, science and art. Female-male dialectics, *anima-animus* belong to the antagonism of the rest of the dream and the effort of cognition. Bachelard thus contrasts the rest and tranquility of the loneliness of the dream in *anima* with the efforts

and projects of thought in the *animus*. Importantly, according to Bachelard, there is no hierarchy between these two fields of the psyche; they are opposite and complementary. He himself emphasizes the value of dreams and the importance of active, creative imagination for the psyche, which for the rationalist tradition are the domain of fantasy and illusion. Bachelard likes the idea that relaxing in *anima* is not the end of *animus* thinking. A dream is a dimension of the original activity of the psyche. The distinction between *anima* and *animus* is not based on sexual, biological, psychological, or social division; it has nothing to do with gender division or with the categorization of men and women in everyday life. For him, these divisions are brutal and reduce the essence of humanity.

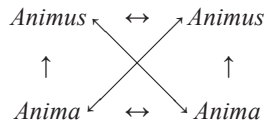
On the other hand, Bachelard writes that all deep dreams are essential femininity, that “the poetics of dreams is the poetics of *anima*” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 53). This is corroborated by the key phrase from *La Poétique de la Réverie*: “And here is the central thesis that I want to defend in this essay: Dream is under the sign of *anima*. When a dream is truly deep, the entity that dreams in us is *anima*” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 53). The dream reveals itself as a certain state that does not have to build projects; it is finally completely disconnected from the *animus*. “A dream frees every dreamer, man and woman, from the world of demands” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 73). The human being finds a place in his dream which is a respite, and it is from *anima*. We have no doubt that Bachelard clearly uses the mind’s division into the work of the *animus* and the rest of the *anima*. This is clearly seen in the different ways of reading poetry. You can read *animus*, be mindful, critical, and ready for a retort; one can read in *anima* while dreaming, and then “the pictures will appear to us as transcendental gifts” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 56). Poetic images make us dream. “Here we read and suddenly we dream” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 77). How else can you read poetry without dreaming?

The Androgyny of the Dream

Bachelard clarifies the analyses of the duality of human existence using the two categories of real and ideal being. The first being is everyday, real, factual life; the second is poetic life. By this he means “a life in speech, a life that makes sense by speaking” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 49). It is especially

poetic language, poetry that goes beyond censorship and supervision, which allows us to recognize ourselves as a double being. We then meet male and female duality within one soul. "The further we go down into the depth of the speaking being, the easier the otherness of all speaking being will reveal itself as male and female difference" (Bachelard, 1960, p. 50). The duality of being is thus revealed most fully in speech: Obviously not colloquial, not ordinary, but poetic. In order to join this essential duality, one must abandon the prose of life and place oneself in the axis of dreams.

How, then, are we to describe a human being as a dual existence apart from sexual, gender, and social oppositions? Bachelard finds a hint in the dynamism and transformation of a dream: "By taking a dreamer to another world, a dream makes a dreamer someone other than he is. Meanwhile, the other one is himself, a double of himself" (Bachelard, 1960, p. 68). The question here is, in what sense can we discover what is different in relation to our self? Does not moving a dreamer into another world make them someone else than themselves? Bachelard believes that in the dream there is a transformation of the dreamer's being, which is their division, as a result of which they find their second Self. However, this has nothing to do with the pathological, abnormal doubling, which we have to deal with, for example, in schizophrenia. The oneirism of the day is full of awareness and clarity, different from the oneirism of the night, in which It is dreaming, not Me. This is nevertheless a highly paradoxical situation, because "in order to analyze all the psychological possibilities that the dream loner has to face, one will have to start with the motto: I am alone, so there are four of us. A lonely dreamer comes face to face with quadripolar situations" (Bachelard, 1960, p. 95). We are dealing here with a duplication of being, caused by the activity of a dream. Since my I possesses both the *anima* and the *animus*, my dreaming self also has them. "In this way, a being designed by a dream—because our dreaming self is a projected being—is doubled as we are; he is, like ourselves, anima animus. Here is the knot in all our paradoxes: "The 'other' is the doubling of a double being. I am alone, so there are four of us" (Bachelard, 1960, p. 95).



Source: G. Bachelard, *La Poétique de la Rêverie*, p. 64.

In support of his theses, Bachelard includes the above diagram in the book. A dream turns out to be a life doubled. What does it mean? This means that being designed in a dream is also doubled in *anima* and *animus*. Bachelard understands the everyday human and the dreamer as beings who realize this androgyny. The first case appears when considering the psychology of being in love. In the communion of two beings in love, the dialectic of *anima* and *animus* is manifested in the form of one psychological projection, or even more precisely in the form of two crossed projections. When a person projects his own animus properties on a woman, the woman projects her animus values on the man. This process enables mutual recognition. It happens in the field of imagination, not in social life and its tragedies (imagined life and idealization processes). A dual existence doubles in a dream, in the frame of ideal interpersonal relations. The second is about the construction of the dream itself. The quadruple dream is therefore the secret of androgyny and integral being. Androgyny exists in the coexistence of opposites, hence, Bachelard's reference to Jung and the reference to the scheme of psychological design through the relations of the four polarities between the two psychisms.

The Anthropology of Anima

“It is essentially about going out of oneself, going beyond a specific, historically deeply entangled individual situation, and regaining the original, superhuman and suprahistorical situation, which preceded the creation of human society; for the recovery of a paradoxical situation that cannot be maintained in a secular existence, in historical time, which, however, needs to be re-integrated from time to time in order to recreate, if only for a moment, the initial fullness, unborn source of holiness and power” (Eliade, 1999, p. 136). This is what Mircea Eliade writes about androgyny in *Mephistopheles and Androgyne*. Androgyn reveals himself

as an ancient symbol of humankind's longing for unity and harmony with the cosmos. This longing is felt in Bachelard as well. Everything he writes about the dream is really meant to show us a possible state of reconciliation between humanity and the world. In this sense, he seems to be practicing a kind of anthropology.

In the order of *anima*, not *animus*, Bachelard seeks the source of value. Shaping dynamic dreams and then fully devoting oneself to them turns out to be beneficial for the subject (*bienfaisant*). Poetic dreams have a beneficial and soothing effect on a person. Their symbolic power is therapeutic, as well as fundamental, to the balance of the psyche. The power of images understood in this way creates the art of living. In this sense, Bachelard becomes a precursor of a new approach in the field of reflection on the problem of the image—it turns out that it is the image that is responsible for the relationship between the human and the world.

Anxiety and fear, and other existential-emotional states can be balanced and soothed through the interaction of images. As Bachelard points out, this allows us to transcend the fragile and tragic nature of our human condition. The dreamlike creations of the imagination confirm the power of human imagination. Despite the appearance of negative images, the imagination prefers “happy dreams” that follow the directions set by the dynamic images of verticality and desires that Bachelard talks about at length in *La terre et les rêveries de la volonté* (Bachelard, 1948, p. 344). The human psyche, equipped with emotionally marked pictorial representations, determines its attitude toward the world. It is thanks to them that a person can poetically enrich his or her emotional, emotional, and imaginative states. Personal, subjective, and intimate image creation turns out to be the key to human existential well-being. This means that the image has a very important function to fulfill. Acting in a person's emotional sphere, it can lift their spirits, indicate the meaningfulness of their existence, or detach them from negative reality. Being immersed in its dream, the I cuts myself off from knowing the hostile and unfavorable world, non-being and non-me. So the person situates themselves in the space of happiness, in the “center of the world” (M. Eliade), where only they and what is closest to them exist. “Through irreality, we enter the world of trust, the world of trust, our own world of dreams” (Bachelard, 1938, p. 12). In this way, dreams of intimacy support human existence; and the imaginative activity is characterized by

usefulness. The dream world is primarily therapeutic. The respite flowing from it becomes an inseparable element of the mental health of an individual.

La Poétique de la Réverie and *La Poétique de l'Espace* ask about human existence. In the pages of the poet, Bachelard defines the soul/*anima*, opposing and escaping reason/*logos*, as one that shows and explains meaning to humans. The soul, not defined in a religious way, but close to the psychological approach to the psyche, discovers the field of our current and future possibilities. Transcending one's Self is synonymous with sublimation, when a person discovers the strength to go beyond it, when it finds the possibility of rising above its real existence. Then, human existence would not be a complete existence. In the opening pages of *La Poétique de l'Espace*, Bachelard emphasizes the difference between the mind and the soul in the context of French philosophical vocabulary: "The philosophy of the contemporary French language—having strengthened psychology—is presented in the duality of soul and spirit. They are somewhat muffled from a subject perspective, vast in German philosophy where the difference between spirit and soul (*der Geist* and *die Seele*) is so obvious. However, the philosophy of poetry (...) does not facilitate or hinder anything. For philosophy, spirit and soul are not synonyms. By treating them synonymously, you close to a precise translation and distort the documents provided by the archeology of images" (Bachelard, 1957, p. 4).

Referring to Charles Nodier's *Dictionnaire Raisonné des Onomatopées Françaises*, Bachelard connects the soul with the word *souffle*. It draws attention to the relationship between the soul and breathing. The soul as such has a lot to do with the breath, and therefore with the rhythmic action that brings to mind rhythm analysis, as well as the philosophical and religious Indian *Upanishads*. In Bachelard's works it takes the form of a kind of human relaxation: "In a poetic dream, the awakened soul, without tension, rests and activates" (Bachelard, 1957, p. 5). The analysis and practice of rhythm shows that every being, not only human, has its own rhythm. The whole universe, the cosmos, is the rhythm of the general vibration of life. As Bachelard writes, "Life must have deeply rhythmic properties" (Bachelard, 1950, p. 138). Thus, the analysis of rhythms leads, in Bachelard's terms, to discovering what is for him the essence of life itself. Undoubtedly, the understanding of the human soul and the universe as a breath comes to mind. In the realm of poetry, the soul plays the role of an inspiration that triggers the creation of a work, a new linguistic form of intentional being.

Anima turns out to be imbued with imagination as the power involved in each poem. “Anima is the principle of unity in the idealization of man, the principle of the dream of being, a being that wants peace and, consequently, continuity” (Bachelard, 1960, p. 74). A dream, which is a process of idealization, has the role of enriching life, making a person able to live integrally. In a solitary dream, we get to know what is male and what is female. Idealization is understood here as an undeniable psychological reality within which the dreamer meets the ideal man, the dreamer meets the ideal woman. In the dream, therefore, there is a reconciliation of *anima* and *animus*, female and male. One can risk the thesis that Bachelard’s process of self-individuation would take place in a dream, through imagination, and would be under the sign of *anima*. This is where the androgynous perspective is realized. Bachelard calls the research on *anima* the philosophy of androgynous being, in which the double idealization of humanity is analyzed. *Anima* and *animus*, two instances dwelling in the depths of the human soul, confirm the androgyny of the psyche. In this sense, it is better to talk about the separation of being into moments of *anima animus*, and not into being *anima animus*. Androgyny is not behind us, in the distant past of the primal being. It is perspective. Idealized masculinity and femininity become Bachelard’s values. For this reason, he understands the search for androgyny as the meaning of human existence.

If the meaning of androgyny reveals itself as the meaning of the whole, and the whole is the point at which humankind is heading, then Bachelardian anthropology is androgynous. In the last of his works, *Fragments d’une Poétique du Feu* (Bachelard, 1988) published posthumously, Bachelard writes again about androgyny. He writes about the Phoenix, a hermaphrodite bird to whom myths and legends about the whole are devoted. Therefore, the famous critics of his thoughts, J. Poirier and J. Libis, speak not of two—scientific and poetic—but three Bachelards (Buse, 2004, p. 27). The third is a metaphysician of the rest of *anima* and androgyny as a whole.

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Transgression of the Self—the Total Act in Jerzy Grotowski’s Laboratory Theatre and Jungian Archetype Experience

Keywords: archetype, Self, Grotowski, Jung, psychoanalysis

Słowa kluczowe: archetyp, jaźń, Grotowski, Jung, psychoanaliza

Abstract

This article will be devoted to one of Jerzy Grotowski’s most important discoveries, *the total act*, a specific kind of action and experience. It was created as part of theatrical practice, but apart from the function related to the dramaturgy of performances, it had a higher purpose, associated with the search for the essence of humanity and sources of the experience of reality. Jerzy Grotowski sought to transform actors and observers, open them to what is authentic, alive and present. This achievement was a kind of experience in which the *sacrum* and the *profanum* are overcome. The total act allowed a person “to become watched” and, paradoxically, allowed them to participate in the duality of passive action, in which a person becomes an observer and agent at the same time.

My goal is to describe the role of the principle of coexistence of opposites in the work of J. Grotowski. I am describing the total act as an opportunity to reach an experience of reality in which the mind and the body merge with each other. Humankind as a psychophysical unity precedes all differences in this experience, he or she is able to reach the very center of their own self, that which Jung called *Selbst*. According to J. Grotowski, this state is possible when the influence of myths and collective ideas is overcome.

Introduction

The Total Act in Jerzy Grotowski's Laboratory Theatre is an interesting object of study, as a phenomenon, not only from the standpoint of culture studies, but also that of psychology.¹ This is undoubtedly due to Carl Gustav Jung's postulates inspiring the idea of striving towards it, as well as its theoretical basis. This article aims to describe the influence of Jung's psychoanalysis on the Total Act, and to point to the fact that it has been an experience of a psychological nature with the potential to transform on both the individual and the collective level. One ought to seek the influence on the emergence of the idea of a Total Act not only in Jung's concept, but also in peak experiences as described by Ronald Laing (Kolankiewicz, 2011), or Antonin Artaud's "cosmic trance" (Grotowski, 2012, p. 292). Inspiration has also been found in some anthropologists' works, i.e., Émile Durkheim and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, who described the social and psychological functions of rituals in traditional communities and their underlying collective imaginations. Some are convinced that Grotowski tried to create a theater that would become a contemporary counterpart to archaic rituals (Kłossowicz, 2006, p. 242). He also founded the project called the "Theatre of Sources" that referred to primal ritual forms as an inspiration leading to actions that transport outside of the ordinary experience. He also spoke of a profane ritual; a vehicle of sorts that allows to meet oneself in the face of another human being in an authentic manner. However, Grotowski's projects were not directed at contact with things sacred or at finding forms that could replace a traditional ritual, and especially not in the case of the Total Act, which was an element of theater reform that preceded the Theatre of Sources. This phenomenon, of which the goal was mainly an authentic and profound meeting of two people—the actor and the spectator—can only be conceived via Jung's theory of archetypes.

Grotowski's development of his activities saw an evolution throughout the years: from theatrical work in collaboration with Ludwik Flaszen, and

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paratheatrical activities, with the Theatre of Sources dedicated to researching ritual actions of traditional cultures, all the way to the “Art as vehicle” project devised with Mario Biaggini in Pontedera. As he himself claimed, this evolution was a natural consequence of understanding human personality as something in a perpetual process. Grotowski did not strive to figure out a method or a working scheme that would be best for the art of theater, but instead an ever more refined listening in to the self, although not the self that would be tied to the ego with its everyday needs, but a universal one, common to all humans, perhaps the essence of humanity. This is what gave rise to the vision of the Total Act—a communion of the body and the psyche, their unification in experiencing a free flow of impulses, which Grotowski called the stream of life (Kajzar, 2006, p. 253).

The Total Act from a Psychological and Anthropological Perspective

Each of the particular periods of Grotowski’s activity, as well as the direction of the evolution of his research, are interesting considering their relationship with Jung’s psychoanalysis (Brach-Czaina, 1980). Yet I will concentrate on the question of the Total Act, developed in the period of activity of the Theatre of 13 Rows in Opole and later the Laboratory Theatre in Wrocław. Narrowing the field of research down to the time of theatrical activity is necessary; Grotowski’s aspiration for his actors to achieve a Total Act belongs to this very period, synonymous with the 1960s and early 1970s.

From a psychological and anthropological perspective, the Total Act is an interesting object of research, as a kind of human experience with the potential for self-discovery, a liminal experience, and as a counterpart to Jungian striving for the self—psychological wholeness. The non-accidental terminological relationship between the wholeness of the *psyche* and the Total Act results from a reference to wholeness, potentially achievable to humans through the integration of archetypal contents: in the first case, with the help of active imagination; and in the second, through a script created by the physical and the mental action. Grotowski was open about having been inspired by Jung’s works, which he often referred to. He especially valued *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, for describing the psychiatrist’s personal experiences with the individuation process (Jung, 1993b, pp. 390–392). One could argue that the process leading to Jungian psychological wholeness and

the Total Act of the Laboratory Theatre are two ways to achieve the same goal—to connect to the archetypal source of one's own being. Grotowski wrote of the Total Act:

If I were to express all this in one sentence I would say that it is all a question of giving oneself. One must give oneself totally, in one's deepest intimacy, with confidence, as when one gives oneself in love. Here lies the key. Self-penetration, trance, excess, the formal discipline itself—all this can be realized, provided one has given oneself fully, humbly and without defense. This act culminates in a climax. It brings relief. None of the exercises in the various fields of the actor's training must be exercised in skill. They should develop a system of allusions which lead to the elusive and indescribable process of self-donation. (Grotowski, 2002, p. 38)

Leading to the self as the climactic element of the individuation process, as well as to the Total Act, was the confrontation with oneself. Jung and Grotowski alike spoke of the necessity to abandon the persona, that is, a mask hiding the authentic human. Striving for psychological wholeness went beyond the therapeutic aspect, and became striving for self-discovery, and perhaps even enlightenment; similarly, the Total Act did not serve simply to realize aesthetic objectives, but to expand self-awareness by referring to the collective consciousness of the spectators. The gnostic core of their views joined Jung and Grotowski; they both regarded the direct experience as a source of knowledge about oneself (Prokopiuk, 1993, p. 34). The former expressed the process of his own striving for the self symbolically, in *The Red Book*, in which he recorded those images of the fantasy which he considered to be non-accidental—mental images of archetypal motivation (Jung, 2019, pp. 43–45). He sought an analogy for the individuation process in alchemical transformations. For Jung, this process was expressed in a metaphorical manner: the transformation from *nigredo* into *albedo*, the joining of elements, represented the synthesis of opposing psychological contents; and the quest for the philosopher's stone is an image of the striving for psychological wholeness (Jung, 1970, p. 80). As for the director, the inspiration from gnosis is visible not only in his interest for gnostic myths and writings, but also in his consideration of the inner process that accompanies the Total Act, composed of known and unknown, conscious and unconscious elements—together forming a flow of live impulses

(Grotowski, 2012, p. 491). Underlying this approach to working with actors was the conviction that access to knowledge surpassing the conscious and personal aspects is possible, and its source, according to Jung and Grotowski, would be the collective unconscious's archetypes. The Total Act, just like the individuation process, would be set in an archetypal experience.

The necessary element that allowed them to come into existence was a personal confrontation with culturally set values and their symbolic forms of expression. The assumption associating Jung and Grotowski's areas of exploration was that culture is the space of expression for the collective content of a psychological nature. From the outset, the director sought the possibility of transforming certain cultural contents and their underlying convictions, attitudes and feelings on the individual and social levels, in order to eliminate obsolete ones and those that inhibit the live human experience.

The core of the theatre is an encounter. The man who makes an act of self-revelation is, so to speak, one who establishes contact with himself. That is to say, an extreme confrontation, sincere, disciplined, precise and total—not merely a confrontation with his thoughts, but one involving his whole being from his instincts and his unconscious right up to his most lucid state. (Grotowski, 2002, pp. 56–57)

According to Jolanta Brach-Czaina, Grotowski realized consciously the assumptions of Jung's individuation process, but not on the individual psyche, as Jung would have, in dialogue with a patient. He chose teamwork, acting at the community level, and interacting with the community of spectators (Brach-Czaina, 1980, p. 82). In his commentaries to the 13 Rows Theatre's performances (*Dziady*, among others), while the theatre was still based in Opole, Ludwik Flaszen wrote that their production assumed a confluence of the chorus and the audience, making them one community, an emanation of a collective psyche (Flaszen, 2006, p. 54).

Through theater, Grotowski transposed the Jungian individuation process onto the collective level. However, the individual human was not deprived of their exceptional role (Czerwiński, 2019, p. 32). What is most important and lived most intensely on the individual level belongs to the community of human experiences. The main motifs that appear in Grotowski's pieces pertained to the relationship between the individual and the collective: their mutual influence and the possibility of transformation

within culture, on this deepest of levels, which one man—a rebel, a dreamer, but also a victim and an outsider—is capable of invoking. Grotowski even described the theatrical performance as an act of transgression (Kornaś, 2006, p. 419). Underlying collective psychological experiences are archetypes. These constituted the core of former mysteries. Contemporarily, Grotowski revealed anew the possibility for reaching the archetypal through the theatrical spectacle.

Kształtując w przedstawieniu archetyp uderzamy w „podświadomość zbiorową” – następuje oddźwięk, odruch, choćby na zasadzie sprzeciwu, poczucia, że coś sprofanowano; zbliżamy do siebie dwa ensemble (zespół aktorów i zespół widzów) trochę na gruncie prowokacji, a pozornie na gruncie „magii”, „aktu magicznego”, w którym – jak w prehistorii teatru – uczestniczą właściwie wszyscy (misterium-archetyp odgrywa tutaj rolę przedmiotu misterium).² (Grotowski, 2012, pp. 212–213)

The Concept of Archetype in Grotowski's Texts

Grotowski used the Jungian term “archetype” in a lenient manner, somewhat skipping the philosophical background for Jung's theory. In particular he rejected the *a priori* character of archetypal forms, i.e., a Kantian presumption that leads one to consider the unconscious epistemologically unavailable. The director was not interested in the existence of archetypal forms outside the socio-historical dimension, that is, in the sphere of culture. He treated them as a symbolic expression of “human knowledge of oneself” (Grotowski, 2012, pp. 212–213). Grotowski's postulates were devoid of the philosophical assumptions that are present especially in the late works of Jung.

² *When shaping an archetype in a performance, we hit the ‘collective subconscious’—there is a response, an impulse, an objection perhaps, a feeling that something has been desecrated; we bring together two ensembles (a group of actors and a group of spectators), somewhat through instigation, and formally through “magic,” an “act of magic” which—just like in theatrical prehistory—involves everybody (the mystery–archetype plays the role of the object of mystery).*

According to the definitions found in Jung's works, archetypes are typical forms of representing reality, the psychological counterpart to instincts—typical forms of acting (Jung, 2011, p. 152). Initially, Jung sought the source of “primal images” (qualified later as archetypes) in the actions of the *libido* drive, mental energy, and its capacity to transform into a symbolic form that refers to the world of human experiences and values. He noticed the existence of archetypes through repetitive mythological motifs, occurring commonly in various cultures and religions—psychological content expressed in a symbolic manner. This led him to consider the symbol as an intermediary between the unconscious psyche and consciousness. According to Jung, the collective unconscious constitutes the entirety of mental phenomena occurring outside consciousness, plus instincts and the *libido* drive. He also described it as a psychoidal entity, and an archetype in itself (Rosińska, 1982, p. 38). On the one hand, it is the source of human spiritual, cultural, and scientific activity; on the other hand, it is like the forces of nature—amoral and destructive (the source of mental disorders). The unconscious might hold all of the contents with the potential for conscious realization. The conscious completes the unconscious; it is its opposite and continuation at the same time (Jung, 2007, p. 349). The psyche evolves—on the individual level through the individuation process, and on the collective level there is accumulation of consciously available contents (and expression of the unconscious ones), which is reflected in culture (Jung, 1979). At that, the archetypes cause an entire spectrum of external experiences; they are the source of mental projections requiring work on oneself. The path to psychological wholeness involves expanding one's consciousness, and identifying and integrating some of those archetypes, which are mere potencies in the unconscious. They get updated in positive or negative aspects, depending on personality and lived experience. This duality of the archetypes, their positive or negative influence, corresponds to a dualist image of the world of gnosis, based on the coexistence of opposites. Good and evil, finding symbolic counterparts in light and darkness, constitute integral parts of the structure of reality. Such views can be found in alchemy and Kabbalist treatises, i.e., *The Book of Zohar*, *Theatrum Chemicum*, *Kabbala Denudate*, *Ars Chemica*, or *Mysterium Lunae*, which Jung studied (Ribi, 1993, p. 19). The archetypes are finished and fully formed, yet retaining a kind of liveliness of interaction—proto-images, blueprints. The livelier the given archetype, the greater the impression,

awe, and even fear it evokes. The archetypal experience is accompanied by experiencing a *numinous* (Jung, 2007, p. 225)—a term derived from Rudolf Otto's religious studies that describes a psychological state related to experiencing the sacred. According to Jung, *numinosum* is a kind of ambience that can be described as either sacred or terrifying (Jung, 2007, p. 225). Pertaining to the question of archetypal experience, he also referred to the notion of *mana*—a force, a feeling of sacredness, a power, as described by Marcel Mauss (Jung, 2007, p. 405).

That which Jung designated by the name *numinosum*, Grotowski and Flaszen called *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, the mystery of horror and enchantment—a simultaneity of two opposing feelings related to the experience of the sacred (Kolankiewicz, 2006, p. 278). Both states involve living a mystery surpassing the every-day experience, surpassing man, causing awe and fear. This aspect of the Total Act is a psychological state that is specific to it.

The role of fantasy in that experience cannot be overvalued. Experiences of archetypal nature come into existence when a given otherwise unconscious content acting upon the psyche encounters a releasing impulse in the form of symbolic imagination. Indeed, archetypes are the source of symbols. They come into existence through the transformation of unconscious contents into a consciously available form. The symbol, as a carrier of contents derived from the unconscious, contents that are more than merely what is subject to intellectual analysis, also affects emotions, feelings, and the imagination—and at that, carries meaning (Pajor, 2004, p. 111). In order to reach the collective unconscious, Jung designed a method of active imagination, consisting in invoking and observing images of the fantasy—a sort of daydream. It could also occur during any sort of creative activity that involves spontaneous expression. The tool, however presented in the spirit of modern science's paradigm, belongs to an old tradition of spiritual knowledge, i.e. the Kabbala, alchemy, astrology, requiring a capacity to form and interpret symbols that enable insight into the nature of one's own, and that of God (Voss, 2009, p. 39).

Functions and Jungian Sources of the Total Act

In Grotowski's case, the actor's need to reach the depths of their own interior could be fulfilled by the Total Act. Man, as a psychophysical unity in this experience, preceded all differences, being able to reach the very center of their own Jungian Self. Thus, the team members would work on a literary work or a Bible fragment, searching during several days or weeks for their own gesture, noise, or a word in which they would be able to find a personal meaning, and at that, inspire its residing emotional charge. The Total Act should bond the individual and the universal. It was based on a structure, a script of movements, voices, words, and the internal experience all coming together. Its "totality" resided in the bonding of the actor with spontaneous movements of their body; experiencing and observing at once, so as to stay conscious of what is at work. This would serve to connect the conscious to the unconscious, while at the same time allowing for lucidity, keeping the actor from falling into trance. The structure was developed in a lengthy process and belonged to the actor as their personal creation. It was therefore a unique construction that was to be lived anew every time, despite its numerous reproductions. Since it worked by considering Man as a psychophysical unity, it included the possibility to synchronize bodily impulses with the level of mental experiences. The Total Act in itself allowed simultaneously experiencing and expressing them, but that required understanding them and according them a symbolic form. Hence there was equilibrium between the degrees of maintaining and losing control in favor of a free flow of psychophysical impulses.

We can observe the gnostic principle of the coexistence of opposites represented in Jung's concept underlying the Total Act on several of its layers: in the inner construction of the actor's actions, in the interaction with the spectator, finally in the way the plot of a performance is set. First, the actor, while developing the Total Act, had to strive to stay spontaneous, while adhering to a strictly defined voice and movement score. The actions were bipolar—precision and strictness seemingly deny spontaneity. Yet the goal was to maintain the precision of carrying out previously composed elements of the score, while never ceasing to improvise the "stream"—the sensing of the flow of life and the experiencing every time anew of one's own gestures and the feelings associated with them, despite repetitiveness (Grotowski, 2012, p. 491). Grotowski maintained that it was a way to impact

the conscious mind, which responds to precise action, and the unconscious mind, associated with spontaneous, truly creative process. This constructional layer of the Total Act directly affected the actor; another affected the spectator, i.e., the polyphony of their actions—a gesture might contradict a facial expression, or a grimace of horror might accompany the rest of the body dazzling with ecstasy (Osiński, 2006, p. 322). This duality extended onto the whole structure of the performance. Ludwik Flaszen qualified it as a “dialectic of derision and apotheosis,” through which the actor were to be humiliated and exalted at once, and tragedy to transform into grotesque.

Dialektyka ośmieszenia i apoteozy” „uderzając” w archetyp, wprawia w drganie cały łańcuch tabu, konwencji i wartości uświęconych. W ten sposób kształtuje się migotliwość przedstawienia: korowód profanacji, kolejne stadia (czy też płaszczyzny) sprzeczności, kolejne i wzajemne antytezy, kolejne unicestwienie tabu...³ (Grotowski, 2012, p. 223)

This polyphony also allowed connecting tradition to modernity, embedding universal phenomena in forms of present events in a way as to allow the spectator to fully identify with them. One example is setting *The Great Improvisation*⁴ in a concentration camp in the play *Akropolis*. Besides that, Grotowski often juxtaposed classicistic motifs with animalistic impulses, combining the sacred and the profane (Kajzar, 2006, p. 253). The body had a major role in the Total Act. Grotowski wanted the spectator to be able to encounter the actor’s bodily and mental unity, “such as one is—whole” (Grotowski, 2012, p. 502). For him, the actor’s body had to be somewhat subject to the inner processes occurring within them in such a way that the internal impulse and its external expression come simultaneously (Grotowski, 2007, p. 37). The Total Act was based in lifting the dualistic tradition opposing spirituality and corporeality (Osiński, 1989, p. 278), which also characterizes Jung’s psychology. The collective unconscious means that it is difficult

³ “The “dialectic of derision and apotheosis,” by “striking” the archetype, sets an entire string of taboos, conventions and sacred values into vibration. In this way, the lamen- bency of the spectacle is formed: a parade of profanity, further stages (or planes) of contradiction, further and mutual antitheses, one more annihilation of a taboo...”

⁴ Famed monologue in Adam Mickiewicz’s play *Dziady* (Forefathers’ Eve), in which the protagonist, a Polish patriot imprisoned by tsarists, challenges God’s indifference to his nation’s suffering and likens his poetry to divine works of creation.

to unequivocally draw a line between the bodily and the spiritual—both archetypes and instincts belong to it.

The Symbol in Jung's psychoanalysis and Grotowski's works

The objective of Grotowski's work during the theatrical period was to challenge mythical heroes, values fixed especially in Christian myths, in order to verify whether this mythical image can be saved—whether it can survive the trial that was being appraised in the audience's mental collective (Wójtowicz, 2006, p. 338). Referring to the unconscious part of the collective psyche required operating with symbols. The Total Act was itself built on the basis of symbols—a mixture of movement, words, and emotions. The Symbol, a carrier of unconscious contents, fulfils a crucial role from the perspective of Jung's analytic psychology and that of Grotowski's art. Jung considered the symbol as an intermediary between the conscious and the unconscious. It allows the perception of messages from the unconscious, which is not knowable in itself. Moreover, the symbol constitutes a sort of visualization or imagination of that which it is surpassed by, because it provides in synthesized form what consciousness fills with content, while exuding a sort of undisclosed sense which completes it (Barentsen, 2015, p. 67–79).

Jung devoted most of his work to the symbolism associated with the archetype of the Self, being the most important of all archetypes, at the same time the center of the human psyche and the objective of the individuation process, joining the conscious and the unconscious. The Self surpasses the personal sphere of the psyche; on the other hand, it is symbolized by unity, wholeness, by integrating every opposite. Its symbols include images of the fantasy, i.e., the mandala, as well as solar, and especially heroic, deities (Jung, 1993a, p. 113). One of the most important symbols of the Self in our cultural sphere is the figure of the Christ, a resurrected, truly transformed man. This figure materializes the heroic myth, described by Rudolf Otto as the most important for many cultures (Otto, 2004). The Christ, a hero of divine origin, having come from miraculous conception, having overcome many trials, having become an outsider, having been shunned by his perpetrators, ultimately beats death. Jung interpreted the myth of the Christ as an image of mental transformation. He is, as a man and as God,

an image of wholeness (Kuźmicki, 2008, p. 65). The figure of the hero is a symbol of the process of deepening self-awareness and striving for the Self. It required sacrifice, confrontation with the archetypal, with oneself, and later also with the supra-personal. It leads at times to the collision with social collectiveness and received values.

Messianic themes pertaining to the heroic sacrifice of the individual on the altar of collective life were ever-present in Grotowski's most important spectacles, i.e., *Dziady*, *Akropolis*, *Książę Niezłomny* (*The Constant Prince*), and *Apocalypsis Cum Figuris*. The Constant Prince's character—the anointed one, or the apocryphal figure of The Dark One—the savior, were the most important acting performances of the Laboratory Theatre. The Total Act itself was considered an act of sacrifice. The savior was dishonored, profaned, or depicted in a grotesque manner on the stage in order to discover a live and still valid meaning of that image, in line with the dialectic of derision and apotheosis. The spectator was to discover anew their presence in themselves (Kolak, 2016, pp. 176–178). The figure of Christ in *Apocalypsis Cum Figuris* is a multi-faceted image of a village fool and an enlightened man, utterly profaned, while the resolution of the spectacle can be understood as its final rejection. This kind of narration can act like a myth: cause contradicting feelings, like the fascinating yet horrifying sacred. Grotowski's stage productions fit into the concept of Jung's myth of the hero—an individual opposed to the collective, symbolizing the conscious in confrontation with the unconscious.

Summary

Jerzy Grotowski's achievements were an extension of Jung's psychoanalytical work; however, they introduced a novelty. A process beginning with working on the body rather than the psyche, subordinating it to internal impulses, was to lead to the experience of wholeness. It was paradoxically a way of "putting the body to death," making it entirely subject to those purely vital impulses preceding the separation of body and mind, setting as one as the other into movement. Moreover, the Total Act came into existence not only as a novel method of realizing the individuation process—it is set on the limit of different domains: the theatrical art, a secular ritual, psychology, and anthropology.

After some years of trials, the Total Act was achieved in 1965 by Ryszard Cieślak in *Książę Niezłomny*—not once, but with each consecutive performance. It may seem surprising; how does a living experience such as the Total Act get repeated and experienced each time with equal intensity, if it means repeating the same script of words and movements? It can be said that Grotowski's goal was for an actor to develop a technique of experiencing, of remaining present as the creator and observer of one's own actions each time anew. This time, a given script was in fact irreproducible and different each time, despite its fixed structure which gave the frame for the performance. A collective realization of the Total Act took place in *Apocalypsis Cum Figuris*, performed from 1969–1980. This last play to ever be produced by the Laboratory Theatre was considered by Grotowski to be the peak achievement within this branch of the arts. He then gave up his theatrical work to concentrate on experimental performative actions, in which the spectator as a passive observer ceased to be necessary—no longer a witness, they became a participant in the events. The psychoanalytical works of Carl Gustav Jung certainly influenced the methods developed by Jerzy Grotowski over the many years of his creative work. The total act is an interesting example of applying the achievements of psychoanalysis to a non-therapeutic field.

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In the Land of *Metaxú*

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Słowa kluczowe: metaxu, obraz, ikona, symbol, mit, Sokrates, Platon

Abstract

The article poses the question of the role of symbolic cognition in philosophical cognition. The starting point is the analysis of Diotima's famous speech quoted by Socrates in Plato's *Symposium*. The issue is presented in a panoramic approach from ancient to modern times.

Inhabitants of the *Metaxú* Realm

When Plato talks about the most difficult issues, he does not use conceptual language but resorts to images, metaphors, and symbols, such as in the well-known myth of the Cave. Similarly, he employs images, metaphors and symbols when addressing philosophers' work, instead of giving clear definitions and arguments, by resorting to the myth of the Feast of the gods and the birth of the strange god Eros. Through the image of Socrates and the depiction of Diotima the prophetess, we are invited to partake in the secrets of what it means to be a philosopher and a pursuer of philosophy. Furthermore, we see Diotima of the *Symposium* explaining to Socrates

that we as philosophers and human beings, unlike gods or immortals, are inhabitants of the realm between the divine world and the human world. Plato refers to this sphere as “in between”—this is *metaxú* (Greek: μεταξύ).

In the world of “our modern postmodernity” (Wolfgang Iser), we followers of god (as the myth suggests), who are the products of prosperity and poverty, who are the intermediaries between the worlds of gods and people, fail to grasp Diotima’s notion of the sphere of the “in between.” Consequently, we live in a way that ignores her reflections concerning the philosophers’ lot, which the Polish Nobel Laureate in Literature refers to as “the land of *Metaxú*” (Tokarczuk, 2020).

According to Eric Voegelin, the notion of *Metaxú* appears only once in the Feast, as a preposition. He maintains that Plato discovers the basic structure of philosophical existence as the space between human and divine existence that is captured by the notion of “in between,” *metaxú*. To paraphrase the *Symposium*, Voegelin writes, “The entire dimension of the spirit (daimonion) is halfway between (*metaxú*) god and man” (Plato, 2002, p. 67). And he draws a further conclusion, stating that “in between—*metaxú*—is not an empty space, but a ‘dimension of spirit’; it is reality, man’s conversations with gods” (Plato, 2002, p. 67), the sphere of “mutual participation (*methexis, metalepsis*) of human reality in the divine and divine reality in the human” (Voegelin, 2000, p. 259).¹

The above-discussed idea of the “in-between” sphere constitutes valuable insight for our consideration. As we know from Socrates’ account, Diotima informs us that the god of this intermediate space is Eros. He is truly strange and unlike any other gods, for he is simultaneously a god and a non-god. So who is he? What is this strange divine being that seems to be an in-between divinity? When we inquire about him, the god who is celebrated in the *Symposium*, we find Socrates, the last to enter the stage of the dialogue as a restrained participant, reminiscing about his youth when the priestess Diotima instructs him that Eros is a “Great spirit, my Socrates. The whole sphere of spirits is something between God and what is mortal” (Plato, 2002, p. 67).

¹ This excerpt is part of the second chapter of the book *Science, Politics, Gnosticism: Two Essays*, which is the fourth part of the above-mentioned book (Voegelin, 2000, p. 103).

As Diotima says, Eros, the god of philosophy, is not a god but an intermediate deity. He “does not get with man”; and if he does so, he does it indirectly. He is a strange god who is not only from the divine realm, but also from the mortal realm. Like Hermes, who is the father of hermeneutics, he is a resident of the “in-between”² sphere.

“God Does Not Get Involved with Man”

Socrates (Krasicki & Kijaczko, 2008, pp. 7–8), the archetypal European philosopher,³ represents the epitome between the divine and human realms. We should remember that he, an adept of sophistry, is more than a philosopher in the sophistic sense of a “wise man” (*sophos*). He is a sage; and in order not to perish in the light of the sophistic and deceptive rhetoric, his soul finds a place between what is divine and what is human, which lends Socrates to be misunderstood by the *demos*. For *demos* fears and hates the undefined and undemocratic attitudes and their aloofness. Hence, Socrates finds himself removed from *polis* and consequently is condemned to death (Plato, *Defense of Socrates*).

Socrates is deeply aware of the complexities and peculiarities of his position; but despite his awareness, he does not know where he actually is. This place that he occupies is not a place in the common understanding of the

² As Diotima says, “The Son of Prosperity and Poverty at the Feast of the gods,”—he is the interpreter between the gods and men. He offers sacrifices and prayers from people to gods, and from the gods he brings orders and favors to people; and being in the middle between both worlds, he bridges the gap between them and makes it all stick together somehow. Through him, all the art of divination goes to heaven. What priests do, the respective sacrifices and ceremonies—because gods do not interfere with people—but through him all intercourse, all conversation between gods and people takes place, both in dreams and in reality. Whoever understands these things is a spiritual person; and whoever understands himself in something else, in some art or some craft, is a simple worker. There are many different spirits of this kind, one of which is Eros (Plato, 2008, p. 203); Plato (2008), p. 68 (distinction—J.K.)

³ As L. Kołakowski wrote, “For centuries, philosophy has confirmed its legitimacy by posing and answering questions inherited from the Socratic and pre-Socratic legacy: how to distinguish real from unreal, truth from false, good from evil. There is one man with whom all European philosophers identify, even if they reject his ideas in their entirety. This is Socrates—a philosopher incapable of identifying himself with this archetypal figure does not belong to this civilization” (Kołakowski, 1990, p. 7).

word *topos*; instead, it is a domain of spirits and thoughts. From a demiurgical *majeure* perspective, he is “in,” i.e., in a specific place represented by the Athenian public square, the *agora*; but he is also “beyond” any place, “beyond” all *topos*. Simply put, for Socrates, it is a mystery where exactly he finds himself “in.”

We can clearly see this idea of philosophy finding itself in the “in-between” space expressed by Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who states that philosophy is never “completely in the world” and yet “is never outside the world” (Hadot, 2000, pp. 64–67). Pierre Hadot employs a similar idea, quoting the words of the author of *The Phenomenology of Perception* when he observes that the same happens in the case of Socrates, who is not easily categorized. He is neither “in the world nor outside the world.” As a philosopher, Socrates is “in between” and confronts his greatest mystery of residing “in between.”

Socratic dialectical art is much more than just sophistic verbal craftsmanship. He not only practices dialectics, but also “proclaims” (Hadot, 2000, pp. 64–65). By expressing himself in the *agora*, he gives voice to what comes from the *chôra*, that is, from beyond the “market,” and knows that without “proclamation” there is no true philosophy (Hadot, 2000, pp. 64–65).

Let us observe that in dialogues such as the *Phaedros* (*The Second Speech of Lysias*), the *Hippias Major*, and the *Ion*, Plato discloses the fundamental truth about man, the same truth that applies to philosophy: that man is a being without measure—this is the same idea that tragedy writers like Sophocles and Aeschylus and Euripides try to convey to the *demos*.

The same can be said about philosophy, for it too remains without measure; and by closing itself to what is different, it closes the mystery of what, though frightening, is most essential to its “birth.”⁴ It is in philosophy and through philosophy that man appears as amazing (*deinos*)—powerful and repulsive. Like man himself, philosophy is not free from falling into a “lack of measure” in its physis and logos, open and secret, human and superhuman, rational and Irrational (Dodds, 2014). Apollonian and Dionysian, heavenly and earthly, uranic and chthonic. The choir, which in the Greek tragedy reveals the will and knowledge of the gods and which, as such, can’t be wrong (Romilly, 1994). In the first stasimon of *Antigone*, the playwright (Antigone, 332) pens:

⁴ This issue was brilliantly highlighted by Giorgio Colli in the books *The Birth of Philosophy* and *After Nietzsche*.

The strength is of wonders, but it reaches above all

A strange man's power.

When reflecting on living in the “land of *Metaxú*,” we need to be aware of the profound consequences of such an existence. *Metaxú*, as Voegelin observes, flows directly from what is referred to as a sickness that affects the totality of existence. A man who is aware of *metaxú* and lives in it while exploring its sickness, simultaneously desires to leave it behind forever. Thus he discovers a strange longing (*zetezís*) and the call (*helkein*) to what is true and wise (*sophon*); he discovers in himself a desire (*eros*) for what is perfect, good (*agathon*), and beautiful (*kalon*) (Voegelin, 2000, p. 259). Simply put, the man who lives in the “land of *metaxú*” and seeks these things is a philosopher. But unlike other people, he does not live in it; nor does he want to live forever.

“Everything that Separates and Connects at the Same Time”

In the understanding of Simone Weil, the term *metaxú* means the sum of phenomena that lead to something else and that only “mediate” (Weil, 1986, p. 273) humanity's path to eternal life. Paradoxically a human is there to be able to live without them. “This world,” writes Weil, “is a closed door. It is an obstacle on the way to the goal. And at the same time—a transition” (Weil, 1986, p. 273). Unlike Weil, the inhabitants of this world forget this truth so much that they treat it as an end in itself. However, its meaning lies in something else; and as such it is always a sign and symbol of something other than itself. Again, as Weil points out, a “wall” that separates two prisoners living in adjacent cells also functions as a medium that they use to communicate with each other by “knocking” on that “wall” (Weil, 1986, p. 273). “The wall,” Weil continues, “is what separates them but also enables them to connect. Everything that separates and connects at the same time” (Weil, 1986, p. 273).

Furthermore, what Weil labels as *metaxú* are relative values without which human life is impossible. But when humans elevate them to being the most important by absolutizing them, then they obscure what is most important in human existence; for as Różewicz writes:

sometimes “life” covers up
 This
 which is greater than life. (Różewicz, 2002, p. 59)

Philosophically speaking, the values of the *metaxú* realm are not autotelic; so they cannot become the goal of human life in itself. Their value and meaning, as both Socrates and Plato perfectly understand and which the sophists do not understand, stems from something beyond them. In this sense, they are a sign and symbol of something they point to, not the content they refer to.

In other words, these values are symbols; and the perception of the *metaxú* as symbolic is the great intuition and sense of Plato’s dialectic (Łosiew, 2019, Stróżewski, 1983, pp. 17–33). The genius of this great Athenian’s philosophy resides in the fact that he expresses the symbolic paradigm in which the entire reality of the visible is a symbol of the invisible, which leads him to see the dialectical relationship between the finite and the infinite in every structure of being, in every detail, in William Blake’s every “grain of sand” (Krasicki, p. 192).

Plato and Dante: Symbolism and Scholasticism

Plato’s symbolic approach to philosophy maintains the organic connection between an image and a concept. However, in the course of the development of European philosophy, this relationship between an image and a concept is shaken in favor of pure conceptualism; and in the period of scholasticism, there is a specific hypertrophy of the concept.

The late Middle Ages are not only characterized by a period of scholastic decline, manifested by the exhaustion of the medieval scholastic intellectualism, but also propelled by the search for new formulas explaining the world and humans in it. This search for a new conceptualization of the world reveals the limitations and flaws of the scholastic approach. The rejuvenated approach to reflecting on the world and humans in it discloses the medieval approach to be sterile and jejune when reflecting on the real world and humans here understood in their inaccessibility and hiddenness.

Consequently, it cannot be much of a surprise that the symbolism of the *Divine Comedy of Dante* and the symbolism of the New Life are moving away from the intellectualism of St. Thomas’ early writings. It is not

surprising then that in order to express its “myth of life” (following Yakov E. Golosovker [2012, pp. 7–14]), Beatrice’s myth, he resorts to a language other than conceptual or scholastic, which is to say, poetic language. This sophiological myth, expressed in a symbolic way, defines the overall vision of the world, humans, and God in Dante’s work; and it should be understood in a symbolic way. Any other attempt to read Dante will lead to a misunderstanding of the creative path of the Italian thinker and poet and for his “myth of life.” As the Polish poet puts it, we will “see” what the curious tourists saw when they came across Dante’s tomb in Ravenna, that is, little, or even “nothing” (Rózewicz, 1980, p. 374).

The Italian poet and thinker, with genius intuition, reveals the limits of intellectualism; and the evolution of his views tends toward a Platonic symbolic and allegorical interpretation of reality and as such heralds the philosophy of the Renaissance, whose possibilities will only be revealed by Giordano Bruno in his fictionalism and the symbolism of the Renaissance theosophists, including its representatives, such as Paracelsus and above all, Jacob Boehme.

Icon versus Image

The symbolic essence of the icon is an image but a special one, which is shown by its comparison with Western religious art. As Paul Evdokimov observes, Eastern mysticism is anti-visionist and rejects all imaginative contemplation. The icon makes Christ present but is not His “portrait” because “portrait” belongs to the realm of painting, not theology. Indeed, there is so-called religious painting; but being an artifact, the icon also occupies a different order and as such transcends beyond the imaginary sphere. In other words, the icon is theological and not only religious. Each icon is derivative, a function, as Evdokimov asserts, of that one and only one icon in the universe, the only image that is Jesus Christ (Evdokimov, 1986).

In Paweł Floreński’s approach to the icon (Floreński, 1984), there is a fundamental difference, which dates back to the Renaissance, between the perspective in painting and the figurative representation of the icon. Vision painting, using perspective, creates the illusion of something that has no ontological or existential reality. It does something that the icon does

not allow, namely, creates the illusion of infinity, transcendence, and “that world,” or directly, “heaven.”

In this sense, Kazimierz Malevich’s abstract—and in fact iconic—painting speaks more about transcendence of the “other world” than all the so-called religious art. For instance, Malevich’s abstract painting entitled “Black Square” can be interpreted as symbolizing the absolute unknowability of God. The core of this painting is not nature, the Renaissance landscape, the world; it is humankind in relation to God and His transcendence, or as a pseudo-Dionysius Areopagite says, total “darkness” for the human mind (Pseudo-Dionizy Areopagita, 1997).

Hence, an icon is a symbol, the symbol that not only shows but also existentially presents what it indicates. Although it is difficult to imagine, when we look at the image of the God-human, the God-human gazes at us. As Irina Jazykowa writes, “[M]an tries to look into God’s Face through the icon, but at the same time God looks back at us through the Image” (Dobieszewski, 2012, pp. 208–209). Moreover, we ourselves become Him; we transform into the One we look at while He looks at us. The teleology of the human being is not some uncertainty, rather, the ontological certainty of the image. “We all stare at the brightness of the Lord as if in a mirror, with our faces unveiled,” writes St. Paul, “by the Spirit of the Lord, we become more and more shining like His image” (2 Cor 3.18), (Krasicki, 2002, p. 81).

Symbolism in the East and West and the Unity of the Christian World

Right up to the time of late Scholasticism, the iconic image of humankind is a living theology, is vivid and recognizable throughout the centuries of theological culture as a symbolic culture. As Evdokimov points out, however, this tradition is losing its pull in modern times. “From the fifteenth century on, the idea of the image of God,” Evdokimov maintains, loses its role in philosophy. Moral consciousness still has a faint memory of this distant voice, but Kant’s “pure will” deprives him of transcendence. Surveying many dictionaries of theology, we encounter no image but its loss. Only in the articles on the subject of original sin, we see the discussion of the topic; but it is as though, instead of a kingdom that marks the course of history, we are talking about a paradise lost (Evdokimov, 1986, p. 99).

A different story concerning the place of the image appears within the Eastern tradition because, in the Christian East, the symbolic tradition is always more vivid. The cult of icons, the Platonic and neo-Platonic traditions in philosophy and theology, (Dobieszewski, 2012) and the unique role of the symbol in the Orthodox tradition create a fertile ground for the persistence of the image. Therefore, until the Great Schism (1054), before which Christianity exhibits a unified theology, the image enjoys its place within the Christian tradition due not only to the universal language of liturgy and theology, which is in Latin, but also to symbolism and Christian Platonism (Beierwaltes, 2003). Hence, until the time of the ecumenical Council of Florence (1439), the tradition of the Christian world was one and still understood by the Christian West and the Christian East.

There is of course the place of doctrinal disagreements between the East and the West. For example, the dispute with the Orthodox of the “light of Tabor” from Mount Athos over the nature of the “energies of God” advocated by the passionate Calabrian monk Barlaam—the defender, and at the same time corrector, of the teachings of St. Thomas—does not harm Christian unity. As the contemporary Anglican theologian Eric L. Mascall observes, “Palamism and Thomism are not oppositional doctrines to each other” (Mascall, 1988, p. 261); and if not for the inquisitive zeal of such figures of the Latin world as Barlaam of Calabria, St. Thomas could find a common language not only with St. Gregory Palamas, but also with other Byzantine theologians (Meyendorff, 1984).

Modern and *Metaxú*. Two Reformers

As indicated, the iconic and symbolic paradigm prevailed within European philosophy from the time of Plato until the Renaissance. However, the rise of modernity—which results not only in a new understanding of philosophy, but also the world and humans in it—moves away from the aforesaid iconic and symbolic paradigm (Lewis, 1986). We can see this shift manifested in *The Discourse on the Method* by René Descartes and in Luther’s theology and anthropology.

Hence, Descartes’ philosophy is characterized by an autarkic, completely self-sufficient, and independent manner from the empirical world while his cognitive position is defined by the term “in between,” which we

no longer recognize and which in fact consists of two separate, significant elements that can be written as “between,” *meta-xú*, but the very word “after,” “beyond,” meta. As a result of such an attitude, Descartes elevates his human cognitive condition on a par with the position of “pure minds,” which do not need any bodily and material basis to know; and his cognitive position can, after Jacques Maritain, be described as “angelism” (Maritain, 2005).

The Cartesian Angelism shown here observes and analyzes in-depth another French thinker, Rémi Brague, who notes that “with modernity, the question of humankind’s place among other creatures becomes topical again. (...) The Greek philosophers rank humans in second place after the heavenly bodies, and the Bible—after the angels. He differs from animals in reason, and from angels, purely spiritual beings, in their carnal nature. Along with modern times, a large-scale movement begins, leading to the removal of both heavenly bodies and angels from the worldview. Their existence is not denied, but both are as if neutralized” (Brague, 2020, pp. 145–146).

To follow Brague’s thinking, the Platonic element “in between,” *metaxú*, vanishes from the modern “kingdom of man.” The “disappearance of angels” (Krasicki, 1992, p. 39) is associated with the loss of understanding of the role of the language of “mediation,” or symbolic language, in fact the only language in which “the other world” communicates with “our world” and through which communication between them is possible (Krasicki, 1992, p. 39). This process coincides with the modern Pascal’s cosmic and existential “void discovery” (Krasicki, 1992, p. 39). Interestingly, Gregory Palamas, the Byzantine theologian and mystic, warned: “And if you erase everything that is between what cannot be participated in and the participants—oh—what a void!—you will separate us from God, destroying the bond and creating a great and impassable gulf” (Spiteris, 2006).

Nonetheless, everything comes at a price because, as the Old Testament asserts, angels always mediate between the transcendence of God and the immanence of the world and humans (Krasicki, 2002, p. 200). As Brague writes, in the Cartesian modern cognitive and anthropological paradigm: “an attempt to remodel human thought according to the example of angelic thought” (Brague, 2020, p. 146) takes place without any mediation and ignores the *metaxú* sphere, as well as the world and humankind in it, resulting in what Pascal notices as being deprived of any epiphany and filled with emptiness.

The emergence of the post-Copernican “place of man in nature,” (Pascal, 1983, p. 47) i.e., the displacement of the old geocentric understanding of the universe, Pascal expressed in a moving and profound way by reflecting:

When I consider the shortness of my life absorbed into the eternity before and after him, when I consider the little space that I occupy and even see, drowned in the infinite vastness of spaces that I do not know and do not know me, I am frightened and surprised that I am rather here than there, for there is no reason why here rather than elsewhere, why rather now than then... Who put me here? On whose command and by whose will were this place and this time assigned to me? (Pascal, 1983, p. 56)

He further captures the de-anthropomorphizing of the universe by eloquently writing: “The eternal silence of these infinite spaces terrifies me” (Pascal, 1983, p. 56). In other words, the centrality of humankind’s phenomenon in the universe is profoundly undermined by the rise of the modern mathematical-physical reason of Descartes.

Unlike Descartes’ philosophy, we see in Pascal’s thought the awareness of being “in between,” *metaxú*. We are, Pascal writes, always “in the middle.”⁵ In his thinking, the beginning and the end of things are always hidden from us, mythical to us. What is most important to us is concealed under a veil of mystery and reveals only a myth. The knowledge of “first things” and “last things” is denied to us because “reason,” adds Pascal, “always falls prey to appearances” (Pascal, 1983, p. 51).

In the asymbolic model presented in the Cartesian philosophy, the “human body” is not a living organism—as, for example, for the theosophists and philosophers of the Renaissance—but a dead mechanism. The Cartesian philosophy propagates a break between the empirical, the material, and the human mind that plays the role of beings like angels that have a direct view of ideas without empirical resources. The “human body” (Descartes, 1989), deprived of all the enormity of vivid symbolic references, becomes an object among other objects; it is not, as Edmund Husserl would later say, “my own living body” (*Leib, Leiblichkeit* [Husserl, 1982, pp. 141–142],

⁵ “We are limited in every direction: This state, which is always in the middle of the two extremes, is manifested in all our faculties” (Pascal, 1983, p. 51).

[Franck, 2017]), felt and lived, but a physical body, a corpuscular block (*der Körper*) that is solely the object of an objectified scientific description.

Speaking from the biblical perspective of the Temptation in Paradise scene in Genesis, (“you shall be like God”—Genesis 3.5), what Descartes is doing in his epistemological approach is to succumb to the devil’s temptation of elevating humans’ status. He is attempting to cross, or rather jump over, the status of a human being as a spiritual and corporeal being in favor of a disembodied, bodiless being. Furthermore, Descartes seeks to equate one’s cognitive status with the cognitive status of incorporeal beings, “pure substances” (St. Thomas, 1984). In this context, he confronts the Angelic Doctor who is stating that “man is not only a soul, but something composed of soul and body” (S. Th. I, q. 75, a. 4), by suggesting that ultimately human essence is not one’s embodiment and one’s soul; rather, it is solely one’s soul, thus challenging the idea that the soul and angel don’t belong to the same species (St. Thomas, 2000).

Luther’s theological iconoclasm resonates with the philosophy of Descartes because he translates the whole sense of the Christian faith into an existential relationship of human beings to the Word of God. Luther’s contribution to theology and anthropology is colossal, but the price of his reform is the elimination of this sphere we call the *metaxú*. Figuratively speaking, we can say that Luther—forgetting that God always reveals Himself in two ways: through His Word and through His creation— “opened His mouth” to scripture but at the same time “closed His mouth” to creation. Consequently, being subject to the watchful eye of various ecclesiastical censors, Luther’s ideas speak not through philosophers and theologians but through “heretics,” theosophists, poets, and mystics (Krasicki, 2011).

Hence, we can say that just as Luther takes the speech from the cosmos, so Descartes takes the living symbolic speech from nature and the human body. Thanks to the father of modern philosophy, nature, which plays the central role in the treatises of French materialists such as La Mettrie and Holbach, soon becomes “nature” (*La Nature*); and everything that we can say about humankind gets synthesized through modern materialism (Miodoński, 2001).

The loss of a symbol is always more than a loss of meaning, for it is an inability to participate in realities that modern philosophers “never dreamed of.” Therefore, the reform initiated by the author of *The Discourse on the Method* is only the God of Deism of the Enlightenment, a god tailored

to the human autonomous thought and will. This god is not the living “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (Exodus 3.6), who reveals Himself to Pascal; He is not Pascal’s Mystery. Rather, he is a demiurge; an excellent mathematician and engineer; and as Etienne Gilson ironically puts it, he is God consulting “his creative act with Isaac Newton” (Gilson, 1961, p. 95).

Consequently, Plato’s will is broken and buried once and for all; and the early modern reform shows the exit door to the angels, banning them from serious philosophical considerations. And then both the Enlightenment and the “masters of suspicion,” such as Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud, demote God from being a symbol to merely becoming a sign, as the poet says, at most a “sign without meaning” (Friedrich Hoelderlin).

Not surprisingly, it is in line with the logic of modern times that man not only wants to be content with no intermediary and no “in between,” no *metaxú*, but also has no use for a “foreign director,”⁶ as Kant puts it in his famous manifesto on “What Is Enlightenment?,” there is room only for autonomous will, and as such, reason.

Although it is a joy for those of a less-than-noble spirit, as a consolation, Descartes is burdened with a kind of irrational fate. His rationalism bears another, less known, “dark,” oneiric side. As eloquently observed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, “Even Descartes has a dream” (Deleuze & Guattari, 2000, p. 50) to which he owes everything that is most important in his philosophy.

Metaxú and “Lords of Images” (Ending)

Our human and philosophical condition is determined by the fact that we live, as Olga Tokarczuk writes, in the “land of *Metaxú*” (Tokarczuk, 2020) and have no access to what is divine; for the opposite of *metaxú*, as the Polish Nobel Laureate writes, is deadly “literalism” (Tokarczuk, 2020, p. 252). This is why “the letter kills us and the spirit gives life” (“the letter kills, and the Spirit gives life”—2 Cor 3.6). As Alexei Losev eloquently observes, we live in the realm of myths and symbols and die in the realm of concepts that are

⁶ “Enlightenment is what we mean when a man comes out of his minor age, into which he fell through his own fault. Underage is the inability of a man to use his own mind, without a foreign manager” (Kuderowicz, 2000, p. 194).

“nothing” by themselves (as Nicolai Hartmann writes, “Begriffe (...) sind für sich überhaupt nichts” [Świeżawski, 1966, p. 350]). Thus deprived of life-giving imagination, we remain hostage to Urizen, the god of the north, the cruel Blakeian god of the “Land of Ulro” (Miłosz, 1994).

Consequently, the symbolic paradigm of truth we are analyzing—transmitted by myth; poetry; art; and even, as in the case of the author of *Meditation*, dreams—is by no means secondary to scientific truth. On the contrary, it is equally valuable, although its truths hail from a different order.

At the same time, the dichotomy of the dispute between what is “rhetorical” and what is “logical,” already outlined in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, and which actually runs throughout the history of European culture, loses its power in a way. This dichotomy, which is a kind of feature of European culture, known to the romantics like Schelling, Dilthey, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Derrida, proves to be not only one of the most established illusions of our culture, but also one of the most difficult to overcome.

Let us add that, unlike a number of inveterate scientists, many are unaware of the falsehood of this dichotomy, of which Ludwig Wittgenstein scornfully notes in his book *Culture and Value*, that nowadays, “people think that scientists exist to instruct them; poets, musicians to please them. The idea that they can teach them something—doesn’t come to their mind” (<https://teologiapolityczna.pl/teologia-polityczna-co-tydzien>).

As noted by a contemporary Polish philosopher who spent many years in the United States, the modern “saviors of humanity” such as Bill Gates or Steve Jobs are not so much the inhabitants of the “land of *metaxú*,” but the rulers of “The Land of Ulro”—this is not so much an impulse for reflection as a reason to rub your hands together in business (<https://teologiapolityczna.pl/teologia-polityczna-co-tydzien>).

After all, this should not engender defeatism in us, the inhabitants of the “land of *Metaxú*.” On the contrary, let us try to put together the whole of our Image that is broken into pieces; perhaps they will form a mosaic, or even an Icon, in our “lost paradigm of man” (Krasicki, 2011) in our Image.

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