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Editoriale

Il tema del “mondo” e dell’“ambiente”, intesi in senso ampio – dunque da un punto di vista fisico-cosmologico, etico e perfino logico-linguistico – e senza trascurare prospettive care alla sensibilità contemporanea, come l’ambientalismo e l’attenzione al mondo animale, si trova al centro di questo numero di *Alvearium*. Richard McKirahan esamina i diversi significati del termine *kosmos*, originariamente “ordine” o “disposizione” di qualcosa, nell’ambito della riflessione presocratica, mentre Luc Brisson discute la concezione dello statuto e della natura dei viventi non umani che emerge nel *Timeo* di Platone. Al *Mondo* di Descartes è dedicato l’articolo di Tad Schmaltz, cui segue un esame, di Marco Brusotti, del concetto metalogico di “mondo” in Wittgenstein. Il numero è completato da un saggio di Igor Agostini sulla teologia in Descartes, che ne offre una presentazione generale in riferimento sia alla cosiddetta “teologia razionale” che ad alcuni aspetti più strettamente teologici, e da una discussione di Elisabetta Basso su *Les aveux de la chair*, l’ultima opera composta da Michel Foucault pubblicata nel 2018 da Gallimard (e in traduzione italiana, presso Feltrinelli, nel 2019).

La Direzione e la Redazione di *Alvearium* si augurano che, come in passato, la composizione del volume riesca a soddisfare le aspettative dei propri lettori e di quanti in generale si accostano agli studi storico-filosofici e a contribuire nei limiti del possibile al progresso di queste ricerche.

La Direzione e la Redazione

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Richard McKirahan

The Meaning of *Kosmos* down to the Mid-fourth Century BCE

Abstract: Questo articolo esamina i significati del termine e della nozione di *kosmos* nell'ambito della riflessione presocratica e fino alla metà del IV secolo a.C. Vengono prese in considerazione e discusse nel dettaglio alcune delle principali posizioni emerse nel dibattito critico contemporaneo e poste in relazione con un'ampia analisi dei materiali pervenutici dei filosofi presocratici e di Platone.

Abstract: This article examines the meanings of the term and the notion of *kosmos* in the context of pre-Socratic thinking up to the mid-fourth century BC. It considers and discusses in detail some of the main positions that have emerged in contemporary critical debate and relates them to an extensive analysis of the surviving materials of the pre-Socratic philosophers and Plato.

Parole chiave: *Kosmos* / Cosmologia / Presocratici / Platone

Keywords : *Kosmos* / *Cosmology* / *Pre-Socratics* / *Plato*

Preface

Our word «cosmos» is derived, or rather transliterated, from the Greek word *kosmos*, and our words «cosmic» and «cosmogony» are derived from the Greek *kosmikos* and *kosmogonia*. («Cosmology» has the same root even though there is no corresponding (ancient) Greek word *kosmologia*.) This makes it easy to assume that the meaning or at least a meaning of *kosmos* was «cosmos» (roughly equivalent to «universe») right from the beginning. But this is not the case. The original meaning of the word was fundamentally «order». Its earliest surviving occurrence with the meaning «cosmos» has been thought by eminent scholars¹ to date from the mid-6th century² Presocratic philosopher Anaximander, but many scholars now believe that this is not true³. Pythagoras (6th – early 5th century) is reported to have been the first to use *kosmos* in this sense, but this too is no longer widely believed⁴. Just how and when the word *kosmos* came to mean «cosmos» is currently a topic of debate and strongly contrasting views.

I begin by distinguishing two types of homonym. Certain articles of clothing are called capes and so are certain geographical features (for example, Cape Horn). Also certain parts of animals' bodies are called

¹ For example, Vlastos in «American Journal of Philosophy», LXXV (1955), pp. 132-134 (reprinted in DAVID J. FURLEY and REGINALD E. ALLEN, *Studies in Presocratic Philosophy*, 1969, vol. 1, and Daniel Graham (ed.), GREGORY VLASTOS, *Studies in Greek Philosophy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995).

² All dates in this paper are BCE except if otherwise noted.

³ Kirk challenged this view in *Heraclitus, The Cosmic Fragments* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1954) and in Kirk and Raven, *The Presocratic Philosophers* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1957; hereinafter: KRS), and Guthrie was explicitly non-committal in *History of Greek Philosophy*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1962; hereinafter: HGP). Since then the tide has turned in their favor.

⁴ See below, p.13 for Pythagoras. However, Horky is unwilling to rule this out as a possibility — see below, p.22-23.

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heads and so are certain people in some organizations. In the second example the meanings are related. Calling the president of an organization its head is clearly derived from its primary meaning. A human head is the top part of the body, while the head of an organization is the person who occupies the top spot in the organizational chart. With «cape» it is different. The word for the article of clothing is derived from the late Latin *cappa* while the word for the geographical feature is derived from words that designate the same thing in Romance languages (Italian and Portuguese *capo*, Spanish *cabó*, French *cap*). The ways these two words were Englished happened to give the same result. In effect they are two English words with the same spelling. The *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* in fact has separate entries for these two meanings. I do not intend to suggest that *kosmos* in its (dare I say?) cosmic meaning is simply a pun on *kosmos* meaning order.

The second variety of homonym, foregrounded by Aryeh Finkelberg (hereinafter F.), is relevant to the present discussion. In his paper *On the History of the Greek ΚΟΣΜΟΣ*⁵, with which I shall be engaging in the present paper, F. distinguishes between what he calls the 'usual' meaning of a word and its 'contextual' meaning. An example of a contextual meaning is the use of head in «head waiter», where «waiter» indicates the context in which «head» is used; another example would be the sentence «Have you ever seen the queen?» Without any specific context I imagine that most people would understand the reference to be Queen Elizabeth II, but in Holland it would probably be understood as referring to (former) Queen Beatrix. The point here is that 'usual' may vary from place to place and from person to person and from time to time, and that disambiguation might be needed to avoid unclarity about which queen I had in mind or the context of which nation I was speaking. But if I said it while talking about a chess match or a game of bridge, the 'contextual' meaning (which amounts to the 'usual' meaning in that kind of context) would be quite different. Further, if I said it with the 2006 film *The Queen* in mind and without supplying any context, the likelihood of misunderstanding would be greater, increasing the need for a word of explanation.

F. believes that until a meaning of a word has become well known (i.e., a 'usual' meaning) and in particular in the case of the initial use of a new meaning, some explanation will be needed in order to make the meaning clear. He further supposes that the meaning «world» is far enough removed from earlier meanings of *kosmos* that such an explanation would be required until it became established⁶, so that the absence of such an explanation in a text would indicate either that «world» was already established as a usual meaning of *kosmos* when the author wrote it or that the author was using *kosmos* intending another, already established, meaning of the word.

Kosmos from the Beginning through the Presocratic Philosophers.

This first part of my essay will provide a critical assessment of the evidence and arguments brought by two leading participants in this debate.

⁵ HSCP (*Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*) XCVIII (1998), pp. 103-136.

⁶ He sees this kind of explanation in passages from the *Timaeus*, *Politicus* and *Philebus* discussed below, p.21-22.

The Meaning of *Kosmos* down to the Mid-fourth Century BCE

The traditional view that the cosmic meaning of *kosmos* is due to certain perceived features of the world (its orderliness, beauty, etc.) has been challenged by E., who describes the traditional view as follows:

The current notion of *kosmos* as “the combination of order, fitness and beauty”⁷ is the inexhaustible source of the scholarly talk of the Presocratic vision of the universe as a structured system exhibiting the beauty of a perfect arrangement⁸.

E. offers a different derivation of cosmic sense of *kosmos* and argues that it appears for the first time 200 years later than Anaximander, perhaps in Plato’s late dialogue *Timaeus* (mid-4th century). This view has recently been challenged by Philip Horky (hereinafter H.) in his paper *When did kosmos become the kosmos?*⁹ H. finds an earlier instance of the cosmic use of the word in Plato’s *Gorgias*, an earlier work than the *Timaeus*, which refers to certain «wise» (*sophoi*) people who use the word in that sense. (A passage in Xenophon’s *Memorabilia*, which refers to some «professors» (σοφισταί) also plays a significant role in H.’s case that it was Pythagoreans, and perhaps even Pythagoras himself, who inaugurated the cosmic sense of *kosmos*.) Both passages will be discussed below¹⁰.

I begin with a survey of the meanings of *kosmos* as given in LSJ¹¹. In Homer and Hesiod, the earliest Greek authors whose original works have survived, the word already has a considerable range. Scholars agree that the basic meaning was ‘order’ and other meanings are applications of this concept to particular situations. The word has a positive connotation, as in the expressions *kata kosmon* (in order) and *eu kata kosmon* (neat)¹². Thersites is described as «knowing *akosma*» (without decency) and *ou kata kosmon* (disorderly or insubordinate)¹³. The attire of the goddess Hera when she goes to seduce Zeus is called her *kosmos*¹⁴, as are the clothing, jewelry and flowers with which Athena dresses Pandora¹⁵. LSJ give a wide range of other definitions, including «discipline», «fashion/form», «ornament», «decoration», «praise», «honour» and «credit». Particular noteworthy is that sometimes one’s *kosmos* is material (Hera’s clothing) and sometimes it is immaterial (discipline). In this way it works like «arrangement», which can refer to the way in which things are arranged and also to the things in their arrangement (a flower arrangement). A state’s constitution (body of laws), its government and also its ruler can be called its *kosmos*, as well as the orderly behavior of its citizens.

«World-order» and «universe» are other meanings recorded in LSJ, where the first attested occurrences are attributed to Pythagoras and Parmenides. But the attribution to Pythagoras is found in a testimonium¹⁶ and as such has no evidentiary value for Pythagoras’ actual words. (It is agreed that not a

⁷ Quotation from Guthrie, *HGP*, vol. 1, p. 208, n.1

⁸ E., p. 104.

⁹ In P. Horky (ed.), *Cosmos in the Ancient World*, Cambridge, 2019, pp. 22-41.

¹⁰ See below, pp. 20 and 22.

¹¹ HENRY GEORGE LIDDELL and ROBERT SCOTT, *A Greek Lexicon*, 9th ed. revised by H.S. Jones, Oxford, 1949 (hereinafter: LSJ).

¹² *Iliad* 14, 187. This and the following translations are taken from Fagles’ and Lattimore’s translations of the *Iliad*.

¹³ *Iliad* 2, 214.

¹⁴ *Iliad* 14, 187.

¹⁵ HESIOD, *Works and Days* 76.

¹⁶ AËTIUS, *Placita* 2, 1, 1.

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single direct quotation has been reliably attributed to him). In fact, however, the word does occur twice in Parmenides' surviving text (28 B4, line 3¹⁷ and B8, line 52)

B4 is as follows:

Λεῦσσε δ' ὅμως ἀπεόντα νόω παρεόντα βεβαίως·
οὐ γὰρ ἀποτμήξει τὸ ἐὸν τοῦ ἐόντος ἔχθεσθαι
οὔτε σκιδνάμενον πάντη πάντως κατὰ κόσμον
οὔτε συνιστάμενον.

But gaze upon things which although absent are securely present to the mind.

For you will not cut off what-is from clinging to what-is, neither being scattered everywhere in every way in order nor being brought together¹⁸.

A possible translation of the third line is «completely scattered everywhere throughout the cosmos», which would make it the earliest securely attested occurrence of that use of the word, but the Homeric parallels point rather to its meaning «completely scattered everywhere in an orderly way».

B8, line 52:

[...] κόσμον ἐμῶν ἐπέων ἀπατηλὸν ἀκούων.

This is standardly translated «listening to the deceitful order of my words» (*vel. sim.*), there is no question of its referring to the cosmos.

The two possible translations of B4.3 shows that the decision about when *kosmos* came to mean cosmos depends on how individual passages are interpreted. Occurrences of the word in Plato's *Timaeus*, *Politicus* and *Philebus*, in Xenophon's *Memorabilia* and in four fragments of Philolaus¹⁹ establish that it was used in the cosmic sense sense by those authors (by Plato late in his career, by Philolaus we know not when)²⁰.

The stage is now set for the rest of my treatment of this topic, which will examine relevant passages where the word *kosmos* occurs in the light of F.'s and H.'s contrasting interpretations.

F. argues that the cosmic meaning of *kosmos* is Plato's invention and is found in the works of Plato mentioned above. These are agreed to be among Plato's last works, hence written in the mid-fourth century. F. begins by discussing earlier occurrences of the word that have been taken to mean 'world' or 'world order' and arguing that they are wrongly taken to be so. He understands this meaning to be an

¹⁷ I use the standard references to the sixth edition of H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (1951).

¹⁸ Here and elsewhere in this paper where not specified otherwise the translations are mine, taken in most cases from R. MCKIRAHAN, *Philosophy Before Socrates*, Hackett Publishing Company, Inc. Indianapolis/Cambridge, 2010².

¹⁹ These texts are discussed below.

²⁰ For Philolaus's dates, see below, p. 20.

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extension of the Plato's use of *kosmos* with the meaning 'heaven'. For the meaning 'heaven' in Plato F. cites *Leges* 820e-821b, 897c8 and 967c5 along with *Philebus* 28e, and *Critias* 121c3. For further uses of the word with this meaning he refers to several other authors from the fourth century onwards: Isocrates (in a text written c. 380), Aristotle, Cleanthes, Euclid, Philo and the lexicographers Pollux and Hesychius²¹.

Importantly for F.'s purposes the fourth century also found *ouranos*, whose original meaning was «heaven», being used to mean «world». F. cites several passages from Plato: *Republic* 509d, *Timaeus* 28b2, *Politicus* 273c1, *Philebus* 30b5 and *Leges* 896e1; also Aristotle: *Physics* 212b17, *De Caelo* 301a17, *Metaphysics* 990a5, and calls attention especially to the definition of *ouranos* at *De Caelo* 278b10-21 as «in yet another sense we call *ouranos* the body encircled by the extreme circumference: for the whole or the universe we are in the habit to call *ouranos*»²². Thus it is not surprising that the two words were considered synonyms and were applied to the world as well as to the heavens.

H. disagrees, claiming that there are cases where the word means 'cosmos' prior to the mid-fourth century, in particular in a passage from Plato's *Gorgias* which is agreed to be an earlier work than the *Timaeus*, *Politicus* and *Critias*, and another from Xenophon's *Memorabilia* which clearly uses *kosmos* with its cosmic meaning, which F., having decided that Plato's *Timaeus* was the first occurrence, declares²³ without further evidence to be a late work of Xenophon (who died in 354, just 6 or 7 years before Plato).

F. and H. both rest their cases on interpretations of particular passages. F. systematically investigates the occurrences of *kosmos* in the fragments of the Presocratic philosophers (Anaximander, Anaximenes, Pythagoras, Heraclitus, Parmenides, Empedocles, Anaxagoras, Melissus, Diogenes of Apollonia, Democritus and Philolaus and in reports of their views (testimonia), and argues that it does not (or not necessarily) have its cosmic meaning in these passages. H. discusses few of these passages, concentrating instead on the occurrences of the word in the *Gorgias* and *Memorabilia* passages, which he maintains have the cosmic meaning. His paper is principally devoted to the doxographical tradition, which originated with Aristotle's follower Theophrastus. Here two things must be borne in mind, first that more original source material was available to the ancient doxographers than has come down to us, but second, where they summarize and abbreviate the original material, as opposing to quoting it literally, there is always the possibility or even the likelihood that the reports do not stick to the vocabulary of the original but use words like *kosmos* in their contemporary senses.) H. concludes that *kosmos* had its cosmic sense already in the *Gorgias* (written perhaps 20 years prior to the *Timaeus*, *Politicus* and *Critias*) and that the *Memorabilia* passage likely refers to the Pythagoreans.

In what follows I will briefly present the passages in the Presocratics containing the word *kosmos* and assess F.'s arguments, in most cases agreeing with him. I will then discuss the passages from Xenophon and the *Gorgias*, summarizing the arguments of both F. and H., and then draw my own somewhat different

²¹ F., pp. 122-123. To this list we may also add Favorinus ap. (D.L. 8.48).

²² F., p. 125 nn. 83, 84, F.'s translation, except I prefer to translate τὸ πᾶν as «the universe» instead of F.'s «totality». The meaning is unchanged.

²³ F., p. 129.

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conclusions.

Anaximander

Several testimonia on Anaximander are relevant.

τοὺς οὐρανούς καὶ τοὺς ἐν αὐτοῖς κόσμους
the heavens (*ouranoi*) and the *kosmoi* in them²⁴

τοὺς οὐρανούς καὶ τὸν ἐν αὐτοῖς κόσμον
the heavens (*ouranoi*) and the *kosmos* in them²⁵

πάντας περιέχειν τοὺς κόσμους
surrounds all the *kosmoi*²⁶

τῆς τῶν οὐρανῶν γενέσεως
the generation of the heavens²⁷

This is good evidence that Anaximander believed in a plurality of worlds, in fact, an infinite (*apeiron*) number of them²⁸ and that he distinguished between «heavens» and «worlds». These accounts come from a single source, Aristotle's student Theophrastus, one of the founders of systematic doxography. Theophrastus evidently had reason to believe that Anaximander held that there are an infinite number of worlds, that he distinguished between *ouranoi* and *kosmoi*, and held that the *kosmoi* are in the *ouranoi*. Thus, if *ouranoi* means «heavens» then *kosmos* cannot mean «world» in the cosmic sense where it refers not just to what we call the earth, but to the entire universe. What, then, does *kosmoi* refer to? F's solution is simply that «it can scarcely mean other than 'and the arrangements in them'»²⁹. In this case «arrangement» is being used in its concrete sense, as in «flower arrangement» to refer to the arrangement of things in them, for example the things Anaximander declares are found in our own *kosmos*³⁰.

Anaximenes

οἶον ἢ ψυχὴ, ἢ ἡμετέρα ἀήρ οὔσα συγκρατεῖ ἡμᾶς, καὶ ὅλον τὸν κόσμον πνεῦμα καὶ ἀήρ περιέχει.
(DK 13 B2)

Just as our soul, being air, holds us together and controls us, so do breath and air surround the whole *kosmos*.

Some of the words in this alleged fragment cannot have been written by Anaximenes. Consequently,

²⁴ SIMPLICIUS, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* 24, 17-18 (in DK 12A9).

²⁵ HIPPLYTUS, *Refutation of All Heresies* 1, 6, 1, 3 (in DK 12A11).

²⁶ HIPPLYTUS, *Refutation of All Heresies* 1, 6, 1, 4 (in DK 12A11).

²⁷ SIMPLICIUS, *Commentary on Aristotle's Physics* 41, 19 (not in DK).

²⁸ I argue for this view in *Anaximander's Infinite Worlds* (pp.49-65 in *Before Plato: Essays in Ancient Greek Philosophy VI*, ed. A. Preus, Albany, State University of New York Press, 2001).

²⁹ F, p. 109.

³⁰ This way of thinking of a *kosmos* goes some way towards meeting the objections of Vlastos to Kirk's view that *kosmos* does not mean «world» in Anaximander. (references in nn.1 and 2 above).

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the meaning of *kosmos*, even if Anaximenes did use it (which is not certain) cannot be ascertained³¹.

Pythagoras

The relevant text runs as follows.

πρωτος ὠνόμασε τὴν τῶν ὅλων περιοχὴν κόσμον ἐκ τῆς ἐν αὐτῷ τάξεως. (Aëtius 2.1.1 = DK 14, 21)

Pythagoras was the first to name the extent of the universe *kosmos* on account of the order (τάξις) found in it.

According to F,

what is reported is a Pythagorean tradition which, we can infer, authorized the use of *kosmos* in the sense of 'heaven.' Since the attribution of this terminological invention to Pythagoras conforms to the Pythagoreans' routine practice, it is impossible to know how old this use really was. The only historical evidence the report furnishes is the use of *kosmos* for 'heaven' by the Pythagoreans of the last generations³².

This is the general opinion now, with which I agree; H. suggests that the tradition in question may be accurate³³.

Parmenides

For discussion of the occurrences in Parmenides' surviving fragments, see above³⁴.

Heraclitus

F. puts his distinction between 'regular' and 'contextual' uses of a word [106] to use in discussing two of the three fragments of Heraclitus that contain the word *kosmos*: 22 B30, B39 and B124. The first of these fragments contains what many take to be the earliest surviving occurrence of *kosmos* in its cosmic sense.

κόσμον τόνδε, τὸν αὐτὸν ἀπάντων, οὔτε τις θεῶν οὔτε ἀνθρώπων ἐποίησεν, ἀλλ' ἦν αἰεὶ καὶ ἔστιν καὶ ἔσται πῦρ αἰείζωνον, ἀπτόμενον μέτρα καὶ ἀποσβεννύμενον μέτρα. (B30)

This *kosmos*, the same of all [things], did none of the gods or men make, but it ever was and is and shall be: ever-living fire, kindling in measures and extinguishing in measures³⁵.

F. grants that *kosmos* could in principle be translated as «world», in which case the fragment would be saying that the world is ever-living fire. However, since he fails to find the cosmic sense of *kosmos* in any earlier author or even in the following half century, he holds that there is no reason to think that this was

³¹ See H. 109 and n. 22 for bibliography on the question whether *kosmos* is authentic; also KRS, p. 159, n. 2.

³² F., p. 107.

³³ F., p. 41.

³⁴ See p. 10.

³⁵ F's translation. The initial phrase is usually taken to be «the same for all people» but F. makes a good argument taking the Greek in this other way.

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a regular sense of the word in Heraclitus' time. Nor, he argues, is it likely to be a conventional use, since no clue is given that it is not used in its regular sense of «order». On F's reading, however, it makes good sense. The word τόνδε, translated «this», then, is not a demonstrative use of the word, referring to the world we live in, but has the meaning «as follows»³⁶ and the first part of the fragment amounts to a claim that this arrangement, which applies to all things, ... is ever-living fire.

The fragment, then, speaks «of the ordered eternal sequence of the fire's measured alterations, which is also the sequence of all things» and the phrase about gods and men «is an assertion that the order of fire's alterations was not brought about by an extraneous agent, is an informative statement of the self-sufficiency of cosmic fire»³⁷.

An advantage of this interpretation which F. does not mention is that it agrees closely with other fragments of Heraclitus:

All things are an exchange for fire and fire for all things, as goods for gold and gold for goods (B90)

The turnings of fire: first, sea; and of sea, half is earth and half fiery waterspout [...]. Earth is poured out as sea, and is measured according to the same ratio (*logos*) it was before it became earth. (B31)

Thunderbolt steers all things (B64)

B90 makes a similar claim to B30; B31 with its reference to the same ratio emphasizes both the order and the orderliness of the changes fire undergoes in maintaining «all things»; B64 points to the intelligent guiding that fire, which seems to be associated with *logos*, provides. For these reasons I find F's interpretation of B30 persuasive.

F's interpretation of *kosmos* fits the third fragment well.

ὥσπερ σάρμα εἰκὴ κεχυμένων ὁ κάλλιστος κόσμος. (B124)

The most beautiful *kosmos* is a pile of things poured out at random.

Since order, not the world, is the opposite of randomness, this fragment naturally belongs along with Heraclitus's many fragments on opposition, such as

The sea is the purest and most polluted water: to fishes drinkable and bringing safety, to humans undrinkable and destructive. (B61)

F's second fragment goes as follows:

τοῖς ἐγρηγορόσιν ἓνα καὶ κοινὸν κόσμον εἶναι, τῶν δὲ κοιμωμένων ἕκαστον εἰς ἴδιον ἀποστρέφεισθαι. (B89)
For the waking there is one common *kosmos*, but when asleep each person turns away to a private one.

³⁶ This is an ordinary use of this word, cf. LSJ s.v. III, 2.

³⁷ Quotes from F. p. 117.

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Here F. admits that *kosmos* means «world» but he discounts the fragment's value as evidence against his interpretation on two grounds. First, that the word translated «common» (*koinos*) was not what Heraclitus (who standardly employed the Ionic form *xunos*) would have used. This shows that the fragment, whatever Heraclitus wrote, has been tampered with, and leaves the status of *kosmos* in doubt. Second, that the idea that we each have our own private world, is an extension of the application of *kosmos* with the meaning «world» and since according to F. there are no occurrences of *kosmos* in this sense until generations later than Heraclitus, no one in his time would have understood what he meant, as is the case for B30. I think that this interpretation is plausible but not conclusive. In any case, F. might have supported his case by pointing this out as a further reason to reject the authenticity of the fragment (or at least its second clause) on the authority of Kirk³⁸ and others who have declared it spurious.

Melissus

εἰ γὰρ ἕτεροιοῦται, ἀνάγκη τὸ ἐὸν μὴ ὁμοίον εἶναι, ἀλλὰ ἀπόλλυσθαι τὸ πρόσθεν ἐὸν, τὸ δὲ οὐκ ἐὸν γίνεσθαι. εἰ τοίνυν τριχὶ μίῃ μυρίοις ἕτεροῖον γίνοιτο, ὀλεῖται πᾶν ἐν τῷ παντὶ χρόνῳ. (3) ἀλλ' οὐδὲ μετακοσμηθῆναι ἀνυστόν: ὁ γὰρ κόσμος ὁ πρόσθεν ἐὼν οὐκ ἀπόλλυται οὔτε ὁ μὴ ἐὼν γίνεται.

For if what-is becomes different, it is necessary that what-is is not alike, but what previously was perishes, and what-is-not comes to be. Now if it were to become different by a single hair in ten thousand years, it will all perish in the whole of time. But it is not possible for it to be rearranged (*metakosmeisthai*) either. For the *kosmos* that previously was is not destroyed, and one (i.e., a *kosmos*) that is not does not come to be. (extracts from Melissus DK 30 B7 sections 2-3)

The verb *metakosmeisthai* must mean «rearrange» and so the noun *kosmos* here must mean «arrangement», which is a normal meaning of the word in the fifth century.

Anaxagoras

οὐ κενώρισται ἀλλήλων τὰ ἐν τῷ ἐνὶ κόσμῳ οὐδὲ ἀποκέκοπται πελέκει οὔτε τὸ θερμὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ ψυχροῦ οὔτε τὸ ψυχρὸν ἀπὸ τοῦ θερμοῦ. (DK 59 B8)

The things in the one *kosmos* are not separated from one another nor are they split apart with an axe, neither the hot from the cold nor the cold from the hot.

As F. points out³⁹, the context in which these words are quoted has nothing to do with cosmology, but rather concerns Anaxagoras' doctrine that there is a portion of everything in everything, no matter how finely you divide it. Here he is talking about hot and cold which (along with the other basic things in his system) are united in an arrangement that makes it impossible for them to be separated one from another.

³⁸ G.S. KIRK, *Heraclitus The Cosmic Fragments*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1970, pp. 63-64.

³⁹ F., p. 113.

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Empedocles

The word *kosmos* appears twice in Empedocles' extant fragments (DK 31 B26 and B134).

It is common parlance to speak of Empedocles' «cosmic cycle» and several different interpretations of the cycle are maintained strongly to this day. I agree with those who believe that Empedocles speaks of an endlessly recurring cycle that contains four phases: (1) a period of the total domination of the unifying power of Love, in which all the four elements (earth, air, fire and water) are in formed into a sphere⁴⁰ a state of complete mixture, followed by (2) a period of increasing Strife, which causes the elements to separate gradually from one another, forming compounds such as ourselves and the things around us, followed by (3) a period (or, on one interpretation, a single instant) of the complete domination of Strife, in which there is total separation, each of the elements forming a mass separate from the others, in turn followed by (4) a period of increasing Love, in which the elements gradually mix and form compounds until they find themselves again in phase (1).

ἐν δὲ μέρει κρατέουσι περιπλομένοιο κύκλιο,
καὶ φθίνει εἰς ἄλληλα καὶ αὖξεται ἐν μέρει αἴσης.
αὐτὰ γὰρ ἔστιν ταῦτα, δι' ἀλλήλων δὲ θέοντα
γίνονται ἄνθρωποι τε καὶ ἄλλων ἔθνεα θηρῶν
ἄλλοτε μὲν Φιλότητι συνερχόμεν' εἰς ἓνα κόσμον,
ἄλλοτε δ' αὖ δίχ' ἕκαστα φορούμενα Νείκεος ἔχθει,
εἰσόκεν ἐν συμφύντα τὸ πᾶν ὑπένερχε γένηται. (B26, ll. 1-7)

They [the four elements] dominate in turn as the cycle revolves,
and they decrease into one another and grow in their turn,
as destined.

For there are just these things, and running through one another
they come to be both humans and the tribes of other beasts,
at one time coming together into a single *kosmos* by Love
and at another each being borne apart again by the hatred of Strife,
until having grown together into one, the whole, they become subjected.

Since there is no permanent state, it might not seem obvious which if any of these phases the single *kosmos* might refer to, but if it does apply to one or more of them, the transitional phases (2) and (4) appear to be excluded, in which the amount of Strife and Love in them is changing continually, as the following passage makes clear.

Double is the generation of mortal things, and double their decline.
For the coming together of all things gives birth to one
[sequence of generation and decline] and destroys it,
and the other is nurtured and flies away when they grow apart
again.

⁴⁰ Empedocles refers to this cosmic phase as *sphairos*, distinguishing it in this way from an ordinary sphere (*sphaira*).

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And these never cease continually interchanging,
at one time all coming together into one by Love
and at another each being borne apart by the hatred of Strife. (B17, lines 3-8)

F. argues, convincingly to my mind, that *kosmos* in the final sentence refers of B26 to phase (1), where the elements are arranged not in an articulated world but in a condition of perfect unity and order⁴¹.

Empedocles elsewhere describes divinity as not having a body but

οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀνδρομέη κεφαλῇ κατὰ γυῖα κέκασται,
οὐ μὲν ἀπαὶ νότοιο δύο κλάδοι αἰσσοῦνται,
οὐ πόδες, οὐ θοὰ γούνα, οὐ μήδεα λαχνήεντα,
ἀλλὰ φρήν ἱερὴ καὶ ἀθέσφατος ἔπλετο μούνον,
φροντίσι κόσμον ἅπαντα καταίσσουσα θοῆισιν.

For it is not furnished in its limbs with a human head.
Two branches do not spring from its back.
It has no feet, no swift knees, no hairy genitals,
but is only mind (*phrēn*), holy and indescribable,
darting through the entire *kosmos* with its swift thoughts. (B134)

F. points out that this description of divinity practically repeats the following description of the *sphairos*:

For two branches do not spring from its back
nor do feet or swift knees or organs of generation,
but it was a sphere and equal to itself on all sides. (B29)

where the Sphere is a reference to the state of perfect union of the four elements in phase (1). He concludes that B134 does not describe a divinity that is not mentioned elsewhere in Empedocles' plentiful fragments, but rather characterizes the *sphairos* as divine and intelligent. This is a new interpretation of B134 and one that I find attractive, but that is not (yet?) accepted by many Empedocles scholars.

Democritus

Democritus and Leucippus, who introduced the atomic theory, held that there are infinite worlds scattered through the infinite void. However, only two fragments attributed to them use the word *kosmos* in this sense; F. rejects both, one

ἀνδρὶ σοφῶ πάσα γῆ βατή· ψυχῆς γὰρ ἀγαθῆς πατρὶς ὁ ξύμπας κόσμος.

⁴¹ I disagree with F. on two points that do not affect his conclusion. In line 7, where F. has «growing together into one» I prefer «having grown together into one», which better reflects the aorist tense of the participle and makes it clear that Empedocles refers to the phase where the four elements are completely unified. And I take lines 5-6 with its present participles, where our translations agree, to refer to the transitional phases (2) and (4), not phases (1) and (3) as F. asserts. So, line 6 speaks of the period when the four elements are approaching the state described in line 7, that is, phase (1). If I am correct the case for his view is made stronger.

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For a wise man all the earth is accessible, for the entire *kosmos* is the homeland of a good soul, (DK 68 B247)

because it is «a banal variation on a sentiment popular in fifth-century Athenian drama», and the other (DK 68 B34, which contains the famous attribution to Democritus of the description of a human being as a small world — *mikros kosmos*), because it comes from a late (sixth century CE) Neoplatonic source, David the Armenian, who «has no doxographical authority» and who may be referring to another Democritus who is also mentioned by Stobaeus⁴².

Diogenes of Apollonia

The word *kosmos* appears twice in the ten surviving fragments of Diogenes, both instances occur early in his book, in the same sentence, where he refers to

τὰ ἐν τῷδε τῷ κόσμῳ ἔόντα νῦν, γῆ καὶ ὕδωρ καὶ ἀήρ καὶ πῦρ καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ὅσα φαίνεται ἐν τῷδε τῷ κόσμῳ ἔόντα

the things that are now in this *kosmos* — earth, water, air, fire, and all the rest that are seen to exist in this *kosmos*. (DK 64 B2)

Diogenes held that air is the single material of which all things are composed. We are also told⁴³ that he believed that air was infinite in extent and in it there are found infinite *kosmoi*, where (as here) this word must refer to worlds.

However, none of his extant fragments refer to this latter doctrine and F. argues that in its two occurrences the word means something else. Indeed, it would be odd to insist that everything in *this* world is composed of the same thing when the theory holds that everything in *every* world is so constituted. The texts that report his belief in infinite worlds were composed in the second and third century CE and they do not pretend to be quoting his original text, so they are weak evidence. On the other hand, as F. argues, it would make sense for Diogenes to contrast the current arrangement of things — «this *kosmos*» (earth, water, etc.) — with the substance (air) out of which they are differentiated.

Philolaus

It is disappointing that F. does not provide an adequate treatment of Philolaus. *Kosmos* occurs six times in his fragments, but F. devotes only two brief footnotes to him⁴⁴. He refers to Huffman's *Philolaus of Croton* but in view of Huffman's careful analysis and treatment of the originality of the fragments⁴⁵ he is rash to dismiss these fragments as post-Platonic forgeries on the grounds that «if my conclusions are correct,

⁴² F., p. 120.

⁴³ Diogenes Laertius IX 57 and Pseudo-Plutarch *Stromata* 12 (= DK 64 A1).

⁴⁴ F. p. 118 n. 58 and p. 128, n. 92.

⁴⁵ C.A. HUFFMAN, *Philolaus of Croton: Pythagorean and Presocratic*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 17-35.

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kosmos, currently considered a distinctively Pythagorean term, was [...] Plato's innovation»⁴⁶.

The relevant fragments are the following.

Fragment 1

ἀ φύσις δ' ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἀρμόχθη ἐξ ἀπείρων τε καὶ περαινόντων καὶ ὅλος <ὁ> κόσμος καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ.

Nature in the *kosmos* was joined from both unlimiteds and limiters, and the entire *kosmos* and all the things in it.

Fragment 2

[...] ἐπεὶ τοίνυν φαίνεται οὐτ' ἐκ περαινόντων πάντων ἔοντα οὐτ' ἐξ ἀπείρων πάντων, δῆλον τᾶρα ὅτι ἐκ περαινόντων τε καὶ ἀπείρων ὁ τε κόσμος καὶ τὰ ἐν αὐτῷ συναρμόχθη.

[...] Now since it is evident that they are neither from things that are all limiters nor from things that are all unlimited, it is therefore clear that both the *kosmos* and the things in it were joined together from both limiters and unlimiteds.

Fragment 6

[...] οὐχ οἷόν τ' ἦν οὐθενὶ τῶν ἔοντων καὶ γιγνωσκομένων ὑφ' ἡμῶν γεγενῆσθαι μὴ ὑπαρχούσης τᾶς ἑστοῦς τῶν πραγμάτων, ἐξ ὧν συνέστα ὁ κόσμος, καὶ τῶν περαινόντων καὶ τῶν ἀπείρων. ἐπεὶ δὲ ταὶ ἀρχαὶ ὑπάρχον οὐχ ὁμοῖαι οὐδ' ὁμόφυλοι ἔσσαι, ἤδη ἀδύνατον ἦς καὶ αὐταῖς κοσμηθῆναι, εἰ μὴ ἀρμονία ἐπεγένετο ὠτινῶν ἂν τροπῷ ἐγένετο. τὰ μὲν ὧν ὁμοῖα καὶ ὁμόφυλα ἀρμονίας οὐδὲν ἐπεδέοντο, τὰ δὲ ἀνόμοια μὴδὲ ὁμόφυλα ... ἀνάγκα τὰ τοιαῦτα ἀρμονία συγκεκλειῆσθαι, εἰ μέλλοντι ἐν κόσμῳ κατέχεσθαι.

[...] it was impossible for any of the things that are and are known by us to have come to be if there did not exist the being of the things from which the *kosmos* is constituted — both the limiters and the unlimiteds. But since the principles are not similar or of the same kind, it would be completely impossible for them to be brought into a *kosmos* if *harmonia* had not come upon them in whatever way it did. Now things that are similar and of the same kind have no need of *harmonia* to boot but those that are dissimilar and not of the same kind ... must be connected together in *harmonia* if they are going to be kept in a *kosmos*.

Fragment 17

ὁ κόσμος εἷς ἐστίν, ἤρξατο δὲ γίγνεσθαι ἄχρι τοῦ μέσου καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ μέσου εἰς τὸ ἄνω διὰ τῶν αὐτῶν τοῖς κάτω, <καὶ> ἔστι τὰ ἄνω τοῦ μέσου ὑπεναντίως κείμενα τοῖς κάτω [...]

The *kosmos* is one. It began to come to be right up at the middle, and from the middle it came to be in an upward direction in the same way as it did in a downward direction and the things above the middle are symmetrical with those below [...]

All occurrences of *kosmos* in fragments 1 and 2, the first occurrence in fragment 6 and the single occurrence in fragment 17 clearly have the same meaning, which fragment 17 (which is apparently the beginning of Philolaus' cosmogony) shows is «world». In its other two occurrences (both in fragment 6) the context makes it clear that the word means «order».

⁴⁶ Ibid.

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F. cites Huffman as saying that Philolaus' «*floruit* may be as late as c. 400»⁴⁷. Huffman prefers dating Philolaus' birth to c.470 but grants that he could have been born as late as 440⁴⁸. If the latter date is correct, then he was only 12 years older than Plato and could well have been alive at or near the time when Plato wrote the *Timaeus*. There is good reason to believe that Plato's discussion of limits and unlimiteds in the *Philebus* has a direct connection with Philolaus' doctrine of limiters and unlimiteds as witnessed in his extant fragments⁴⁹. This suggests that Plato could also have borrowed the cosmic sense of *kosmos* from Philolaus and applied it in the *Philebus* and in the *Timaeus* and *Politicus* as well. On this account F.'s dating it to the mid-fourth century would not be out of the question, even though its originator was not Plato. On the other hand, if (as is certainly possible) the work or works from which these fragments come were written considerably earlier, they could have been seen by Plato, who is reported to have obtained Philolaus' writings as early as 388. This would make it possible that he knew the cosmic sense by the time he wrote the *Gorgias* — a consideration relevant to the next passage to be considered.

F.'s discussion of the fifth-century occurrences of the word *kosmos* concludes as follows:

It thus emerges that the fifth-century texts do not furnish any clear-cut evidence for *kosmos* as “world.” The word is consistently used in its primary sense of “order, arrangement,” and even in this sense no systematic employment of it in cosmological speculation is traceable.

Plato

Gorgias 507e-508a

φασὶ δ' οἱ σοφοί, ὧν Καλλικλῆεις, καὶ οὐρανὸν καὶ γῆν καὶ θεοὺς καὶ ἀνθρώπους τὴν κοινωनीαν συνέχειν καὶ φιλίαν καὶ κοσμιότητα καὶ σωφροσύνην καὶ δικαιοσύνην, καὶ τὸ ὅλον τοῦτο διὰ ταῦτα κόσμον καλοῦσιν, ὧν ἑταίρε, οὐκ ἀκοσμίαν οὐδὲ ἀκολασίαν.

The wise (*sophoi*) say, Callicles, that community, friendship, orderliness (*kosmiotēs*), temperance and justice hold heaven and earth and gods and humans together, and that for these reasons they call this entirety a *kosmos*, not a state of *akosmia* or intemperance.

F. denies that «this entirety» refers just to heaven and earth (i.e., the universe) but to the entirety composed of heaven and earth and gods and humans, reminding us that heaven and earth are the places where gods and humans dwell, respectively. In his view, the message of this passage is that «the fellowship of the heaven and the earth, gods and men [...] rests on order, temperance and justice». Secondly, if *kosmos* means «world» here, it is well contrasted with *akosmia* (which can be translated «absence of *kosmos*») but, F. insists, «the denial that the universe may be called ‘intemperance’ is absurd»⁵⁰. F. concludes that Plato is saying that the wise call the community of gods and humans «a (moral) order, not disorderliness or intemperance, and that is why the intemperate, who ‘is incapable of fellowship’ would be dear neither to a

⁴⁷ F., p. 118, n. 57.

⁴⁸ HUFFMAN, *Philolaus of Croton*, p. 6.

⁴⁹ I plan to develop this idea in a projected book on Philolaus.

⁵⁰ F., p.126.

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fellow-man nor to a god»⁵¹. I think that the first of these two claims is strong if we accept that *kosmos* had not acquired its cosmic sense by the time Plato wrote the *Gorgias*, but not so the second claim, in view of Plato's serious wordplay elsewhere.

H. takes *kosmos* in the *Gorgias* passage in its cosmic sense,⁵² but does not to my mind provide reasons to reject F's interpretation.

F. holds that Plato introduces *kosmos* in the cosmic sense for the first time in the *Timaeus* and employs it again in the *Politicus* and *Philebus*. In all three dialogues Plato calls attention to the novelty of the word's use in this sense:

Timaeus 28b3

ὁ δὴ πᾶς οὐρανὸς – ἢ κόσμος ἢ καὶ ἄλλο ὅτι ποτὲ ὀνομαζόμενος μάλιστα ἂν δέχοιτο, τοῦθ' ἡμῖν ὠνομάσθω.

all the world (*ouranos*), or *kosmos* or whatever other name it might well receive, let this be its name for us.

That the meaning is «world» and not «heaven» is made clear just below (28c4), where the entity mentioned at 28b3 is identified as «this universe» (*tode to pan*) as well as by the cosmogony that follows.

Politicus 269d7-8

ὄν δὲ οὐρανὸν καὶ κόσμον ἐπωνομάκαμεν
what we have named *ouranos* and *kosmos*

also in a context clearly referring to the universe (*to pan*)⁵³.

In two of its three occurrences in the *Philebus* *kosmos* means «world» and in the first⁵⁴ of these it is marked again as a contextual use.

Philebus 29e1

τοῦδε ὄν κόσμον λέγομεν

this thing that we call *kosmos* (29e1)

In its first occurrence in the *Philebus* (28e4), where *kosmos* means «heaven», Plato does not draw attention to it, which suggests that this was a 'usual' meaning.

F. notes that Plato did not intend this new meaning of *kosmos* to replace its earlier meaning as «heaven» and that he abandoned the cosmic meaning in *Leges*, where it means «heaven» (821a2, 897c8)

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² F., p. 30.

⁵³ *Polit.* 269c4.

⁵⁴ The second is at 59a3.

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and «order» (967c5), but never «universe». It appears to be Aristotle who first used the cosmic sense prominently, although he too sometimes uses it to mean «heaven». He may well have taken up the new use from Plato, although this can hardly be proved.

Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 1.1.11

οὐδείς δὲ πώποτε Σωκράτους οὐδὲν ἀσεβὲς οὐδὲ ἀνόσιον οὔτε πράττοντος εἶδεν οὔτε λέγοντος ἤκουσεν. οὐδὲ γὰρ περὶ τῆς τῶν πάντων φύσεως, ἢ περ τῶν ἄλλων οἱ πλείστοι, διελέγετο σκοπῶν ὅπως ὁ καλούμενος ὑπὸ τῶν σοφιστῶν κόσμος ἔχει καὶ τίσιν ἀνάγκαις ἕκαστα γίγνεται τῶν οὐρανίων.

No one ever saw or heard Socrates either doing or saying anything irreverent or unholy. For he did not even discuss the nature of all things as most of the others do, inquiring into the nature of what men of wisdom⁵⁵ (*sophistai*) call the *kosmos* and by what necessities each of the heavenly phenomena takes place.

F. acknowledges that in this passage *kosmos* must mean «world». Whether or not his claim that Plato's *Timaeus* is the earliest occurrence of the word in this sense still stands, then, depends on the date of composition of the *Memorabilia*. F. notes that there is no evidence for the dating of any of Xenophon's works and that Xenophon died in 354, only shortly before Plato, and so is able to sustain his claim by postulating that the *Memorabilia* was one of Xenophon's last works. He proceeds to identify the «men of wisdom» as the members of Plato's Academy.

H. disagrees on three grounds⁵⁶. First, that F. «depends a lot on dating of the works of Plato, a notoriously difficult project»; second, that his dating the *Memorabilia* to the end of Xenophon's life is unsubstantiated; third, that the *Gorgias* passage discussed above «expressly associates the use of the term *kosmos* with people other than himself». All these assertions are obviously true, but I do see how they refute F.'s thesis, although I agree that the second claim has considerable weight. On general grounds I find it more plausible that Xenophon should have written his Socratic works (in addition to the *Memorabilia*, the *Apology*, *Symposium* and *Oeconomicus*) at a relatively early stage of his authorial career, when Socrates would still have been much in his mind and when Plato wrote his *Apology of Socrates* (to which Xenophon's text of the same title can easily be seen as a corrective supplement) and his 'Socratic' dialogues, and other writers were composing 'Socratic' works (notoriously Polycrates' *Accusation of Socrates*).

In support of his own interpretation, H. cites the continuation of the *Gorgias* passage quoted above.

σὺ δέ μοι δοκεῖς οὐ προσέχειν τὸν νοῦν τούτοις, καὶ ταῦτα σοφὸς ὢν, ἀλλὰ λέληθέν σε ὅτι ἡ ἰσότης ἢ γεωμετρικὴ καὶ ἐν θεοῖς καὶ ἐν ἀνθρώποις μέγα δύναται, σὺ δὲ πλεονεξίαν οἶε δεῖν ἀσκεῖν. γεωμετρίας γὰρ ἀμελεῖς. (508a4-7)

I believe that you don't pay attention to these facts, even though you're a wise man (*sophos*) in these matters. You've failed to notice that the geometrical equality has great power among both gods and men, and you suppose that you ought to practice getting the greater share. That's because you neglect geometry. (H.'s translation)

The reference to geometry suggests to H. that Plato had Pythagoreans in mind, and he rightly focuses

⁵⁵ «Men of wisdom» is F.'s translation of the Greek word σοφιστῶν. For further discussion see below, p. 23-24.

⁵⁶ H., p. 29.

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on Philolaus, whom F. too quickly dismissed. As we have seen, the word *kosmos* occurs in several of the fragments of Philolaus. H. reports that according to Huffman it means «world» in fragments 1 and 2, «organized system» in fragments 1, 2 and 6, «order» in fragment 6, and «whole world» in fragment 17⁵⁷. In the sequel H. links this use of *kosmos* to the Pythagoreans, whom he identifies as the *sophoi* (wise) of the *Gorgias* passage and Xenophon's *sophistai* (F. translates this word «men of wisdom»; H. translates it as «professors») — a result he acknowledges is less than certain⁵⁸.

Three elements in this discussion require examination. First, Plato's mention of mathematics, and geometrical equality does not amount to a reference to Pythagoras or to distinctively Pythagorean pursuits. The role these people played in the early history of geometry is quite obscure and no one thinks that they were the only ones to pursue geometry in Plato's time.

Second, Plato himself had a deep interest in mathematics even if he did not make any contributions himself. It is prominent in the *Meno*, the *Republic* (where its several branches form the core of the philosophical education of the philosopher kings), the *Timaeus* (where the shapes of the four elements and the world are identified as regular solids, which are commonly known still today as the Platonic solids even though Plato himself had no hand in their discovery) and it is apparent in other dialogues. Additionally, Plato used mathematical procedures and entities as models of rigor and precision in purely philosophical contexts, notably in discussing Forms and both in the use of what he calls «hypotheses» and in a simple application of proportions — both in the «divided line» passage of the *Republic* (509d-511d).

Third, the identification of Xenophon's *sophistai* and the *Gorgias*' *sophoi* as Pythagoreans is anything but secure⁵⁹. To begin with, in the *Gorgias* passage just quoted, where Socrates calls Callicles «*sophos* in these matters» I suppose that he is thinking of Callicles' strongly asserted view that superior people should get a greater share of what's going and inferior people should get less⁶⁰. There is, of course, no suggestion that Callicles is a Pythagorean.

More significantly I find it remarkable that neither F. nor H. considers another possibility: that Xenophon's *sophistai* and possibly the *sophoi* of the *Gorgias* are none other than (some of) the Sophists. H.'s rendering «professors»⁶¹ seems a deliberate attempt to avoid this obvious translation. In any case the translation «professors» requires some explanation since it is not clear who (apart from Sophists) might have been considered professors in Xenophon's time. I find it hard to suppose that Xenophon, a fervent admirer of Socrates and a contemporary of Plato, who grew up in late fifth-century Athens, would have used the word with anyone other than the well-known Sophists in mind. This interpretation is amply

⁵⁷ Huffman (1993) 97f. In his translations of the fragments, he translates the word as «world-order» in both of its occurrences in fragment 1 and in fragments 2 and 17 (whose authenticity is debated). In fragment 6 he translates the first occurrence as «world-order» and the second as «order».

⁵⁸ H., p. 40.

⁵⁹ I think that not too much should be made of the fact that the *Gorgias* speaks of *sophoi* where Xenophon speaks of *sophistai*, for the *Gorgias* is the very dialogue where Plato defines sophistic (*sophistikê*) along with rhetoric (*rhêtorikê*) among other terms, very much with the practice of the Sophists (notably including Gorgias himself) in mind, a practice he is contrasting unfavorably with philosophy. Since in our passage it would not be to his purpose to denigrate the unusual meaning given to *kosmos*, he does not refer to its authors as sophists but as «wise people» — which in fact is the original sense of the word *sophistês*.

⁶⁰ *Gorgias* 483c-d.

⁶¹ The same translation is found in the Loeb translation.

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confirmed by Xenophon's use of the word *sophistês* elsewhere⁶².

In fact, several Sophists had interests that could have led them to use *kosmos* in this sense. Prodicus is reported to have had a deep interest in nature and some think that it was his cosmogony that Aristophanes parodies in the *Birds*⁶³. Several of Antiphon's fragments are on scientific and astronomical subjects⁶⁴. And Hippias, the first person we know of to have collected and organized information and quotations from earlier authors including Presocratic philosophers, and the only Sophist present at the conversation in Plato's *Protagoras* to have been said to be discussing «both about nature and some astronomical questions about things in the heaven»⁶⁵, and who is singled out as teaching «about calculation, astronomy and geometry» among other subjects, might well have used the word⁶⁶. There is no way to prove this hypothesis, but in cases like this, arguments from silence cannot be conclusive. The virtual absence of relevant texts from the Sophists makes it extremely unlikely that a text containing the word *kosmos* would have survived even if one or more of them actually used it in their writings.

The Status Quaestionis

We are left with four possibilities for the earliest recorded use (or allusion to this use) of the word *kosmos* in its cosmic sense. (1) F's view, that Plato originated it in the *Timaeus*; (2) H.'s opinion, based on an elaborate study of the Pythagorean doxography,⁶⁷ that the cosmic sense is found in an earlier work of Plato than the *Timaeus*, was used by Pythagoreans (even though I find it plausible that it was they who asserted that Pythagoras originated it) and may go back to Pythagoras himself; (3) the view that Xenophon attributes it to Sophists, whom he does not name; (4) Heraclitus, whose fragment B30, where a person who took it to refer to the universal order of everything we experience, would (in virtue of the 'concrete' meanings of *kosmos*) understand Heraclitus to be discussing the world in fact if not in name.

As we have seen, H. rejects view (1) on the grounds that (1) the word's cosmic meaning occurs in the *Gorgias* and (2) that Xenophon's *Memorabilia* is likely to be earlier than the *Timaeus*. I favor F. on the first of these two claims (although H.'s reading is certainly possible) but tend to favor H. on the second. As to view (2) I am dubious about the security of H.'s identification of the Pythagoreans as its originators. I also find plausible F.'s derivation of Plato's use of *kosmos* in this sense through the intermediary of the development of the meaning of *ouranos* from «heaven» to «world / universe», while being ready to believe that the plausibility is no guarantee of truth. View (3), although unsupported by textual evidence I think is a real possibility. And as to view (4), as the saying goes, «you pays your money and you takes your choice».

⁶² *Memorabilia* I 6 and *Cynegetica* 13, 1; 13, 6; 13, 8; 13, 9, where he describes Sophists in all too familiar unflattering terms; also in *Memorabilia* 1.6 Antiphon is called a Sophist as is Antisthenes at *Symposium* 4.5.

⁶³ For texts see ROBERT MAYHEW (ed.), *Prodicus the Sophist*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 39-45, with commentary pp. 159-175.

⁶⁴ GERARD J. PENDRICK (ed.), *Antiphon the Sophist. The Fragments*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 126-141, 144-153 with commentary pp. 276-289, 291-310. The most important texts are F26-F28.

⁶⁵ 315c.

⁶⁶ 318e.

⁶⁷ H., pp. 31-40.

The Meaning of *Kosmos* down to the Mid-fourth Century BCE**Conclusion**

In the end it may not be very important who first used *kosmos* to mean «world» or «universe», and given the meager evidence we have at our disposal (all of Plato's works but practically no remains of the Sophists' writings and even fewer Pythagorean materials from the period in question) it is extremely unlikely that the original occasion of its use has come down to us. I regard one thing as clear, though: Plato's repeated indications in his late dialogues that he is using the word in an unfamiliar sense establishes that in the mid-fourth century the cosmic sense was indeed unfamiliar, whether or not Plato invented it. This then holds *a fortiori* for when Plato wrote the *Gorgias*. It was unfamiliar too when Xenophon wrote the *Memorabilia*, whenever that may have been. But even if it was used early on, say by a Sophist or by Heraclitus, a single use of a word in a new sense does not mean that it immediately becomes familiar and does not preclude others from independently extending the use of the word in the same way.

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Luc Brisson

Animal Dignity and Vegetarianism. The Environmentalism of the *Timaeus*

Abstract. In questo articolo vengono esaminati alcuni aspetti della concezione platonica del mondo, nel *Timeo*, come ambiente naturale, cercando di illustrarne le implicazioni dal punto di vista dell'etica individuale, anche in rapporto al problema della relazione fra l'anima e il corpo, e delle conseguenze che essa comporta sul piano della considerazione della condizione degli animali non umani e dei viventi non animali.

Abstract. This article examines some aspects of Plato's conception of the world, in the *Timaeus*, as a natural environment, trying to illustrate its implications from the point of view of individual ethics, also in relation to the problem of the relationship between the soul and the body, and the consequences that it has with regard to the condition of non-human animals and non-animal living beings.

Parole chiave: Platone/*Timeo*/ Anima/ Corpo/ Dignità animale/ Vegetarianesimo.

Keywords: Plato/ *Timaeus*/ Soul/ Body/ Animal Dignity/ Vegetarianism.

It is fashionable to say that, because he teaches that the soul is an immortal principle Plato advocates contempt for the body and a flight of the soul toward an uncertain Beyond. It is true that for Plato soul is much more important than body, but because the world is a living being and because human beings can be transformed in animals, the body of the world and of animals are worthy of admiration and respect. From this perspective, one cannot help being surprised that defenders of the environment do not recognize Plato as one of the forerunners of their struggle.

1. Soul as a Controversial Notion

The word «soul» has become, if not a dirty word, then at least a source of embarrassment: if people were asked what they think of the soul, it would be felt as a kind of provocation. This is the reason why philosophers nowadays prefer to take an interest in the mind rather than in the soul, that ghost in the machine which should be confined to the area of religion or superstition. My goal, here and now, is not to replace philosophical speculation by religious doctrine, but, placing all religious considerations in parentheses, to do the job of a historian of philosophy, by showing the important role played in Plato and his followers by the question of the soul, which goes back far into the past of ancient Greece.

Plato defends a paradoxical philosophical doctrine, characterized by a twofold ontological revolution. 1) The world of the things perceived by the senses, in which we live, is a mere image of a world of intelligible realities (or Forms) which, as the models of sensible things, constitute genuine reality. Unlike sensible things, the Forms possess their principle of existence within themselves. 2) Man cannot be reduced to his

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body, and his genuine identity coincides with what we designate by means of the term «soul», whatever may be the definition proposed of this entity, which accounts not only in man, but also in the totality of the world, for all motion, both material (growth, locomotion, etc.) and immaterial (feelings, sense perception, intellectual knowledge, etc.). Throughout the history of philosophy, this twofold reversal has enabled the specificity of Platonism to be defined¹.

2. The two Traditional Models of the Soul

In ancient Greece, the soul is associated with a body which it animates, and to which it provides spontaneous movement, thus establishing a distinction between the living and the non-living. In this context, we find two models of the soul. The first and most widespread one (in *Iliad* and *Odyssey* for instance) is surely that which associates the soul with a moving force inside the body, from which it detaches itself at death to become a feeble image, an image which does not regain vigor until it is placed in contact with a corporeal element (mainly, blood). The second one, in contrast, presents the soul as a temporary guest that travels independently of his body it animates, for instance Abaris traveling on an arrow.

3. Plato's Synthesis

The interest of Plato's position resides in the fact that he associates these two models in his representation of the soul. The model of the soul attached to the body it animates appears in the *Timaeus*, whereas that of the traveling entity appears in the *Phaedrus* and at the end of the *Timaeus*. Above all, however, this synthesis should be situated within a specific philosophical context.

3.1. The Soul as the Motor of a Body

In the *Timaeus*, the description of the making of the world soul (35a1–b2), a mixture from which come all the other souls, illustrates two things: on the one hand, its ontological dependence on the intelligible, and on the other, its status as an intermediary reality between the intelligible forms and the world of sensible particulars. Then the demiurge associates the soul of the world with the body of the world (*Timaeus* 34a–b, 36d–e). The human soul is fashioned by the demiurge out of the same mixture as the world soul and the soul of gods, but less pure (*Timaeus* 41d4–7). Subsequently, the demiurge's assistants go on to implant into a mortal body this immortal soul, which is the principle of all psychic and physical motions (*Timaeus* 42a3–b2, 69c5–d6).

¹ LUC BRISSON, *Platon. L'écrivain qui inventa la philosophie*, Paris, Cerf, 2017.

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3.2. The Soul as the Guest of a Body

It is above all in the central myth of the *Phaedrus* (245c–246b) that the soul is described as a traveling entity. In this magnificent myth, Plato describes the ascent of the human souls, which follow the troop of the gods and demons to take their place on the external envelope of the sphere that constitutes the body of the world, in order to contemplate the intelligible realities.

1) As a reality (*ousía*)², the soul can by definition (*lógos*) be considered source and principle of motion and hence of life. It can therefore neither be born nor die ; it is immortal (*Phaedrus* (245c5)). Indeed, if the soul would stop or die, all things in the world would stop or die.

2) The soul is by nature a composite power (*sumphutè dunámis*). Both in gods and in men, it includes three elements. In the central myth of the *Phaedrus*, Plato does not give an argued description of the structure of the soul; he limits himself to comparing the soul to a chariot drawn by two horses that are led by a charioteer. If one refers to other dialogues, the charioteer may be identified with intellect (*noûs*), and the two horses with spirit (*thumós*) and desire (*epithumía*). Intellection (*noésis*) is the highest faculty of the soul, and Intellect (*noûs*) has the Forms as its objects. There can be no intellect without a soul (*Philebus* 30b), and soul must be directed by its own intellect (*Timaeus* 90a–e). In fact, the history of a human soul is determined by the quality of the exercise of the activity of its intellect. On earth, this activity finds itself in competition with that of spirit (*thumós*) and of desire (*epithumía*); but by taking time away from the exercise of the intellect, these two parts of the soul have an influence on the activity of the intellect. The term «part» does not have a material meaning here, but indicates an aspect, or rather a capacity or faculty, of the soul.

4. The Hierarchy of Living Beings

Importantly, the *Timaeus* establishes a hierarchy between living beings, since, in the final analysis, any mythical construction whose purpose is to influence human behavior cannot elude the prior establishment of a values system. The highest rank in this hierarchy is occupied by gods; then come human beings, men and women; then the animals that live in the air, on earth and in the water, while plants are at the bottom. This hierarchy is based on the two criteria: (1) the quantity and the quality of the relations between the soul and the intellect, and (2) the nature of the body which the soul enables to move or to change spontaneously. The first criterion establishes an impassable border between plants and the rest of living beings, whereas the second one establishes another barrier, just as impassable, between the gods and demons on the one hand, and the rest of living beings on the other.

² For ancient Greek, we have used the following system of transliteration. Greek letters are written in Roman letters according to this system: eta = *ē* ; omega = *ō* ; zeta = *z* ; theta = *th* ; xi = *x* ; phi = *ph* ; khi = *kh* ; psi = *ps*. Iota subscript is written after the letter (for example *gi*, and *qi* if it is an alpha, because in this case *ā* is a long vowel) ; rough breathings are written as *h*, and smooth breathings are not noted. All accents are noted.

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4.1. The Soul as a Permanent Guest of a Divine Body

Plato gives the following definition of god: «an immortal living being, which has a soul and a body, both naturally united forever» (*Phaedrus* 246d1–2). Yet there are several kinds of gods. First of all, there is the world, a body shaped as a sphere; then the celestial bodies, made up of fire; and the traditional divinities, also endowed with a body, although we do not know what it is made of. In the middle, between human beings and the gods, are the demons, who are also endowed with a body. The bodies of the gods and the demons are not in themselves indestructible, but they will not be destroyed, as a function of the will of the demiurge who made them (*Timaeus* 41a7–b6). What is more, the gods, whose body cannot be destroyed, cannot take on another appearance (see in *Republic* II 380d–382c); in other words, they cannot metamorphose themselves. The soul of gods is thus always associated with the one and same body³.

The world, which is unique, has a body shaped like a vast sphere, without organs or members. This sphere contains within itself the totality of elements, so that nothing can come from outside to attack it, and it is therefore exempt from sickness and death. In addition, the demiurge, who is benevolent, does not wish the world to be subject to corruption. This body is inhabited by a soul, which is an incorporeal entity between the sensible and the intelligible, endowed with a mathematical structure.

The celestial bodies, made of fire, and the Earth, made primarily of earth, are qualified as «divine» since they meet the criteria stated above. They are indeed living immortals, consisting both in a body that cannot be destroyed, and in a soul that is proper to them, and endowed with an intellect. There is a hierarchy among celestial bodies, according to their motion. The fixed stars follow the course imposed by the circle of Sameness, from east to west, with perfect uniformity, for the motion of their soul does not give rise to any interference. The soul of the wandering stars introduces anomalies with regard to the trajectory of the circle of Otherness, which transports them all. The Earth, for its part, remains at the centre of the world, simply because in its case the motion of Sameness and that of Otherness cancel one another out.

As a result, the *Timaeus* ends on this hymn to our world : « For having received in full its complement of living creatures, mortal and immortal, this world has thus become a visible living creature embracing all that are visible and an image of the intelligible, a perceptible god, supreme in greatness and excellence, in beauty and perfection, this Heaven single in its kind and one» (*Timaeus* 92a5–9, transl. F. M. Cornford). How, in this context, not having concerns for environmental protection of a world that is a living being and even a god?

³ LUC BRISSON, *Le corps des dieux*, in *Les dieux de Platon*. Actes du Colloque international organisé à l'Université de Caen Basse-Normandie, les 24, 25 et 26 janvier 2002, textes réunis et présentés par Jérôme Laurent, Caen, Presses Universitaires de Caen, 2003, pp. 11-23.

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4.2. The Soul as a Provisory Guest of a Human or of an Animal Body

Beneath the gods in the hierarchy, one finds souls that are endowed with an intellect like the gods, but liable to be attached to a body, which, unlike that of the gods, is destructible. These inferior souls are subject to temporality; their existence is marked by cycles of 10 periods, imposed by destiny, which involve a system of retribution based on reincarnation⁴.

4.2.1. Reincarnation or Metempsychosis

Throughout nine periods, a human soul can be attached to a given body subject to destruction. In this way, the soul can be punished or rewarded for its previous lives (punished, for instance, by becoming attached, on earth, to an inferior animal). Another period for this soul then begins, now deprived of its previous individuality. Here, Plato's thought on soul is not very different from oriental doctrines of reincarnation. At the end of each ten thousand years cycle, it is not the individual souls that persist, but so to speak the available pool of souls. Let us next consider the soul's wanderings in more detail.

In fact, Plato describes a psychic *continuum*, in which we find a hierarchical order of gods, demons, human beings, and animals that live in the air, on the earth and in the water, and even, as we shall soon see, plants. Intellectual activity, conceived as the intuition of Forms, constitutes the criterion that enables a distinction to be established between all these souls. Gods and demons contemplate the intelligible reality, that is the Forms, directly, and, as it were, incessantly. Human beings share this privilege only during a certain period of their existence, when their souls are separated from all terrestrial bodies. Once human souls have been incarnated, their contemplation of the Forms is mediate, since it must pass through the intermediary of sense-perception. As one goes down the scale of beings, animals use their intellect less and less.

The consequences Plato derives from this conception of the phenomenon of life are certainly not primarily biological, but ethical and political. The main purpose seems to be the establishment of a system of retribution which no living being – excepting gods, and vegetables – will be able to escape.

Within the psychic scale mentioned above, we note two discontinuities: (1) A discontinuity between the souls of gods and of demons, which never fall into a body subject to destruction; and the souls of human beings and of animals, which inhabit destructible bodies with diverse appearances. (2) A discontinuity between the souls of human beings and of animals, which are endowed with a rational power, and the souls of plants, which are reduced to the desiring power.

Let us consider some of the consequences of these two discontinuities. 1) The hierarchy of human beings and animals, which is a function of the exercise of intellectual activity, is rendered material by the body. The body in which the soul is situated illustrates the quality of that soul's intellectual activity; in

⁴ L. BRISSON, *Le corps animal comme signe de la valeur d'une âme chez Platon*, in *L'Animal dans l'Antiquité*, édité par Barbara Cassin et Jean-Louis Labarrière, sous la direction de Gilbert Romeyer Dherbey, Paris, Vrin, 1997, pp. 227-245. And THOMAS M. ROBINSON, *Plato and Metempsychosis and the concept of appropriate degradation*, «Méthexis» X (1997), pp. 45-49.

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short, the body is a «state of the soul». 2) Like that of human beings, whether men or women, the soul of animals is endowed with a rational power, and this is true even if animals are what they are because they make little or no use of their intellect. In any case, nothing prevents an animal, whatever it may be, from climbing back up the scale to become a human being.

4.2.2. Vegetarianism

It follows that killing and eating an animal is equivalent to killing and eating a human being; by doing so, the killer becomes the equal of a god, intervening in the fate of another human being⁵. How, in this case, can the survival of human beings, who need to feed themselves, be ensured, without making an «anthropophagus» of them? By giving them as food, vegetables, a kind of living being that is not endowed with intellect⁶.

After mentioning the four types of living beings that populate the world, the gods associated with fire, human beings, men or women, the birds that inhabit the air, the animals walking or crawling on the earth, and those living in water, Timaeus rapidly mentions the origin of vegetables, which he associates with the third, or desiring power (*epithumía*) of soul in the *Timaeus* (76e–77c).

Plato justifies the existence of vegetables by human body's need to reconstitute itself in order to maintain itself in existence, through consuming beings endowed with a soul like it, but a soul that is absolutely bereft of any intellect⁷. For man, to eat a human being endowed with an intellect, even if this living being did not make use of this higher faculty, would be an act of «cannibalism»⁸. This is no longer the case with plants, which possess a soul, but one that is bereft of intellect. The decomposition of plants within the human body enables the constitution of blood, which nourishes all the other tissues. In this way, plants enable the human body – which, unlike the world's body, may be destroyed by the external aggression of fire or of air – to reconstitute itself without consuming living beings animated by a soul endowed with an intellect. In short, Plato 'invents' plants in order to be able to maintain his scale of living beings. We must insist on the following corollaries: since plants cannot be endowed with an intellect, a human soul cannot be incarnated in a plant, as it is may be the case in Empedocles' doctrine. Plutarch, in *On the intelligence of animals*, but more explicitly Porphyry, in his *On Abstinence from Animal Food* in four books advocate vegetarianism giving examples to explain how animals are intelligent beings. Nowadays, vegetarians argue that animals have feelings, but for Plato, Plutarch and Porphyry they are equipped with intelligence as well.

As such, the prescription of vegetarianism means the respect of domestic and wild animal life, because

⁵ JOHANNES HAUSSLEITER, *Der Vegetarismus in der Antike*, Berlin, Töpelmann, 1935; DANIEL A. DOMBROWSKI, *The Philosophy of Vegetarianism*, Amherst [Ma], University of Massachusetts Press, 1984.

⁶ L. BRISSON, *Justifying vegetarianism in Plato's Timaeus (76e-77c)*, in *Greek Philosophy in the New Millennium. Essays in honour of Thomas M. Robinson*, Livio Rossetti (ed.), («Studies in Ancient philosophy»), Sankt Augustin (Academia Verlag) 2004, pp. 313-319.

⁷ D. A. DOMBROWSKI, *Was Plato vegetarian?*, «Apeiron» XVIII (1984), pp. 1-9.

⁸ JUAN IGNACIO GONZÁLEZ MERINO, *Vegetarianismo y carnivorismo en el Timeo*, «Estudios Clásicos» CLI (2017), pp. 79-92 [Summary in English].

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in both cases, it means respect of human life. And once more, it is very important for environmentalism which advocates biodiversity and respect for domestic animals.

5. Dualism

The real problem is the question of dualism, which leaves the body on its own, as an isolated piece of inert space.

Even if in Plato soul is much more important than body, but it is always associated with a body it moves. Thus, this body should be taken care of, even if it is material. In the *Phaedrus* and at the end of the *Timaeus*, the soul's wanderings from one body to another radically modify one's vision of the world as a whole in general, and in particular of the animal realm, which thus becomes a stage for human psychic states, insofar as each species illustrates the predominance of a moral characteristic. Moreover, this means that animals should be considered to be like human beings in dignity. We can therefore understand why the doctrine of metempsychosis implies a vegetarian way of life, in which plants, having themselves a soul maintain connections with human beings. The world, human beings and animals are living beings to be respected. Moreover, it is the same soul which animates not only men and animals, but also the celestial bodies and the world as a whole. The doctrine of *sympatheia* in Antiquity was based on this presupposition. In this context, environmentalism was, in a way, a family affair⁹.

Everything changed with Descartes and his followers who advocated a radical dualism between mind and space. The world is no longer a living being but a piece of space, and the animals are no longer inferior human beings, but unconscious mechanical robots. In consequence, human beings have the absolute power to change their environment and to make animals available for any of their needs: agricultural work, transportation, food. Science adopted Descartes' view which led from time to time to catastrophic consequences, even if it generally brought a better life for the humanity.

In conclusion, even if soul cannot be a solution today (as a matter of fact I am agnostic), it is surprising, as I said in the introduction, that defenders of the environment do not recognize Plato as one of their forerunners. The world and living beings are more than their body, make entirely available for mankind. In Plato, soul was a ground for dignity and care; human being was a member of the same family as the whole world, the celestial beings and the animals. What can we find now to take care of the world and living being, if they are reduced to their body? We must try to prevent catastrophes in order to avoid ecological, economical and humanitarian disasters. We must try to keep alive wild species and to reduce the arduousness of the life of the domestic animals, but with no other justification than the preservation of body? The world is no more enchanted.

⁹ See *Thinking about the environment*. Our debt to the classical and medieval past, edited Thomas M. Robinson and Laura Westra, Lanham / Boulder / New York / Oxford, Lexington Books, 2002.

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Tad M. Schmaltz¹

Mundus est Fabula: Descartes's *Le Monde*

Abstract. Nel suo incompiuto *Il Mondo*, Descartes presenta una favola che riguarda l'emergere di un nuovo mondo nello «spazio immaginario». Nella mia discussione su questa favola, prendo le mosse da una breve storia della fabbricazione, della scomparsa e della ricomparsa del *Mondo*. Considero quindi il significato della forma della favola in questa opera, nonché le connessioni dell'uso di questa forma da parte di Descartes con le sue successive discussioni sul «metodo» e sul copernicanesimo. Infine, esamino i tentativi di due critici francesi del cartesianesimo, Gabriel Daniel e Voltaire, di rivolgere contro Descartes l'indicazione che si trova nel *Mondo* secondo cui il suo nuovo mondo è una favola (*mundus est fabula*).

Abstract. In his unfinished *Le Monde*, Descartes offers a fable concerning the emergence of a new world in «imaginary space». In my discussion of this fable, I begin with a brief history of the fabrication, disappearance, and re-appearance of *Le Monde*. Then I consider the significance of the guise of the fable in this text, as well as the connections of Descartes's use of this guise to his later discussions of «the method» and Copernicanism. Finally, I take up attempts by two French critics of Cartesianism, Gabriel Daniel and Voltaire, to turn against Descartes his own suggestion in *Le Monde* that his new world is a fable (*mundus est fabula*).

Parole chiave: Descartes/ favola / Gabriel Daniel / *Le Monde* / mondo / spazio immaginario / Voltaire

Keywords: Descartes / Fable / Gabriel Daniel / Imaginary space / *Le Monde* / Voltaire / World

Introduction

The sixth chapter of Descartes's *Le Monde* opens with a request for the reader:

Allow [...] your thought to wander beyond this world for a little while in order to come to see another one wholly new, to which I shall give birth in your presence in imaginary spaces².

So begins the fabrication of a new imaginary world, one composed of matter completely devoid of the qualitative features found in the old scholastic world, and also governed by a novel set of laws of motion. The emphasis in this article is on the suggestion in *Le Monde* that «the world is a fable» (*mundus est fabula*), to borrow the epigraph in the book Descartes holds in his famous portrait (ca. 1647) by the Dutch

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² *Le Monde* [LM], ch. VI, in RENÉ DESCARTES, *Cœuvres de Descartes*, ed. by Charles Adam and Paul Tannery [AT], Paris, J. Vrin, 1964-74, XI, 31; and RENÉ DESCARTES, *Opere postume 1650-2009*, a cura di G. Belgioioso [BOp II], con la collaborazione di I. Agostini, F. Marrone, M. Savini, Milano, Bompiani, 2009 («Il Pensiero Occidentale»), p. 249.

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painter Jan Baptist Weenix³. As background, I begin with the history of the emergence, disappearance, and re-appearance of *Le Monde*. Then I consider the significance of the guise of the fable in this text, as well as the connections of Descartes's use of this guise to his discussion in the *Discours de la méthode* (1637) of «the method», on the one hand, and to his response in *Principia philosophiæ* (1644) to the theologically charged issue of Copernicanism, on the other. Finally, I take up attempts by two early modern critics of Cartesianism to «turn the fables» (ahem!) on Descartes⁴. The first attempt is in the service of casting doubt on the correspondence of Descartes's fable to reality; the second is supposed to prepare the way for the replacement of the world of *Le Monde* by a brave new Newtonian world.

1. The History of *Le Monde*

Le Monde is the title Descartes himself sometimes used for the first part of a projected trilogy⁵. The three-part work was supposed to cover: (i) the inanimate world, with an emphasis on the central role that light plays in it⁶; (ii) the animate world, focusing on the human body considered just in itself; and (iii) the rational soul. Topic (i) is covered in an incomplete draft that bears the title, *Le Monde, ou Traité de la lumière*, in an initial posthumous edition. Topic (ii) is covered in another incomplete draft that was entitled, *Traité de l'homme*, in the posthumous edition published by Descartes's literary executor, Claude Clerselier. There is no extant draft of the section covering topic (iii), and it may well be that Descartes never got around to composing one.

The discussion of topic (i) is the primary focus here. Descartes began intense work on the text dealing with this topic in 1632, after his move from Amsterdam to Deventer. Just prior to that move he had written to his friend Etienne de Villebressieu to praise him for «discovering the *generalities* of nature», including the fact that

there is only one material substance, which receives from an external agent its action or ability to move locally, from which it acquires the different shapes or modes that make it such as we see in the primary components we call elements⁷.

This is precisely the sort of nature that Descartes sets out to fabricate in *Le Monde*: a world composed of a homogeneous «real, perfectly solid body» that forms a plenum, with parts distinguishable by the dif-

³ This epigraph is also used in JEAN-LUC NANCY, *Mundus Est Fabula*, in *Ego Sum: corpus, anima, fabula*, Paris, Flammarion, 1979, pp. 95-127. In contrast to what I offer here, Nancy focuses on the implications of Descartes's fable for his conception of the *cogito*. For discussions of the notion of fable in *Le Monde* that are somewhat closer to mine, see JEAN-PIERRE CAVAILLÉ, *Descartes: La Fable du Monde*, Paris, J. Vrin, 1991; and JAMES GRIFFITH, *Fable, Method, and Imagination in Descartes*, Cham CH, Palgrave Macmillan, 2018, pp. 11-45.

⁴ Apologies for this cringe-worthy play on the English expression, 'turn the tables' on someone/thing.

⁵ See, for instance, the references to «mon Monde» in *Descartes to Mersenne*, 25 November 1630, AT I, 179 (RENÉ DESCARTES, *Tutte le lettere 1619-1650*, a cura di G. Belgioioso [BL], con la collaborazione di I. Agostini, J.-R. Armogathe, F. Marrone, F.A. Meschini, M. Savini, Milano, Bompiani, 2009² («Il Pensiero Occidentale»), p. 174).

⁶ On the importance of the notion of light in *Le Monde*, see J. GRIFFITH, *Fable*, cit., pp. 13-16.

⁷ *Descartes to Villebressieu*, summer 1631, AT I, 216 (BL, p. 205).

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ferent motions imposed on them from without⁸.

Such a world is devoid of the «real qualities» posited by philosophers working in the scholastic tradition. In scholasticism, such qualities are required to account for non-quantitative features of the bodies of our experience, such as colors, odors and tastes. In order to prepare for his elimination of such features, Descartes begins in *Le Monde* by suggesting that the material cause of our sensations may not resemble the sensations themselves, and in particular that light may be very different from the sensory idea it produces in us. The proposal is that light may be related to our idea of light in the same way that words are related to the thoughts they prompt in the mind. Just as words can make us think of objects they don't resemble, so the action of light can make us have ideas that don't resemble it⁹.

Descartes is well aware that the word analogy does not prove that light differs from our idea of it. Rather, he tells his reader is that he merely «wanted you to suspect that there might be a difference, so as to keep you from assuming the opposite [...]»¹⁰. In *Le Monde*, Descartes proceeds by offering only a way in which light and other bodily qualities *could* be conceived. According to the proposal in this text, anticipated in the letter to Villebressieu, these features of the material world are conceived entirely in terms of the various sizes, shapes, motions and arrangements of different parts of a homogenous matter.

The way is thus prepared for Descartes's fable concerning the emergence of a new world conceived in an entirely mechanistic manner. In the passage from *Le Monde* with which I started, he asks us to think of such a world as created in «imaginary spaces». The reference here is to a view within scholasticism that was opened up by Paris bishop Tempier's condemnation in 1277 of the orthodox Aristotelian rejection of the possibility of extra-cosmic void space¹¹. There was a concern in medieval and later scholasticism to uphold God's absolute power by allowing that he could move the entire world into an «imaginary» – that is, not real because unoccupied – space beyond the outermost celestial sphere¹². Drawing on this sort of position, Descartes asks his reader to follow him in conjuring a new world in the currently unoccupied extra-cosmic spaces fabricated by proponents of a scholastic account of the actual world¹³.

Descartes initially imagines a world consisting of a homogeneous solid body that «uniformly fills the entire length, breadth and depth of this huge space in the midst of which we have brought our mind to rest». He then supposes that God fractures this body by infusing portions of it with various motions. The subsequent development of the world from a state of chaos deriving from the initial infusion of motion is said to be determined by certain «ordinary laws of nature» that govern the re-distributions of motion that occur due to collision. Descartes claims that these laws can be so conceived that they

⁸ LM, ch. VI, AT XI, 33 (BOP II, p. 250).

⁹ LM, ch. I, AT XI, 3-4 (BOP II, p. 214).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, AT XI, 6 (BOP II, p. 218).

¹¹ The forty-ninth of the articles condemned in 1277 denied that God could move the world with rectilinear motion since that would require leaving a void; see HEINRICH DENIFLE, EMIL CHATELAIN, *Chartularium Universitatis Parisiensis*, Paris, Fratrum Delalain, 1889-1897, I, p. 546.

¹² For discussion of this position in medieval and later scholastic thought, see EDWARD GRANT, *Much Ado about Nothing: Theories of Space and Vacuum from the Middle Ages to the Scientific Revolution*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981, pp. 116-181.

¹³ «The philosophers tell us that such spaces are infinite, and they certainly should be believed because it is they themselves who have made [ont faits] them» (LM, ch. VI, AT XI, 32; BOP II, p. 248).

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are sufficient to cause the parts ... to disentangle and arrange themselves in such good order that they will have the form of a quite perfect World, in which we shall be able to see not only light but also all the other things, general as well as particular, that appear in the real world¹⁴.

In short, the imaginary world that Descartes fabricates ends up accounting for all effects in the real world of our experience. At this point, he hopes the thought will occur to even the most committed scholastic philosopher that perhaps the purportedly imaginary world is in fact the real world after all.

Descartes was preparing to publish his fable of the new world in 1633 when he learned of the condemnation of Galileo by the Roman Inquisition for his defense of the Copernican thesis that the earth moves around the sun. The trouble for Descartes is that there is the implication in *Le Monde* that the vortex that carries the earth around the sun involves the motion of the former¹⁵. Indeed, Descartes writes to his friend Mersenne that if the condemned view of Galileo is false, «so too are the entire foundations of my philosophy, for it can be demonstrated from them quite clearly». He concludes, with reference to *Le Monde*, that «for all the world I did not want to publish a discourse in which a single word could be found of which the Church would have disapproved; so I preferred to suppress it rather than to publish it in a mutilated form»¹⁶. A few years later, in the fifth part of his *Discours de la méthode*, Descartes did publish a *précis* of *Le Monde*, albeit one that is silent on the issue of Copernicanism. This summary reflects his strategy in *Le Monde* of leaving behind a consideration of the real world in order to speak «solely of what would happen in a new world»¹⁷. Nevertheless, we have the disappearance of the text of *Le Monde* itself, which was in fact not published during Descartes's lifetime.

This text reappears in 1664, with the publication of an edition that includes two additional discourses from authors other than Descartes¹⁸. The first of the appended documents is a *Discours [...] touchant le mouvement et le repos [...]*¹⁹, with the author identified as «a Philosopher, the style of whom shows well both the clarity of his conceptions and the solidity of his mind»²⁰. The second is a *Discours de la Fièvre*, with the author identified as «another Philosopher and Mathematician, to whom the Public has a kind of obligation for several discoveries that he has made in Physics». The anonymous editor adds that «I would give you the name of one and the other if I had permission»²¹.

As a matter of fact, we can discern who wrote these discourses. The first discourse, which as its full title indicates was originally presented at a session of the Paris *académie* of Habert de Montmor, was later

¹⁴ LM, ch. VI, AT XI, 34-35 (BOP II, p. 252).

¹⁵ For more on the condemnation of Galileo and its relation to Descartes's cosmological views in *Le Monde*, see TAD M. SCHMALTZ, *Galileo and Descartes on Copernicanism and the cause of the tides*, «Studies in History and Philosophy of Science», LI (2015), pp. 70-81.

¹⁶ *Descartes to Mersenne*, November 1633, AT I, 270-271 (BL, p. 248-250).

¹⁷ *Discours sur la méthode* [DM] V, AT VI, 42 (RENÉ DESCARTES, *Opere 1637-1649*, a cura di G. Belgioioso [BOP I], con la collaborazione di I. Agostini, F. Maronne, M. Savini, Milano, Bompiani, 2009 («Il Pensiero Occidentale»), p. 72.

¹⁸ RENÉ DESCARTES, *Le Monde de M^r Descartes, ou le Traité de la Lumière et des autres principaux objets de sens. Avec un Discours de l'Action des Corps, et un autre des Fièvres, composez selon les principes du même Auteur*, Paris, Girard, 1664. The two appended discourses have their own pagination.

¹⁹ *Discours prononcé dans l'Assemblée de monsieur de Montmor, touchant le mouvement et le repos. Pour montrer qu'il n'arrive aucun changement en la matière que l'on ne puisse expliquer par le mouvement local.*

²⁰ *Avis du libraire au lecteur*, in the *Discours [...] touchant de le mouvement et le repos [...]*, p. 3.

²¹ Id.

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included as the second discourse of *Le discernement du corps et de l'ame* [...] (1666), a work of the French Cartesian Géraud de Cordemoy²². The second discourse was included as a section of Jacques Rohault's *Traité de physique* (1671), a text which presents his influential version of Cartesian physics²³. It might be natural to conclude further that Clerselier was the editor of the 1664 edition. After all, that same year he published an edition of Descartes's *L'Homme*²⁴. However, it would be odd for Clerselier, who was Rohault's father-in-law, to claim that he did not have permission to identify the author of the *Discours de la Fièvre*. Moreover, the preface to the 1664 edition of *Le Monde* is attributed not to Clerselier but rather to an unknown 'DR'. Finally, in a second edition of this text, published in 1677, Clerselier disassociates himself from the first edition. In his preface to the later edition, he complains that «one was too precipitous in publishing» the original edition, which resulted in the fact that it did not include figures more faithful to the text²⁵. Clerselier's second edition does not include the two discourses appended to the original edition, naturally enough since these had already been included in their authors' own publications. The 1677 edition also places *Le Monde* after a reproduction of Clerselier's 1664 edition of *L'Homme*. Clerselier realizes that this reverses Descartes's original order of the texts, but observes that it would have caused «too much change» to replicate the correct order²⁶. Nevertheless, in Clerselier's view this edition offers a more faithful rendition than that found in the 1664 edition of Descartes's introduction in *Le Monde* of his fable of the new world.

2 The Guise of the Fable

An obvious question at this point is why Descartes presented his account of the new world in *Le Monde* as a fable of an imaginary world. Why not offer it instead as a straightforward account of the real world? Prior to introducing the fable, Descartes reveals to his reader that though he could offer arguments to render plausible the identification of his imaginary world with the real world,

in order to make this long discourse less boring for you, I want to clothe part of it in the guise [*l'intention*] of a fable, in the course of which I hope the truth will not fail to become sufficiently clear, and will be no less pleasing to see than if I were to expose it totally nude²⁷.

²² GÉRAUD DE CORDEMOY, *Le discernement du corps et de l'ame en six discours, Pour servir à l'éclaircissement de la Physique*, Paris, Lambert, 1666.

²³ JACQUES ROHAULT, *Traité de physique*, Paris, Savreux, 1671.

²⁴ RENÉ DESCARTES, *L'Homme de René Descartes et un Traité de la formation du foetus du mesme auteur. Avec les Remarques du Louis de la Forge, Docteur de Medecine, demeurant à la Fleche, Sur le Traité de l'Homme de René Descartes, et sur les Figure par luy inventées*, Paris, Angot, 1664.

²⁵ RENÉ DESCARTES, *L'Homme de René Descartes, et un Traité de la formation du foetus, du mesme auteur, avec les Remarques de la Louis de la Forge. À quoi on a ajouté le Monde, ou Traité de la lumière du mesme auteur, seconde edition, reveuë et corrigée*, Paris, Angot, 1677, préface, n.p.

²⁶ Id. Presumably, the thought here is that it would cause confusion to have a reproduction of the 1664 edition of *L'Homme* bearing the title, *Le Monde*.

²⁷ LM, ch. V, AT XI, 31 (BOP II, p. 248).

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The suggestion here seems to be that Descartes uses the guise of the fable primarily as a means of enlivening the discussion so as to hold the attention of the reader²⁸. However, other passages from *Le Monde* indicate further motivations. At one point in this text, for instance, Descartes notes that in entering imaginary spaces in order to construct the new world, our mind travels far enough «to lose sight of all the creatures that God made five or six thousand years ago»²⁹. Because the new world is merely imaginary, the account of its production need not correspond to the creation story in Genesis, according to which God produces fully-formed creatures simply by pronouncing, «Let there be». In holding that his new world gradually emerges from an initial chaotic state by means of transformations governed by laws of nature, Descartes can claim that he is not in conflict with what the Scriptures say about the creation of the real world³⁰.

There is another motivation for Descartes's use of the guise of fable that does not require the admission of false suppositions. He tells us in *Le Monde* that he is willing to grant his scholastic opponents that the real world includes a «prime matter» distinct from quantity, and to insist only that when he identifies matter with its quantity, this is only in order «to make up, as I please, a world in which there is nothing that the dullest minds are incapable of conceiving, and which nonetheless could be created exactly as I have imagined it»³¹. Thus, the use of the fable guise allows Descartes to avoid disputes with his scholastic opponents over the nature of the real world. His task is only to show that the world *can* be as he imagines it, something he thinks even his critics cannot deny. In contrast to the case of his account of the emergence of the new world, moreover, Descartes need not hold that his identification of matter with quantity is false. It suffices for him to refrain from insisting from the start that it is true.

I have mentioned that Descartes's *Discours* includes a summary of *Le Monde*. However, this text also includes an appeal to the notion of fable not connected to this summary. Toward the beginning of the *Discours*, in particular, Descartes observes that «I am presenting this work as a story [*histoire*] or, if you prefer, a fable [*fable*], in which, among certain examples worthy of imitation, you will perhaps also find many others that it would be right not to follow»³². Here Descartes uses the fable guise to reinforce the point that his aim «is not to teach the method that everyone must follow in order to direct his reason correctly, but only to reveal how I have tried to direct my own»³³. He is merely offering sample results of his use of the method that others may take or leave, as they prefer.

The indication that these results are mere fables is also connected to the fact that his presentation in two of *essais* appended to the *Discours* proceeds in an explicitly hypothetical manner. In *Les Météores*, for instance, Descartes claims:

²⁸ For more on this suggestion, see J.-P. CAVAILLÉ, *Descartes: La Fable*, cit., pp. 191-210.

²⁹ *LM*, ch. VI, AT XI, 32 (BOp II, p. 248).

³⁰ For a similar point, see *Principia philosophiae* [PP] III, 45, AT VIII-1, 100 (BOp I, p. 1864). The notion of fable as false supposition seems to apply as well to the claim in *Le Monde* that God never preforms miracles in the new world, and that rational souls do not disrupt the ordinary course of nature; see *LM*, ch. VII, AT XI, 48 (BOp II, p. 268-270).

³¹ *LM*, ch. VI, AT XI, 36 (BOp II, p. 254).

³² *DM I*, AT VI, 4 (BOp I, p. 28).

³³ *Id.*

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It is true that knowledge of these things [viz., meteorological phenomena] depending on general principles of nature, which have not yet, to my knowledge, been accurately explained, I will have to use, at the start, certain suppositions [suppositions], as I did in my *Dioptrique*; but I will try to render them so simple and so easy that you will have no difficulty believing them, even though I have not demonstrated them³⁴.

The reference here is to a passage from *La Dioptrique* in which Descartes warns his reader that instead of describing the nature of light, he merely uses certain comparisons that «help me to conceive it in the manner that to me seems the most convenient to explain all those properties with which experience acquaints us, and to deduce afterwards all the others which cannot be so easily observed». In this way, he imitates «the Astronomers, who, although their assumptions are almost all false or uncertain, nevertheless, because these assumptions refer to different observations that they have made, never fail to draw many very true and well-assured conclusions from them»³⁵.

There are two points that need to be distinguished here. The main point in the *Météores* is that since no deduction from «general principles of nature» is provided, the results of the method are presented as deriving merely from certain «simple and easy» suppositions. As in the case of *Le Monde*, presumably, this procedure allows Descartes to avoid disputes with his critics over the precise content of the general principles. Indeed, in the *Discours* Descartes himself complains that though his general principles «are almost all so evident that they need only to be understood to be believed», still since such principles do not «accord with all the diverse opinions of other men, I foresee that I should often be distracted by the controversies they would arouse»³⁶. What the *Dioptrique* adds, however, is the possibility that the initial suppositions used in place of general principles are in fact false, just as in the case of suppositions of the astronomers. The appeal to such suppositions would be similar to the appeal in *Le Monde* to a fabricated creation story that deviates from the true scriptural account.

We will return to this second point concerning false suppositions in a moment. But it is the first point from the *Météores* that Descartes emphasizes in the advice he gives to the Utrecht medical professor Henricus Regius. Regius entangled himself in controversy by presiding over a disputation in 1641 that, among other things, denies the existence of scholastic substantial forms and real qualities. With some exasperation, Descartes asks Regius:

Why do you openly reject substantial forms and real qualities? Do you not remember that on page 164 of my *Météores*, I said quite expressly that I did not at all reject or deny them, but simply found them unnecessary in setting out my explanations? If you had taken this course, everybody in your audience would have rejected them as soon as they saw they were useless, and in the mean time you would not have become so unpopular with your colleagues³⁷.

One certainly can challenge Descartes's prediction that Regius's audience would have readily ac-

³⁴ *Météores* I, AT VI, 233 (BOP I, p. 317).

³⁵ *Dioptrique* I, AT VI, 83 (BOP I, p. 120-122).

³⁶ DM VI, AT VI, 68 (BOP I, p. 104).

³⁷ *Descartes to Regius*, January 1642, AT III, 492 (BL, p. 1586). The passage from *Les Météores* to which Descartes is referring is cited in note 34.

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cepted his explanations had he only proceeded in a hypothetical manner. After all, it had hardly worked out this way for Descartes's own hypothetical presentation in the *Discours*! In any event, in works written after the *Discours* – most notably the *Meditationes* and *Principia Philosophiæ* – Descartes does attempt to articulate and defend general principles of nature and to appeal to these when confronting directly an alternative scholastic account of the real world.

However, there is one important place in his mature work where Descartes revives the point from the *Dioptrique* concerning the use of false suppositions. The text I have in mind is particularly relevant to *Le Monde* insofar as it concerns the theologically charged issue of Copernicanism. In his *Principia*, Descartes claims that the three main astronomical systems – namely, those of Ptolemy, Copernicus and Tycho Brahe – are offered only as «suppositions, which are regarded not as being true, but merely as being suitable for explaining the appearances»³⁸. Likewise, Descartes intends his own claim that planetary orbits are explained by the vortical motion of matter is «to be considered simply as a hypothesis and not as the real truth»³⁹. The translation of this passage in the French edition adds to 'as a hypothesis' the clarification, 'or supposition that may be false'⁴⁰.

The context of the Copernicanism controversy is immediately relevant to this insistence in Descartes on the merely suppositional nature of astronomical systems, including his own. There is for instance the famous passage – related to the initial consideration of Copernicanism by the Roman Inquisition during 1615-1616 – in which Cardinal Bellarmine tells his correspondent, the Carmelite Father Paolo Foscarini:

It seems to me that Your Paternity and Mr. Galileo are proceeding prudently by limiting yourself to speaking suppositionally and not absolutely, as I believe that Copernicus spoke. For there is no danger in saying that, by assuming the earth moves and the sun stands still, one saves all appearances better than by postulating eccentrics and epicycles; and that is sufficient for the mathematician. However, it is different to want to affirm that in reality the sun is at the center of the world and only turns on itself without moving from east to west, and the earth is in the third heaven and revolves with great speed around the sun; this is a very dangerous thing, likely not only to irritate all scholastic philosophers and theologians, but also to harm the Holy Faith by rendering Holy Scripture false⁴¹.

We know that Descartes used the guise of the fable in *Le Monde* in part as a means of not irritating the scholastic philosophers. So also in his *Principia*, it seems natural to suppose that he appeals to the merely suppositional – and possibly false – nature of his astronomical system to avoid a similar sort of irritation.

There are reasons to doubt that Descartes himself ever seriously entertained the possibility that the vortical explanation of planetary orbits that he presents in the *Principia* rests on false suppositions. After all, Descartes himself notes in this text that if his account agrees with the phenomena, «we would seem to do an injury to God if we suspected that the causes of things discovered by us in this way were false, as if

³⁸ PP III, 15, AT VIII-1, 85 (BOp I, p. 1842).

³⁹ PP III, 19, AT VIII-1, 86 (BOp I, p. 1844).

⁴⁰ AT IX-2, 110 (BOp II, p. 350).

⁴¹ *Bellarmino to Foscarini*, 12 April 1615, in *Le Opere di Galileo Galilei*, Edizione nazionale, ed. by Antonio Favaro, Firenze, Barbèra, 1890-1909, XII, p. 171. I am using the English translation in *The Galileo Affair: A Documentary History*, ed. by Maurice A. Finocchiaro, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1989, p. 67.

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he endowed us so imperfectly that used properly our reason allows us to go wrong»⁴². This is hardly treating his astronomical system as a mere supposition that may well be false⁴³.

Nonetheless, Descartes's main argument in the *Principia* is that his astronomical system is superior to its competitors insofar as it does not require the condemned view that the earth moves around the sun⁴⁴. Key to this argument is a revision of his understanding of motion in *Le Monde*. In this earlier text, Descartes defines motion as that «which makes bodies pass from one place [*lieu*] to another, and successively occupy all the spaces [*espaces*] that are in between»⁴⁵. However, the *Principia* introduces a new definition, according to which motion «in accord with the truth of the matter» consists in «*the transference [translationem] of one part of matter, or one body, from the vicinity of those bodies that are immediately contiguous and considered at rest, to the vicinity of others*»⁴⁶. The contrast with *Le Monde* is clear, for this definition is distinguished explicitly from the definition of motion as «*the action by which a body migrates from one place [loco] to another*»⁴⁷. Since there is an action that brings about a change in the place of the earth, at least relative to the sun, this contrasting definition requires that the earth move, just as Descartes recognized when he first discovered the condemnation of Galileo. However, insofar as the earth is not transferred from the vicinity of the bodies contiguous to it, his new definition of motion allows him to argue that, strictly speaking, the earth is not in motion. Which is exactly what Descartes does argue in the *Principia*:

From this it follows that no movement, strictly speaking, is found in the earth or even the other planets; because they are not transported [*transferuntur*] from the vicinity of the parts of the heaven immediately contiguous to them, inasmuch as these parts of the heaven are considered as immobile. For this would require the separation of all together, which does not happen; but because the celestial matter is fluid, now some of the particles, now others, are removed from the planet to which it is contiguous, and this by a motion that must be attributed to them, and not to the planet⁴⁸.

To say the least, this attempt to sidestep the Church's condemnation of Copernicanism has been viewed with skepticism. There has been the persistent objection that Descartes introduced his new definition of motion as a desperate and perhaps insincere attempt to prevent his astronomical system from suffering the same fate as Galileo's. We have the claim in a 1689 *Censura* of Cartesianism from the French érudit Pierre-Daniel Huet, for instance, that «although [Descartes] was keenly aware of the infinite defects in his definition [of motion], he preferred to experience the censure and criticism of philosophers rather than of cardinals»⁴⁹. More recently, Alexandre Koyré has written, in a similar vein, that Descartes «only adopted [his theory of motion] so as to be able to reconcile Copernican astronomy, or more simply the mobility of the earth, which was manifestly implied in his physics, with the official doctrine of the Church»⁵⁰.

⁴² PP III, 43, AT VIII-1, 99 (BOp I, p. 1814).

⁴³ In contrast, Descartes allows in the *Principia* that his supposition that the world gradually emerged from initially undifferentiated matter is in fact false; see the passage from this text cited in note 30.

⁴⁴ In the next few paragraphs, I draw on my discussion in *Galileo and Descartes on Copernicanism*, cit., pp. 78-79.

⁴⁵ LM, ch. VII, AT XI, 40 (BOp II, p. 260).

⁴⁶ PP II, 25, AT VIII-1, 53 (BOp I, p. 1794); italics in original.

⁴⁷ PP II, 24, AT VIII-1, 53 (BOp I, p. 1792); italics in original.

⁴⁸ PP III.28, AT VIII-1, 90 (BOp I, p. 1796).

⁴⁹ PIERRE-DANIEL HUET, *Censura philosophiae cartesianae*, Paris, Horthemels, 1689, ch. VIII, p. 193.

⁵⁰ ALEXANDRE KOYRÉ, *Galileo Studies*, trans. by J. Mepham, Atlantic Highlands NJ, Humanities Press, 1978, p. 265.

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I am inclined to think that Descartes sincerely considered his new definition of motion to be tenable, just as he sincerely accepted as authoritative the determination of Rome that the Scriptures require the immobility of the earth⁵¹. Nonetheless, the suggestion in the *Principia* that his theory may depend on false suppositions reveals that he was not willing to rest his entire case for his fidelity to the Church's condemnation of Copernicanism on the tenability of his definition. Descartes apparently felt the need to hold on to the tactic of distancing himself from his own cosmological theory by allowing that it may be merely an imaginary fable. This was a tactic that his early modern critics were later to use against him.

3. A World Well Lost

In this final section, I consider briefly the critiques of Descartes's new world in the work of two of his later French critics, namely, the Jesuit Gabriel Daniel (1649-1728) and the *philosophe* François-Marie d'Arouet, better known by his pen name Voltaire (1694-1778). Daniel is particularly notable for our purposes since he was inspired by Descartes's *Le Monde* to write *Voyage du Monde de Descartes*, his own fable concerning an unnamed narrator's celestial journey with Descartes after the purported death of the latter⁵². Around the time of the publication of this work in 1691, Daniel, a theologian by trade, was heavily involved on the side of the Jesuits in disputes over the issues of grace and free will that pitted this side against Jansenists in France toward the end of the seventeenth century⁵³. The publication of his *Voyage* seems initially to be an inexplicable interruption in his participation in such disputes. However, this interruption can be explained in terms of the fact that Huet, a friend of the Jesuits⁵⁴, had just published a critique of Descartes's philosophical system that reinvigorated the debate over Cartesianism⁵⁵. The connection between Huet and Daniel is reinforced by the fact that Huet pseudonymously published his own fable concerning the afterlife of Descartes just two years after the publication of Daniel's fable⁵⁶. Indeed, Huet mentions in a 1692 letter, with reference to his fable, that «I amused myself by writing a little story roughly like Daniel's *Voyage*»⁵⁷.

⁵¹ For a defense of Descartes against the charge that his account of motion is merely a contrived attempt to save his system from theological condemnation, see DANIEL GARBER, *Descartes' Metaphysical Physics*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992, pp. 181-188.

⁵² GABRIEL DANIEL, *Voyage du Monde de Descartes*, Paris, Bénard, 1690. Later printings of this work use 'Voyage' in the title. On Daniel and his *Voyage/Voyage*, see JUSTIN E. H. SMITH, *Gabriel Daniel: Descartes Through the Mirror of Fiction*, in *The Oxford Handbook of Descartes and Cartesianism*, ed. by Steven Nadler, Tad M. Schmaltz, Delphine Antoine-Mahut, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019, pp. 791-803.

⁵³ Daniel's anti-Jansenist publications include his *Lettre touchant une ancienne hérésie renouvelée depuis peu touchant la personne de Jésus-Christ. Preuve de l'hérésie du traducteur des homélies de S. Jean Chrysostome sur les épîtres de S. Paul*, Paris, Anheline, 1690; and *Entretiens de Cléandre et d'Eudoxe, sur les Lettres au provincial*, Cologne, Pierre Marteau, 1694.

⁵⁴ During his lifetime, Huet donated his considerable library to the Jesuits on condition that he continue to have use of it until his death.

⁵⁵ I provide the reference for Huet's *Censura* in note 49. On the arguments in and impact of this text, see TAD M. SCHMALTZ, *Radical Cartesianism: The French Reception of Descartes*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002, pp. 215-233.

⁵⁶ MR. G. DE L'A, *Nouveaux mémoires pour servir à l'histoire du cartésianisme*, Utrecht, vande Water, 1693. This text reports that rumors to the contrary notwithstanding, Descartes is alive and well and teaching philosophy in Lapland.

⁵⁷ *Huet to Bossuet*, 5 April 1692, in JACQUES-BÉNIGNE BOSSUET, *Correspondance*, ed. by Charles Urbain, Eugene Levesque, Paris,

Mundus est Fabula: Descartes's Le Monde

In the introduction to his *Voyage*, Daniel begins by paying homage not to Descartes's *Le Monde*, but rather to *Vera Historia*, the satirical novel of the ancient Greek author Lucian of Samosata. In the latter work, Lucian spins a tale of travel to the moon and beyond that, he warns his reader, contains only lies and is wholly without value. Daniel notes, however, that while he follows Lucian in writing about a fanciful celestial journey, he is constrained as a philosopher to use his fiction to present ideas that are true⁵⁸. The main truth Daniel wishes to convey through his fable is that Descartes's system of the world is a pure fantasy that Descartes himself mistakes for reality. It is with respect to this truth that Daniel highlights the fantasy that Descartes concocts in his abandoned *Le Monde*⁵⁹. The goal of *Voyage*, Daniel suggests, is to show that Descartes's system «is full of contradictions, is in no way followed, [and] one supposition destroys another»⁶⁰.

Daniel's tale begins with the report by the narrator of an encounter with an old man who reveals that before his purported death, Descartes discovered a secret concoction that, once smoked, allowed his soul to disengage from his body and wander on its own. While Descartes's soul was wandering one day, a physician in Sweden applied treatments to Descartes's body that rendered it incapable of receiving his soul. Left on its own, his soul preferred the solitude of the «Third Heaven» beyond the fixed stars, just as previously, when united to his body, Descartes had sought the solitude of the Dutch countryside.

At an important point in Daniel's fable, the soul of the narrator, having been freed from its body, travels with the souls of the old man and Descartes's friend Marin Mersenne to seek out the soul of Descartes in the outer regions of the universe⁶¹. There Descartes attempts to create for his visitors not merely a fable of a new world, as in *Le Monde*, but that world itself. The attempt consists in the creation by Descartes and his companions of vortices for the purpose of conjuring into existence the three different elements of the new world. The fact that the narrator was impressed by the results is explained in terms of traces in his brain that the old man and Mersenne had arranged to be produced there when his soul was separated from its body, and that continued to influence his soul even in its state of separation. In contrast, certain peripatetic souls, governed by different brain traces, could discern in this region nothing but empty space. After returning to its place in the pineal gland back on earth, however, the narrator's soul is unsettled by a series of objections that *les Péripatéticiens* offered to Descartes's cosmological system. The fable ends with a letter to Descartes in which the narrator recounts those objections, leaving the impression that there is no completely satisfactory response to them⁶².

Hatchette, 1909-29, V, p. 107.

⁵⁸ DANIEL, *Voyage*, cit., pp. 2-4.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁶¹ I skip over other details here, such as the visit of the three souls to the moon, which is populated by the souls of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, among other philosophers. Mentioned in this part of *Voyage* is the lunar fable in SAVINIEN DE CYRANO DE BERGERAC, *Histoire comique de Cyrano Bergerac contenant des États et Empires de la Lune*, Paris, de Sercy, 1657. For more on the lunar aspect of Daniel's fable, see RALPH HEYNDELS, *Un jésuite dans la lune à la fin du XVII^e siècle. Discours philosophique et diégétique dans le Voyage du monde de Descartes (1690), du père Gabriel Daniel*, «Recherches sur le XVII^e siècle», II (1978), pp. 17-31.

⁶² Indeed, a later companion piece to *Voyage* includes some reflections from the narrator in which he indicates that he never received a response to his letter either from Descartes or from Mersenne and the old man; see G. DANIEL, *Suite du Voyage du Monde de Descartes, ou Nouvelles difficultés proposées à l'auteur du Voyage du Monde de Descartes, Avec la Reffutation de deux defenses du Système general du*

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Daniel's fable is not an attempt to recover the old scholastic world that Descartes's new world was supposed to replace; in fact, *Voyage* includes several digs at the explanatory vacuity of scholastic forms and qualities. Rather, we are left with a kind of skeptical *epoché*. As the narrator expresses this point, in a subsequent work in which he reflects on his experiences recounted in *Voyage*:

This alteration of motions of the animal spirits by peripatetic traces, and [then] by Cartesian traces, seems to have put my mind into a certain equilibrium, and in a kind of detachment from the two opposed sects, which render it capable of judging both quite fairly⁶³.

The judgment on Descartes that emerges from *Voyage* itself, however, is negative rather than merely indifferent. In particular, the upshot is that one cannot create anything like the real world simply from the vortical motions of homogenous matter. Daniel's fable is thus intended to show that Descartes's fable of the new world can in the end offer no insight into the nature of our world.

Descartes's vortical physics was initially ignored and then condemned in France during the decades following his death in 1650. However, it began to gain a foothold there around the time of the publication of *Voyage*. In the last decades of the seventeenth century, the Paris professor Edme Pourchot introduced a scholasticized version of Descartes's physics in his courses. This prepared the way for the directive in 1720 that philosophical instruction at the Université de Paris combine *veterum* (Aristotelian) and *recentiorum* (Cartesian) physics⁶⁴. Yet at just the point Cartesian physics became ascendant in the French schools, there was a pressing need in the Paris Académie des sciences to confront the serious objections to this physics offered in Newton's *Principia mathematica*, initially published in 1687 and then in new editions in 1713 and 1726. Even so, there was a kind of rallying to Descartes by the French scientific establishment in reaction to the Newtonian theory of gravitational attraction. In a 1737 éloge, for instance, Bernard de Fontenelle, in his role of Permanent Secretary of the Académie, praised the efforts of his subject (the *académicien* Joseph Saurin) «to conserve the vortices of Descartes», without which one falls prey to «the incomprehensible system» of «Newtonian attractions»⁶⁵.

With characteristic wit, Voltaire notes the irony of this shift in the fortunes of Cartesian vortical physics:

What a revolution in the opinions of men! The philosophy of Descartes was proscribed in France while it had some appearance of truth, and its ingenious hypotheses were not given the lie by experience, and now that our eyes

Monde de Descartes, Amsterdam, Mortier, 1696, p. 94.

⁶³ G. DANIEL, *Suite du Voyage*, cit., p. 95. Similarly, Huet was concerned to defend a skeptical stance toward dogmatic philosophical claims on all sides. On Huet's skepticism, see THOMAS M. LENNON, *Pierre-Daniel Huet, Skeptic Critic of Cartesianism and Defender of Religion*, in *Oxford Handbook of Descartes*, cit., pp. 780-790.

⁶⁴ See the declaration cited in CHARLES JOURDAIN, *Histoire de l'Université de Paris au XVIIe et au XVIIIe siècle*, Paris, Hachette, II, p. 173. For further discussion of the victory of Cartesian physics in early modern French universities, see my *Early Modern Cartesianisms*, cit., pp. 307-314.

⁶⁵ BERNARD DE LE BOVIER DE FONTENELLE, *Œuvres complètes*, ed. by Alan Niderst, Paris, Fayard, 1990-2001, VII, p. 279. For further discussion of the Cartesian response in the Paris Académie to the Newtonian challenge, see my *Early Modern Cartesianisms*, cit., pp. 314-336.

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demonstrate its errors, it will not be allowed to abandon them⁶⁶.

Voltaire is the author of the famous *Lettre sur Descartes et Newton*, included in his 1734 *Lettres philosophiques*. At the beginning of this *Lettre*, he draws a contrast between the view from Paris, where «one sees a universe composed of vortices of subtle matter», and the view from London, where «one sees nothing of this»⁶⁷. For Voltaire, it is obvious that «our eyes demonstrate» the errors of Cartesian vortical physics, insofar as this physics cannot accommodate the Keplerian rules of planetary motion that Newton explained in terms of gravitational attraction. But then there is the question of why, if the inadequacy of Cartesian vortices was so obvious, one was not allowed to abandon them in France.

Relevant to this question is Voltaire's emphasis on the prominence of Descartes's imagination in his writings. Thus, he notes that «Descartes was born with a brilliant and strong imagination», and that «this imagination could not be hidden even in his philosophical works, where one sees ingenious and brilliant comparisons»⁶⁸. He also admits that «the system of Descartes seemed to give an account [*rendre une raison*] of these phenomena [concerning gravity and the motion of the planets], and this account appeared to all the world as true as it is simple and intelligible»⁶⁹. There is a notable contrast here with the dense mathematical account of the world presented in Newton's *Principia*, which many simply could not fathom. Yet Voltaire's final judgment on Descartes's system of the world is that it is in the end «nothing more than an ingenious fiction [*un roman ingénieux*]»⁷⁰, merely an engaging but ultimately imaginary fable. Moreover, he takes the lesson from Newton to be that «in philosophy we must be wary of what we believe we understand too easily, as well as of things we do not understand»⁷¹. In fact, the path set out by Newton has led us most recently to the strange new world of quantum mechanics, itself far removed from our imagination. From a lay perspective, the account of the world provided by this science certainly seems to be an impenetrable fable, albeit one which currently possesses a sort of empirical adequacy that the more imaginable fable of *Le Monde* ultimately lost.

⁶⁶ VOLTAIRE, *Défense du newtonianisme*, in *Œuvres complètes de Voltaire*, Paris, Crapelet, 1819-25, XXVIII, pp. 303-304.

⁶⁷ M. DE V***, *Quatorzième Lettre sur Descartes et Newton*, in *Lettres philosophiques*, Amsterdam, Lucas, 1734, p. 62.

⁶⁸ M. DE V***, *Lettre sur Descartes et Newton*, in *Lettres philosophiques*, cit., pp. 63-64.

⁶⁹ M. DE V***, *Quinzième Lettre sur le Système de l'Attraction*, in *Lettres philosophiques*, cit., p. 73.

⁷⁰ M. DE V***, *Lettre sur Descartes et Newton*, in *Lettres philosophiques*, cit., pp. 70-71.

⁷¹ Id.

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Marco Brusotti

«Non ci sono considerazioni generali sul mondo e sul linguaggio».

Wittgenstein (1931) sulla ‘metalogica’ e la ‘magia’ del *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*

Abstract. «Non ci sono considerazioni generali sul mondo e sul linguaggio.» Nel 1931, con questa lapidaria osservazione, Wittgenstein prende le distanze dall'impostazione del *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*. Certo, l'opera prima iniziava sì con quella che poteva sembrare una definizione del concetto di mondo, perveniva però al risultato che tale 'definizione' fosse insensata finendo col negare che considerazioni generali sul 'mondo' fossero possibili. Tuttavia, un decennio dopo la pubblicazione, Wittgenstein ritiene ormai che nel *Tractatus* «l'eliminare ogni/la/magia» avesse esso stesso «il carattere della magia». A suscitare le perplessità di Wittgenstein è quindi proprio il carattere alquanto peculiare che la critica della metafisica aveva assunto nel *Tractatus*. Tale lettura retrospettiva evidenzia come già in una fase relativamente precoce della transizione per il filosofo sia divenuto centrale constatare quel carattere 'magico' e 'metalogico' del *Tractatus* che secondo gli interpreti del *New Wittgenstein* esso invece proprio non avrebbe. Il presente contributo è dedicato all'idea wittgensteiniana di 'metalogica' – anche in relazione con la contemporanea proposta di Carnap – e alla sua concezione di 'mondo' come concetto metalogico.

Abstract. «There are no such things as general discourses about the world and language». In 1931, with this lapidary remark, Wittgenstein distances himself from the approach of the *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*. Certainly, this book began with what might sound like a definition of the concept of 'world', but it arrived at the result that this 'definition' was indeed nonsensical and ended up denying that general considerations on the 'world' were possible. However, a decade after publication, Wittgenstein now considers that in the *Tractatus* «the elimination of /all/magic» had itself «the character of magic». Wittgenstein's perplexity is thus due precisely to the rather peculiar character that the critique of metaphysics had assumed in his book. This retrospective reading shows how, already at a relatively early stage of the transition to a new method, it had become central for the philosopher to acknowledge the «magical» and «metalogical» character of his *Tractatus*, which, according to the *New Wittgenstein* scholars, it did not have at all. The present paper deals with Wittgenstein's criticism of 'metalogic' - also in relation to Carnap's contemporary proposal - and with his conception of 'world' as a metalogical concept.

Parole chiave: Mondo/ Linguaggio/ Metalogica/ Wittgenstein/ Carnap

Keywords: World/ Language/ Metalogic/ Wittgenstein/ Carnap

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In *Logica, linguaggio, filosofia*, frutto di una travagliata collaborazione con Wittgenstein, Friedrich Waismann si sofferma sull'«aura metafisica di alcune parole»¹. In questo contesto dedica alcune considerazioni al processo di «sublimazione» che dall'uso quotidiano conduce all'uso metafisico della parola «mondo».

Un tipico esempio è la parola 'il mondo'. In origine, la parola "mondo" significa qualcosa di molto grande e in senso spaziale, quindi qualcosa nello spazio, ma non lo spazio. La parola "mondo" deriva anche il suo peso, la sua anima, dal fatto che denota qualcosa di immane. Questa sensazione di qualcosa di grande viene poi per così dire sublimata: è come se si fosse notata la relatività di ogni grandezza spaziale e adesso si fa rifugiare l'anima della parola 'mondo', che in fondo era legata a questa stessa grandezza, in un'altra area, nello spazio o addirittura nel logico. È come se quello che in origine veniva considerato come mondo fosse diventato banale e adesso stiamo facendo rifugiare il nimbo altrove. Parliamo ora della grandezza dello spazio invece che della grandezza delle entità spaziali, come se fosse la stessa cosa. / Ma come avviene questo cambiamento? Credo che qui sussista un fenomeno particolare, [...] Guardando il cielo stellato, si può avere una sensazione simile a quella della musica, e allora sorge in noi una sensazione cosmica che non conosce grandezza spaziale. La parola "mondo" diventa, per così dire, disincarnata. È come se se ne ottenesse la pura e semplice importanza senza il sostrato. Una trasposizione simile ha luogo con espressioni [...] che nella vita di tutti i giorni vengono usate in modo assolutamente banale, ma che poi subiscono una sublimazione e crescono assumendo dimensione metafisica. Si fa rifugiare l'anima della parola in una dimensione metafisica e il nimbo è ormai diventato intangibile².

«Mondo» fa quindi parte delle parole che facilmente acquisiscono un'«aura» [*Aura*] o un «nimbo» [*Nimbus*] metafisici finendo con l'esercitare su di noi qualcosa come un «incantesimo» [*Zauber*]. Già nel suo uso quotidiano tali parole hanno qualcosa come una rilevanza (un 'peso'), un'anima; ad esse è legata una sensazione caratteristica, nel caso di 'mondo' una sensazione di grandezza spaziale nonché qualcosa come un sentimento musicale del cosmo. È tale anima a divenire poi una sorta di aura magica quando «mondo» viene usato come parola metalogica. La «sublimazione» di cui l'uso quotidiano della parola «mondo» finisce con l'essere oggetto si configura come un processo di graduale trasposizione che progressivamente la conduce a stare non più per qualcosa di spaziale bensì prima per lo stesso spazio e infine per il 'logico'.

Anche se Waismann non lo dice esplicitamente, è abbastanza chiaro che considera questa la genesi anche (e forse soprattutto) dell'uso 'metalogico' che lo stesso *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* fa della parola «mondo». Negli autografi wittgensteiniani dei primi anni Trenta si incontrano considerazioni critiche parallele, anche se alquanto più stringate. A essere precisi, la caratterizzazione di Waismann più ancora che per il concetto di «mondo» vale per quello di «spazio logico». Nel *Tractatus* lo «spazio logico» è un

¹ La collaborazione fu tanto difficile che il libro uscì postumo dopo la morte dello stesso Waismann (1896-1959). FRIEDRICH WAISMANN, *The Principles of Linguistic Philosophy*, a cura di R. Harré, Londra, Macmillan, 1965. Io cito dall'edizione tedesca: *Logik, Sprache, Philosophie*, hrsg. v. G. P. Baker u. B. McGuinness unter Mitwirkung v. J. Schulte, Stuttgart, Reclam, 1976. Successivamente sono stati pubblicati i dettati di Wittgenstein a Waismann in funzione di questo libro: L. WITTGENSTEIN/F. WAISMANN, *The Voices of Wittgenstein: the Vienna Circle*. Original German texts and English translations. Transcribed, ed. and with an introd. by Gordon Baker. London-New York, Routledge, 2003. Prima dell'originale è stata pubblicata una versione francese: *Dictées de Wittgenstein à Friedrich Waismann et pour Moritz Schlick*, sous la direction de Antonia Soulez, 2 voll., Paris, PUF, 1997. Oltre alla postfazione a *Logik, Sprache, Philosophie*, alla prefazione a *The Voices of Wittgenstein* e ai saggi raccolti nella traduzione francese cfr. anche GORDON P. BAKER: *Verehrung und Verkehrung: Waismann and Wittgenstein*, in C. Grant Luckhardt (ed.), *Wittgenstein. Sources and Perspectives*, Bristol-Dulles, Toemmes Press, 1996, pp. 243-285.

² F. WAISMANN, *Logik, Sprache, Philosophie*, pp. 134-135; traduzione mia. Il titolo del paragrafo è *L'aura metafisica di alcune parole* [*Die metaphysische Aura einiger Wörter*] (cfr. *Logik, Sprache, Philosophie*, pp. 128 ss.). Nei dettati di Wittgenstein a Waismann non si trova un passo corrispondente a quello citato.

«Non ci sono considerazioni generali sul mondo e sul linguaggio».
Wittgenstein (1931) sulla 'metalogica' e la 'magia' del *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*

concetto modale che include tutto quanto è logicamente possibile – così come il linguaggio comprende tutte le proposizioni, non solo quelle vere. Quindi lo spazio logico non coincide con il mondo reale giacché coinvolge anche tutti i mondi possibili ovvero non solo tutto ciò che effettivamente accade ma anche tutto ciò che potrebbe o sarebbe potuto accadere³. Visto questo carattere modale e universale, non costituisce una forzatura vedere proprio nello «spazio logico» del *Tractatus* l'ultimo e più radicale esito del processo di sublimazione e trasposizione del concetto quotidiano di 'mondo' descritto da Waismann.

Negli autografi di Wittgenstein non si riscontrano estese considerazioni corrispondenti all'elaborato e alquanto speculativo tentativo waismanniano di caratterizzare psicologicamente l'anima della parola «mondo» e di dettagliare il processo di sublimazione che essa subirebbe nel corso della storia. Ciononostante, l'impiego che *Logica, linguaggio, filosofia* fa del concetto psicoanalitico di 'sublimazione' per descrivere il rapporto tra l'uso comune delle parole e quello filosofico è senz'altro di matrice wittgensteiniana. Sono inoltre nello spirito di Wittgenstein anche le considerazioni di Waismann sull'aura o nimbo di 'mondo' e sull'incantesimo che tali parole finiscono con l'esercitare su di noi. Nel 1931 un tale influsso magico viene descritto anche nelle note autografe di Wittgenstein sul *Ramo d'oro* dell'antropologo scozzese James Frazer.

1. La 'magia' del *Tractatus*.

«Non ci sono considerazioni generali sul mondo e sul linguaggio.»⁴ Nel 1931, con questa lapidaria osservazione Wittgenstein intende ormai prendere le distanze dall'impostazione del *Tractatus*. La cosa può sembrare strana visto che in realtà già l'opera prima aveva finito col negare che tali considerazioni generali fossero possibili. Certo, essa stessa sembrava consistere essenzialmente di considerazioni su mondo e linguaggio, iniziando proprio con quella che parrebbe una 'definizione' del concetto di mondo. La prima delle sette «proposizioni fondamentali» è appunto: «Il mondo è tutto ciò che accade» (TLP 1, p. 7)⁵. Però il risultato finale è che l'intero *Tractatus* consiste di pseudo-proposizioni le quali violano le regole della sintassi logica e sono quindi insensate. La conclusione del libro invita il lettore che abbia seguito Wittgenstein a lasciarsi ormai alle spalle tali 'chiarimenti insensati'⁶ come una scala che una volta usata è ormai superflua

³ Il mondo è la totalità dei fatti e viene descritto completamente dalla totalità delle proposizioni vere; lo spazio logico è la totalità degli stati di cose, anche di quelli che non sussistono, e viene descritto dalla totalità delle proposizioni *tout court*, comprese quindi anche quelle false.

⁴ «Allgemeine Ausführungen über die Welt und die Sprache gibt es nicht.» (MS 110, pp. 201-202; cfr. anche TS 211, p. 248; TS 213, p. 66r). Traduzione mia. I passi dal lascito manoscritto vengono citati con le usuali sigle "MS" (manoscritto) o "TS" (dattiloscritto) seguite dal numero dell'item secondo il catalogo di von Wright e dal numero di pagina dell'autografo di Wittgenstein ('66r' = '66 recto'; '66v' = '66 verso'). I testi possono essere reperiti nelle seguenti edizioni: L. WITTGENSTEIN, *Wiener Ausgabe*, hg. v. M. Nedo. Wien-New York, Springer, 1994 ss.; *Wittgenstein's Nachlaß. Text and Facsimile Version. The Bergen Electronic Edition*, Oxford-New York, Oxford University Press, 1998 s. La traduzione inglese citata nell'abstract all'inizio del presente saggio è tratta da: L. WITTGENSTEIN, *The Big Typescript: TS 213. German-English Scholars' Edition*, edited and translated by C. Grant Luckhardt / Maximilian A. E. Aue, Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013, p. 54e.

⁵ Il *Tractatus logico-philosophicus* viene citato con l'usuale sigla "TLP" seguita dal numero della proposizione e dal numero di pagina nella seguente edizione italiana (che a volte ho leggermente modificato): L. WITTGENSTEIN, *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*, a cura di Amedeo G. Conte, Torino, Einaudi, 1989.

⁶ Uso l'espressione paradossale 'chiarimenti insensati' giacché Wittgenstein scrive: «Le mie proposizioni delucidano [erläutern] in questo senso: colui che mi comprende infine le riconosce insensate, [...]» (TLP 6.54, p. 175). Preferisco tradurre *erläutern* con

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e bisogna «gettar via» (TLP 6.54, p. 175). Bisogna prima ‘salire’ per, su e oltre tali pseudo-proposizioni, incluse naturalmente anche quelle ‘sul’ mondo, per vedere correttamente – il mondo: «Egli deve superare queste proposizioni; è allora che egli vede rettamente il mondo» (TLP 6.54, p. 175). Così la penultima proposizione immediatamente prima della celebre chiusa «Su ciò, di cui non si può parlare, si deve tacere» (TLP 7, p. 175). Vede correttamente il mondo chi ha imparato a fare a meno di questo pseudo-concetto. L’opera, quindi, inizia con quella che sembrerebbe una definizione del concetto di mondo (TLP 1, p. 7), perviene però al risultato che tale ‘definizione’ è insensata e infine attesta al lettore che abbia seguito l’autore traendo questa conclusione che adesso vede finalmente il mondo in maniera corretta.

Un decennio dopo la pubblicazione, a suscitare le perplessità di Wittgenstein è però proprio il carattere alquanto peculiare che la critica della metafisica aveva assunto nel *Tractatus*. Nel giugno del 1931 il filosofo non solo si è già lasciato alle spalle alcuni capisaldi della filosofia della sua opera prima, ma ha anche rinunciato al tentativo più limitato di colmare lacune ed emendarne aporie e sta ormai procedendo a reimpostare in maniera ben più radicale il proprio approccio filosofico, anche se la transizione è ancora più prossima all’inizio che non al compimento. In ogni caso Wittgenstein sta lavorando a un nuovo progetto e ha sovente occasione di riflettere sul titolo nonché sul possibile *incipit* dell’opera *in fieri*. In questo contesto prende in considerazione l’opportunità di «iniziare con delle osservazioni sulla metafisica come una specie di magia» (MS 110, p. 177).

Io credo ora che sarebbe giusto cominciare il mio libro con alcune osservazioni sulla metafisica considerata come un tipo di magia.

Nel far questo però non potrei né prendere le parti della magia né irridarla.

Della magia bisognerebbe riuscire a mantenere la profondità.

Sì, l’esclusione della magia ha qui il carattere stesso della magia.

Perché se allora mi sono messo a parlare del ‘mondo’ (e non di questo albero o di questo tavolo), che altro potevo volere se non catturare qualcosa di più alto nelle mie parole? (MS 110, pp. 177-178)⁷.

La metafisica si rivela essere una specie del genere ‘magia’ (concetto quest’ultimo sul quale torneremo). Il punto importante però è che qui, a venir considerata di natura magica non è solo la metafisica; proprio «l’eliminare ogni/la/magia» ha esso stesso «il carattere della magia» (MS 110, p. 177). Quale modo di mettere in questione la metafisica risulta essere esso stesso una peculiare variante di metafisica?⁸ L’osservazione percorre una singolare parabola. Dapprima, infatti, potrebbe sembrare che a eliminare o mettere fuori gioco la magia in un modo che avrebbe esso stesso carattere magico sia proprio il nuovo libro al quale Wittgenstein sta lavorando. Invece l’ultima frase suggerisce retrospettivamente che era nel *Tractatus* che

«delucidare» che non con «illustrare»/«illuminare» come nella traduzione italiana di A. G. Conte.

⁷ La traduzione italiana si trova nell’*Introduzione* di Rush Rhees a L. WITTGENSTEIN, *Note sul ‘Ramo d’oro’ di Frazer*, Milano, Adelphi, 2000, pp. 12-13. L’originale tedesco è accessibile nella *Wiener Ausgabe* nonché nella *Bergen Electronic Edition*. Nel MS 110 (non nel TS 211) tali osservazioni introducono le prime osservazioni di Wittgenstein sul *Ramo d’oro* di Frazer (su questo contesto cfr. Marco BRUSOTTI: *Wittgenstein, Frazer und die “ethnologische Betrachtungsweise”*, Berlin/Boston, de Gruyter, 2014, p. 74 ss.).

⁸ In modo simile già Ramsey osserva criticamente che il *Tractatus* contiene un argomento metafisico, ovvero l’argomento secondo cui tutti gli argomenti metafisici sono privi di significato.

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tale eliminazione aveva essa stessa il carattere della magia.

Nel 1931 Wittgenstein individua la «connessione della metafisica con la magia» nell'idea che tra i problemi in senso scientifico oltre a quelli «insignificanti, quasi accidentali», oggetto delle scienze empiriche, ve ne siano anche di «essenziali, grandi, universali» dei quali soltanto la metafisica intende occuparsi, «Invece il nostro punto di vista è che non c'è un *grande*, sostanziale problema nel senso della scienza» (MS 110, p. 200). Già il *Tractatus* sosteneva l'inesistenza di un qualcosa come un «*enigma*» (TLP 6.5, p. 173) metafisico. Più in generale il libro intendeva eliminare la metafisica: in filosofia l'unico metodo «rigorosamente corretto» (TLP 6.53, p. 175) consente di mostrare a chiunque «voglia dire qualcosa di metafisico [...] che, a certi segni nelle sue proposizioni», ad es. alla parola «mondo», «egli non ha dato significato alcuno» (TLP 6.53, p. 175) e che quindi il risultato non può essere che un nonsenso. Si tratta pertanto di mostrare che la metafisica consiste non di proposizioni false o indimostrabili, ma addirittura di pseudo-proposizioni insensate. Secondo la conclusione però anche il *Tractatus* consiste di pseudo-proposizioni che si «chiarificano» [*erläutern*], ma nel contempo sono «insensate» (TLP 6.54, p. 175). Si potrebbe dire che in questo senso è la stessa 'cornice' (prefazione e conclusione) dell'opera ad attribuire carattere magico al testo che elimina la magia. Torneremo in seguito sulla nota interpretazione che il *New Wittgenstein* dà del *Tractatus* e della sua 'cornice'. Importante per il momento è sottolineare che nel 1931 Wittgenstein non pensa semplicemente a ripetere e confermare ancora una volta il gesto della 'cornice' del *Tractatus* quando intende ormai aprire il suo nuovo libro prendendo esplicitamente le distanze dalla sua opera prima. Qualche mese prima invece, negli schizzi di introduzione/prefazione dell'autunno 1930, non aveva ancora sentito il bisogno di una tale presa di distanze, anzi proprio quando parlava del 'mondo' continuava inequivocabilmente a riecheggiare il *Tractatus*.⁹ Il nuovo *incipit* rappresenta quindi una novità. Certo, Wittgenstein ha poi finito con lo scartare la possibilità di iniziare il suo nuovo libro con una tale autocritica, marcando questa osservazione come 'debole' e sostituendola al momento di trascrivere in un dattiloscritto le sue note sul *Ramo d'oro*. Resta comunque il fatto che meno di un anno e mezzo dopo la ripresa dell'attività di scrittura filosofica, egli ormai vede nel *Tractatus* una forma particolare di 'magia', ossia di metafisica e di 'metalogica'.

⁹ Wittgenstein sosteneva che mentre la civilizzazione vuole «cogliere il mondo attraverso la sua periferia - nella sua molteplicità», il suo nuovo libro intende invece coglierlo «nel suo centro - nella sua essenza» (MS 109, p. 211). Mentre lo spirito della civilizzazione è volto a progredire continuamente, quello del suo libro rimane dov'è e vuole «cogliere sempre la stessa cosa» (MS 109, p. 212) ovvero appunto l'essenza immutabile del mondo. Ciò corrisponde all'orientamento del *Tractatus* secondo il quale la struttura logica del mondo si mostra e al quale interessa non il 'come' bensì il 'che' del mondo ovvero non la molteplicità dei fatti empirici ma 'che' il mondo è (il mistico). Tale disinteresse per la varietà ed eterogeneità dei fatti, per la molteplicità del mondo è anche il tema della seguente osservazione: «Vi sono problemi ai quali non mi accosto mai, che non si trovano nella mia linea o nel mio mondo. [...] Ma io non arrivo affatto a questi problemi. Quando io "have done with the world", ho prodotto una massa amorfa (trasparente), e il mondo con tutta la sua molteplicità rimane in disparte come un ripostiglio delle cianfrusaglie privo di interesse. O meglio: il risultato di tutto il lavoro è di mettere il mondo in disparte (Il gettare il mondo intero nel ripostiglio delle cianfrusaglie)» (ibid., pp. 31-32). (MS 110, pp. 13-14; trad. it. da L. WITGENSTEIN, *Pensieri diversi*, Milano, Adelphi, 2001, p. 31).

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2. La critica della ‘metalogica’.

In quegli anni all'interno del Circolo di Vienna l'approccio del *Tractatus* e in particolare l'impossibilità di esprimere linguisticamente la forma logica è oggetto di accese controversie¹⁰. Le proposizioni del *Tractatus* «delucidano» [*erläutern*] per il fatto che «colui che mi comprende infine le riconosce insensate se è acceso per esse - su esse - oltre esse» (TLP 6.54, p. 175). Neurath respinge «con decisione e senza riserve il tentativo di Wittgenstein di legittimare almeno provvisoriamente mediante delucidazioni preparatorie la metafisica idealistica, anzi misticistica, in una qualche forma»¹¹. Secondo Neurath della sintassi del linguaggio si può parlare in modo sensato in questo stesso linguaggio: può quindi essere rappresentata come un fenomeno fisico nel linguaggio fiscalistico della scienza unitaria. All'inizio degli anni trenta Carnap (ancora nella sua fase 'pre-semantic') fa propria questa concezione. La sua *Sintassi logica del linguaggio* è il provvisorio punto finale di questo progetto e già le lezioni sulla *Metalogica* del giugno 1931 si muovono in questa direzione¹². La «metalogica» di Carnap è «la teoria delle forme che compaiono in un linguaggio, cioè la rappresentazione della sintassi del linguaggio»¹³. Tale teoria deve rispondere a domande come «ci sono proposizioni su proposizioni, che senso hanno, sono frasi empiriche o tautologie, ne risulta una gerarchia dei linguaggi?»¹⁴. Sono tutte domande risalenti al *Tractatus*; l'ultima si riferisce alla proposta più importante dell'introduzione di Russell¹⁵. Più tardi Carnap passerà con Tarski a un modello semantico a due linguaggi (linguaggio oggetto e metalinguaggio). Nelle sue conferenze sulla metalogica invece qui intende ancora fare a meno di una gerarchia di linguaggi: vuole aggirare il divieto di Wittgenstein impiegando un linguaggio comune fiscalistico. «Aggirare» perché Carnap non intende propriamente contraddire il *Tractatus*. Carnap infatti con «metalogica» non intende «proposizioni su una specie di proposizioni», bensì «proposizioni in parte singolari, in parte condizionali concernenti entità fisiche, ovvero concernenti «serie di segni linguistici». A questo proposito «possiamo esprimere la metalogica nel nostro linguaggio

¹⁰ Cfr. RUDOLF CARNAP, *Autobiography*, in Kuang Tih Fann (ed.), *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The man and his philosophy*, Atlantic Highlands, N.J., Humanities, 1978, pp. 33-39.

¹¹ OTTO NEURATH, *Einheitswissenschaft und Psychologie*, in *Einheitswissenschaft* 1 (1933), p. 29, citato da Friedrich Stadler: *Studien zum Wiener Kreis. Ursprung, Entwicklung und Wirkung des logischen Empirismus im Kontext*, Frankfurt am M., Suhrkamp, 1997, p. 548.

¹² Carnap interviene sulla metalogica nelle riunioni del Circolo di Vienna dell'11, 18 e 25 giugno 1931; una discussione ha luogo il 2 luglio 1931. Si veda la sinossi (*Der Schlick-Zirkel: Übersicht der Diskussionen 1927-1932*) in STADLER, *Studien zum Wiener Kreis*, pp. 272-274, qui p. 274. Il testo delle tre relazioni e della discussione è pubblicato a pp. 314-334; cfr. anche la voce 'metalogica' del protocollo di Carnap, *ibid.*, p. 338.

¹³ *Metalogica*, in F. STADLER, *Studien zum Wiener Kreis*, cit., p. 314.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Nella sua introduzione al *Tractatus* Russell aveva preso le distanze dalla concezione che la sintassi logica non fosse esprimibile (gli Hintikka parleranno con una terminologia più attuale di «inesprimibilità della semantica»). È vero che Russell fraintende la concezione wittgensteiniana di una sintassi universale di tutte le lingue *reali* (e immaginabili) confondendola con la proposta di un linguaggio *ideale*; a ragione però critica l'idea di una totalità di tutte le lingue. Una tale «totality» è «not merely logically inexpressible, but a fiction, a mere delusion» (B. RUSSELL, *Introduction*, in L. WITTGENSTEIN, *Logisch-philosophische Abhandlung - Tractatus Logico-philosophicus. Kritische Edition*, hg. v. Brian McGuinness / Joachim Schulte, Frankfurt/M. 1989, p. 286). Quindi Russell propone: «every language has, as Mr Wittgenstein says, a structure concerning which, in the language, nothing can be said, but [...] there may be another language dealing with the structure of the first language, and having itself a new structure, and [...] to these hierarchy of languages there may be no limit» (*Introduction*, op. cit., p. 286). Russell formula così una proposta ricca di conseguenze: si potrebbe parlare della struttura logica «attraverso una gerarchia di lingue» ovvero in un metalinguaggio. Tarski riprende questo suggerimento.

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ordinario, e in modo tale che questo non contraddica le concezioni di Wittgenstein¹⁶. Se si può parlare sul linguaggio, allora solo su «segni fisici, suoni, linee di gesso, ecc., non sul «significato»¹⁷. Tutte le proposizioni, anche quelle metalogiche, sono proposizioni nell'unico linguaggio. Tutto si svolge - come secondo il Wittgenstein intermedio, così anche secondo Carnap e Neurath - nel linguaggio, cioè nel linguaggio fisicalistico della scienza *nonché* della vita quotidiana. Il linguaggio fisicalistico non parla di «significati», ma della «sintassi». Esso evita il 'modo materiale' (*inhaltlich*, letteralmente: 'contenutistico') di parlare e lo sostituisce con il 'modo formale': parla di vocabolario e di sintassi invece che di «oggetti» e «fatti».

Tale ascesa semantica distingue l'approccio carnapiano non solo dalla metafisica tradizionale, ma anche dal *Tractatus* - con tale argomento Carnap più tardi si difenderà dalle accuse di plagio mossegli da Wittgenstein. La critica di Carnap va quindi in due direzioni. Da un lato, il *Tractatus* ricade in parte nel 'modo materiale' parlando anche di 'stati di cose', 'fatti' e 'mondo' invece che solo di 'proposizioni' e di 'linguaggio'. D'altra parte, il *Tractatus* pone un veto al legittimo 'modo formale' di parlare ovvero conferisce alle «delucidazioni» uno status speciale in definitiva insostenibile: quello di 'pseudo-proposizioni' insensate¹⁸.

È proprio nei giorni in cui Carnap tiene queste conferenze sulla «metallogica» che anche Wittgenstein inizia a usare il termine, seppur in un senso critico alquanto idiosincratico. «Come non c'è una metafisica così non c'è una metallogica» (MS 110, p. 189)¹⁹. Qui con «metallogica» non si intende il punto di vista di Carnap, le cui conferenze Wittgenstein probabilmente conosce al massimo per sentito dire. Piuttosto, «metallogica» sta per una tendenza molto generale, che Wittgenstein ravvisa in Frege, nella «philosophical grammar» di Russell²⁰, ma non da ultimo anche nel suo stesso *Tractatus*. Metallogico, infatti, non è solo il punto di vista secondo cui è possibile parlare di sintassi logica, ad esempio avvalendosi di un metalinguaggio per parlare del linguaggio oggetto, come in altri termini aveva proposto Russell nella sua introduzione. Metallogico è anche l'approccio del *Tractatus* per cui sulla sintassi logica si possono dare solo «delucidazioni» insensate. Questa particolare versione di metallogica implica l'idea che ci sia un linguaggio universale e quindi un limite di ogni possibile linguaggio. Le «delucidazioni» metalogiche del *Tractatus* si spingono oltre questo confine e sono quindi in realtà insensate. Così lo stesso *Tractatus*. Nel 1931 però nemmeno sotto tale forma di pseudo-proposizioni insensate viene ammessa la legittimità di «considerazioni generali sul mondo e sul linguaggio» (MS 110, p. 202 s.).

¹⁶ *Metallogica*, in F. STADLER, *Studien zum Wiener Kreis*, cit., p. 327.

¹⁷ *Ibid.* cfr. STADLER, *Studien zum Wiener Kreis*, cit., p. 314.

¹⁸ Non molto dopo le lezioni sulla metallogica la critica si muoverà anche in una terza direzione: alla sintassi universale del *Tractatus* Carnap contrapporrà il proprio «principio di tolleranza».

¹⁹ Sulla 'metallogica' in Wittgenstein cfr. STEPHEN S. HILMY, *The Later Wittgenstein. The Emergence of a New Philosophical Method*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1987, § 2, p. 40 ss.

²⁰ Cfr. ad es. B. RUSSELL, *The Principles of Mathematics*, New York-London, Norton, 1996, p. 42; *The Philosophy of Logical Atomism*, Chicago-La Salle, Illinois, Open Court, 1998, p. 141.

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3. La critica dell'uso metalogico della parola 'mondo'.

In un dettato a Friedrich Waismann incontriamo una più dettagliata versione non autografa dell'argomentazione wittgensteiniana che «mondo» e «linguaggio» non sono parole metalogiche.

Nella filosofia le parole “senso”, “linguaggio”, “mondo” ecc. compaiono di continuo. Ora è molto importante chiedersi: abbiamo a che fare con parole eccezionali che sono in un certo senso al di sopra o al di sotto delle altre parole? Una parola come “linguaggio” è una parola metalogica? Per niente. Le parole “linguaggio”, “significato”, ecc., ammesso che le usiamo correttamente, sono di nuovo solo parole come le parole “tavolo”, “sedia” e “finestra”. Non sono in alcun modo parole privilegiate. [...] Con l'osservazione che depone dai loro troni le parole “linguaggio”, “senso”, “mondo”, ecc. la filosofia non viene distrutta; piuttosto, tale osservazione è essa stessa un'osservazione filosofica. [...] L'unica cosa metalogica della filosofia è la credenza in ciò che essa smaschera come non metalogico. Questo è il suo collegamento con il metalogico²¹.

La frase conclusiva, alquanto criptica anche nell'originale tedesco, va letta nel senso che la filosofia, lungi dal costruire una metalogica, la dissolve. Questa è l'unica connessione tra filosofia e metalogica: la prima smaschera come non metalogico quello che la seconda crede essere tale. Quindi la filosofia non è altro che critica della metalogica. Il solo legame tra loro è di natura critica. «L'unico compito dignitoso della filosofia» – la sua «connessione con gli dei» – «è quello di distruggere il vecchio idolo (della filosofia)» (MS 112: p. 113v)²². Il filosofo mostra che il metalogico è mera apparenza: «mondo» e «linguaggio» non sono parole eccezionali, privilegiate.

È proprio in questo senso che l'autografo del 1931 prende espressamente le distanze dal modo in cui il *Tractatus* aveva parlato «del 'mondo'» «(e non di questo albero o tavolo)» (MS 110: p. 178). Esprimendosi così, sostiene, aveva voluto – non diversamente dal modo magico di pensare – «catturare [bannen] qualcosa di più alto nelle <sue> parole» (MS 110: p. 178). Certo, già l'autore del *Tractatus* sapeva che le «proposizioni non possono esprimere nulla che sia più alto», intendendo con questo che non «vi possono essere proposizioni dell'etica» (TLP 6.42, p. 169), dell'estetica o della religione²³. Nel 1931, d'altra parte, Wittgenstein ormai sottolinea che era lui stesso nel *Tractatus* a voler catturare nel linguaggio qualcosa di più alto e che intendeva farlo proprio quando cominciava col parlare del «mondo»²⁴. Sono proprio queste

²¹ L. WITTGENSTEIN/F. WAISMANN, *The Voices of Wittgenstein*, pp. 20-22.

²² «Tutto ciò che la filosofia può fare è distruggere gli idoli. E questo vuol dire non crearne di nuovi, come sarebbe ad es. l'«assenza di idoli» (TS 213: p. 413; cfr. TS 212: p. 1133; MS 112: p. 10v). Nonostante l'autocritica secondo cui nel *Tractatus* l'eliminazione di ogni magia ha essa stessa carattere magico, per Wittgenstein coloro che fanno un nuovo idolo dell'«assenza di idoli» sono piuttosto Russell, il Circolo di Vienna ecc.

²³ «Né, quindi, vi possono essere proposizioni dell'etica. / Le proposizioni non possono esprimere nulla che sia più alto» (TLP 6.42, p. 169). Le proposizioni descrivono solo com'è il mondo: «Come il mondo è, è affatto indifferente per ciò che è più alto. Dio non rivela sé nel mondo» (TLP 6.432, p. 173). «Non come il mondo è, è il mistico, ma che esso è» (TLP 6.44, p. 173).

²⁴ Dal momento che nell'osservazione del giugno 1931 Wittgenstein si riferisce alle prime proposizioni del *Tractatus*, il tentativo di catturare qualcosa di più alto nel linguaggio usando la parola 'mondo' non è quello descritto anche nella conferenza sull'etica del 1929. Tra le esperienze etiche tentando di esprimere le quali si urta contro i limiti del linguaggio la conferenza annovera la meraviglia per il fatto che il mondo è (quello che TLP 6.44 aveva definito il mistico): «the experience of wondering at the existence of the world [...] is the experience of seeing the world as a miracle» (L. WITTGENSTEIN, *A Lecture on Ethics*, in *Philosophical Occasions 1912-1951*, ed. by James Carl Klagge/Alfred Nordmann, Indianapolis-Cambridge, Hackett Publishing Company, 1993, pp. 37-44, in part. p. 43). Come è noto, la conferenza distingue tra uso relativo e assoluto delle parole. In senso relativo ci si meraviglia di un determinato fatto

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considerazioni 'metalogiche' sul mondo e la sua essenza a risultargli ora simili a incantesimi e formule magiche volte a catturare nel linguaggio qualcosa di più alto²⁵.

Nel 1931 il parlare di «mondo», «realtà», «fatto», che per Carnap costituisce un resto metafisico del *Tractatus*, è ormai anche al centro dell'autocritica di Wittgenstein. Secondo lui il *Tractatus* oltre a tali parole frainde pure i concetti mentali, che fanno parte di quelli che Carnap ascrive al modo materiale. La distinzione carnapiana tra modi di parlare formale e materiale [*formale e inhaltliche Redeweise*] non è tuttavia determinante per l'autocritica di Wittgenstein. Mentre Carnap *promuove* una metalogica in cui il modo di parlare formale sostituisce quello materiale, Wittgenstein *respinge* una metalogica di cui considera parte integrante anche quello che Carnap chiama «modo materiale» e non solo quello formale. Quindi, mentre secondo Carnap «fatto» appartiene al modo materiale e «proposizione» a quello formale, per Wittgenstein si tratta in entrambi i casi di parole metalogiche: lo sono «linguaggio» come «mondo», «proposizione» quanto «fatto» (o «pensiero») e «nome» non diversamente da «oggetto». Wittgenstein, quindi, non sostiene né una sintassi logica né un «modo formale» nel senso di Carnap e critica i concetti sintattici non meno di quelli semantici («mondo», «realtà», ecc.).

La sua critica quindi annovera tra le presunte parole metalogiche quelle che sembrano stare per la realtà nel suo complesso («realtà», «mondo», «esperienza») o comunque descritta in modo generale («fatto»), per i fondamenti mentali di senso e significato («senso», «significato», «comprensione»/«comprendere» [*verstehen*], «intendere» [*meinen*], «pensiero» ecc.)²⁶, per l'isomorfia di linguaggio e realtà («conformità alla realtà» [*Übereinstimmung mit der Wirklichkeit*]), per il linguaggio universale («linguaggio», «proposizione», «regola», «gioco») oppure per il calcolo universale («calcolo», «sistema di regole» e «matematica») o infine per una fondazione assoluta («fondamentale»).

Anche se non si tratta di parole speciali o 'proibite' (lo stesso Wittgenstein continua a usarne non poche), esse si prestano particolarmente ad essere frainde in senso metalogico. Wittgenstein attribuisce già a Frege l'idea che parole come «linguaggio» siano uniche e non come tutte le altre²⁷. Ma al centro della critica è soprattutto il *Tractatus*. Quando insiste che «mondo», «proposizione» o «significato» sono parole come

che sarebbe potuto non accadere; in senso assoluto invece ci si meraviglia dell'esistenza del 'mondo' come se alla parola 'mondo' corrispondesse qualcosa che potrebbe non esistere. «But it is nonsense to say that I wonder at the existence of the world, because I cannot imagine it not existing» (*A Lecture on Ethics*, pp. 41-42). Giacché l'uso assoluto delle parole è un abuso del linguaggio, ogni descrizione di tali esperienze è in definitiva un nonsenso. Come noto però non molto dopo la conferenza del 1929 Wittgenstein abbandona tale concezione sostenendo che il linguaggio non è una gabbia.

²⁵ In altro contesto Wittgenstein sostiene che riferirsi al «limite dell'intelletto umano» soddisfa «un anelito al trascendente» (MS 111, p. 134). Ai suoi occhi, questo in fondo vale anche per il modo in cui il suo stesso *Tractatus* parla di un limite del linguaggio.

²⁶ La critica della metalogica è fin dall'inizio una critica di concezioni «magiche», mentalistiche (o anche «pneumatiche», come più tardi le chiamerà Wittgenstein) della «comprensione». In una retrospettiva del 1937 si legge: «Sono stato a lungo tentato di credere che 'comprendere' fosse una parola metalogica» (MS 116, p. 16; cfr. S. S. HILMY, *The Later Wittgenstein*, cit., p. 42, che menziona anche il § 284 di *Zettel*). Secondo Hilmy, con questa dichiarazione di essere stato «a lungo» tentato di credere ad una concezione metalogica del «comprendere» Wittgenstein si riferisce al *Tractatus* e al cosiddetto «decennio perduto» (cfr. S. S. HILMY, *The Later Wittgenstein*, cit., p. 43). Ma questa «tentazione» caratterizza anche (e tanto più) il periodo che va dal 1929 ai primi mesi del 1931. Al più tardi durante l'anno Wittgenstein si accorge dell'equivoco: «Nemmeno la parola 'comprendere', l'espressione 'comprendere una proposizione' è metalogica, ma è un'espressione del linguaggio come qualsiasi altra» (MS 110, p. 189, vedi p. 191; poi MS 114, p. 2, 15; cfr. anche S. S. HILMY, *The Later Wittgenstein*, cit., p. 43).

²⁷ Cfr. *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge, 1932-1935*. From the Notes of Alice Ambrose and Margaret Macdonald edited by A. Ambrose, Oxford, Blackwell, 1982, p. 13.

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tutte le altre, Wittgenstein intende che non si tratta di «concetti formali» nel senso del *Tractatus* ovvero, come le chiama in seguito, di «parole metalogiche» (MS 116, p. 2). Secondo il *Tractatus* i concetti formali sono pseudo-concetti [*Scheinbegriffe*] (cfr. TLP 4.1272, p. 65). Le «pseudo-parole» corrispondenti sono prive di significato e, a differenza delle parole vere e proprie che stanno per concetti propriamente detti, non possono essere costituenti di proposizioni²⁸. Forme linguistiche in cui «pseudo-parole» quali appunto «mondo» vengono usate come se stessero per concetti reali costituiscono «insensate pseudoproposizioni» [*unsinnige Scheinsätze*] (cfr. TLP 4.1272, p. 65). Nel *Tractatus* quindi la parola «mondo» è completamente diversa da «albero» o «tavolo».

Un decennio dopo, Wittgenstein perviene quindi alla conclusione che il tentativo del *Tractatus* di eliminare la metafisica continua a condividere con quest'ultima (e con Frege) l'approccio «metalogico». La metalogica è il tentativo di creare un «super-ordine [*Über-Ordnung*] tra – per così dire – super-concetti». In questa osservazione delle *Ricerche Filosofiche*, la versione definitiva delle riflessioni del 1931, il termine «metalogica» non viene più usato; tuttavia, il prefisso «meta» viene semplicemente sostituito dall'equivalente prefisso «super» [*über*] cosicché il mito della metalogica viene formulato in maniera più colloquiale come la concezione di un «super-ordine tra – per così dire – super-concetti». «Mentre le parole 'linguaggio', 'esperienza', 'mondo', se hanno un impiego, ne devono avere uno così basso come le parole 'tavolo', 'lampada', 'porta'²⁹.

Una stesura preliminare aggiungeva che la singolare profondità dei problemi filosofici non è dovuta al presunto fatto che «si interrogano sull'essenza del linguaggio» bensì è caratteristica della loro natura di «trabocchetti linguistici» (MS 157a, p. 52r)³⁰. Che i problemi della filosofia siano confusioni linguistiche è naturalmente già l'idea centrale del *Tractatus* il quale a rigore nemmeno esclude che in un contesto non filosofico una parola come «mondo» abbia un significato come tutte le altre (come quando sta banalmente per il globo terraqueo) ovvero venga usata nel contesto di proposizioni dotate di senso. «Mondo» inteso come «globo terraqueo» però è un concetto reale, mentre «mondo» come viene usato nel *Tractatus* è un concetto formale ovvero, come si è detto, uno pseudo-concetto. Quando questa pseudo-parola viene usata come se stesse per un concetto propriamente detto il risultato è un nonsenso.

Secondo l'interpretazione standard, il *Tractatus* considera sì parole quali 'mondo' come prive di significato e i corrispondenti enunciati come insensati, ma attribuisce a questi ultimi una singolare prero-

²⁸ Secondo il *Tractatus* una costruzione come 'a è un oggetto' è insensata perché cerca di dire qualcosa che si può solo mostrare. Infatti, 'oggetto' è un concetto formale, non sta per una proprietà esterna e quindi non è un predicato. In un linguaggio formale corretto alle proprietà interne, ai concetti formali, non corrispondono nomi, ma variabili. Nel contesto di una proposizione i nomi stanno per oggetti; invece, le variabili non stanno per qualcosa, non hanno funzione di rappresentanza. È la variabile utilizzata nel simbolismo a mostrare se 'a' è un 'oggetto'. Invece la costruzione 'a è un oggetto' non fa parte del linguaggio perché la pseudo-parola 'oggetto' viene usata come se si avesse a che fare con un concetto reale e non con un concetto formale e quindi per tentare (invano) di dire quello che mostra l'uso della variabile. Della sintassi logica non si può parlare, essa si mostra nel simbolismo.

²⁹ L. WITTGENSTEIN, *Ricerche filosofiche*, Torino, Einaudi, 1974, § 97. Sul 'super-sistema' cfr. MS 121: 38v; BGM: 134; sulla 'metalogica' cfr. ad esempio MS 110, pp. 189, 201 e ss.

³⁰ «Mentre le parole 'mondo', 'linguaggio', 'esperienza', ecc. |cioè| i loro significati sono prosaiche come le parole porta, tavolo, lampada - e i nostri problemi hanno la loro (particolare/peculiare) profondità non perché si interrogano sull'essenza del linguaggio, ma perché sono trabocchetti linguistici» (MS 157a, p. 52r [cancellatura di Wittgenstein]; cfr. L. WITTGENSTEIN, *Philosophische Untersuchungen. Kritisch-genetische Edition*, hg. v. Joachim Schulte in Zusammenarbeit mit Heikki Nyman, E. v. Savigny u. Georg Henrik von Wright, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, 2001, p. 136, n. 11). Sulla questione se sia veramente possibile 'conservare' (MS 110, p. 177) la profondità della magia, come vorrebbe Wittgenstein, nonché sulla sua nuova concezione 'antropologica' e non più 'metalogica' della 'profondità' nelle osservazioni su Frazer del 1931, cfr. M. BRUSOTTI, *Wittgenstein, Frazer*, cit., p. 82 ss.

«Non ci sono considerazioni generali sul mondo e sul linguaggio».
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gativa: consentono di mostrare qualcosa che non si può dire. Le pseudo-proposizioni sono «connessioni di segni che sembrano dire qualcosa che può solo essere mostrato» (MS 101, p. 34r). Proprio per questo le proposizioni chiarificatrici del *Tractatus* sono insensate: si spingono infatti oltre i limiti del linguaggio cercando di 'dire' qualcosa che si può solamente 'mostrare'. Però, se il *Tractatus* sostiene che quello che non si è in grado di dire si riesce comunque a mostrarlo, è giustificata l'obiezione di Neurath secondo cui si deve sì tacere, ma non 'su' qualcosa. Come noto, la lettura 'risoluta' proposta da interpreti quali James Conant e Cora Diamond sotto l'insegna del *New Wittgenstein* nega invece che il *Tractatus* attribuisca ai suoi chiarimenti insensati la prerogativa di mostrare qualcosa che non si può dire. Essi sarebbero semplicemente insensati – senza dire *né mostrare* nulla. Non sarebbe il *Tractatus* a dover essere tacciato di 'ineffabilismo', ma esclusivamente i suoi interpreti tradizionali.

Il problema è che la lettura retrospettiva che lo stesso Wittgenstein dà della propria opera all'inizio degli anni Trenta va nella stessa direzione. Innanzitutto, non problematizza in un colpo solo e una volta per tutte la distinzione metalogica tra concetti propriamente detti e concetti formali. Anzi dapprima continua a sostenerla distinguendo concetti formali come «esperienza», i quali stanno per una forma logica (cfr. TS 213, § 107, p. 528), dai concetti quotidiani che stanno per delimitazioni banali. Concetti formali come «proposizione», «colore», «numero» vengono paragonati a «titoli di capitolo» [*Kapitelüberschriften*] di un libro nel cui testo essi altrimenti non compaiono: «Nei capitoli non devono comparire, ma lì viene data la struttura» (MS 108, p. 99). Nel capitolo intitolato al «colore», ad esempio, le proposizioni conteranno termini come «blu», «rosso» ecc. ma non il sortale «colore»³¹; però il capitolo può e deve contenere o il noto ottaedro dei colori o comunque una rappresentazione perspicua della 'struttura' grammaticale. La parola *Sprache*, che in tedesco significa sia «lingua» sia «linguaggio», viene poi paragonata al titolo non di un singolo capitolo, ma dell'intera grammatica ovvero della metalogica, cosa che Wittgenstein tuttavia ben presto negherà recisamente (cfr. MS 110, p. 65; cfr. anche MS 110, p. 201; MS 111, p. 169). Osservazioni come quella da cui è tratta la frase che dà il titolo al mio contributo lasciano infatti cadere la distinzione tra concetti propriamente detti e concetti formali e l'idea dello status speciale di questi ultimi.

Le parole 'mondo' [...] possono solo stare per delimitazioni banali come 'mangiare', 'riposare', ecc. | Perché anche se una parola del genere fosse il titolo della nostra grammatica – ad esempio la parola 'grammatica' – l'unica cosa che questo titolo dovrebbe fare sarebbe distinguere questo libro da altri libri. | Non ci sono considerazioni generali sul mondo e sul linguaggio. (MS 110, pp. 201-202)

Qui si è ormai affermata la concezione che anche i presunti concetti formali stanno solo per delimitazioni banali e non possono svolgere alcuna particolare funzione metalogica.

Il *Tractatus* attribuisce indebitamente a parole che sono «fatte in casa» come tutte le altre delle prerogative speciali (che esse in realtà non hanno) e lo fa proprio nel modo in cui considera come insensate le proposizioni corrispondenti. Nel 1931, oltre a revocare la distinzione metalogica tra concetti propria-

³¹ Si tratta della concezione risalente al *Tractatus* per cui, trattandosi di una relazione interna, la pseudo-proposizione «blu è un colore» è insensata.

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mente detti e concetti formali, Wittgenstein quindi attribuisce al *Tractatus* anche l'idea che questi ultimi consentano di mostrare qualcosa che non si può dire. Anche quest'idea viene ormai lasciata cadere. Così un'osservazione retrospettiva commenta in maniera alquanto criptica il fatto che nel *Tractatus* parole come 'mondo' non venissero usate come «parole concettuali» [*Begriffswörter*].

Che anche le parole 'mondo' e 'realtà' siano equivalenti alla parola 'proposizione' sembra rendere ancora più difficile la nostra domanda. / Ma è ridicolo cercare di delimitare il mondo, o la realtà. A chi li si dovrebbe contrapporre. E così è con il significato della parola 'fatto'. / Ma neanche si usano queste parole come parole concettuali. / *We are only concerned with what can be said*. Noi abbiamo a che fare solo con ciò che si può dire. / Cioè: per fortuna non possiamo ammettere alcuna delusione; non c'è nulla che possiamo tentare ma non possiamo realizzare (MS 111, p. 170).

Nella sua retrospettiva Wittgenstein si avvicina a riproporre l'argomento 'kantiano' secondo cui non si può parlare della totalità dei fatti (mondo, realtà) visto che si tratterebbe di un concetto non delimitabile non essendoci nulla al di fuori di essa. Ugualmente si potrebbe argomentare che non si può parlare del linguaggio inteso come totalità delle proposizioni. Già lo stesso *Tractatus* argomenta in questo stile (si pensi alle considerazioni della prefazione sulla delimitabilità del 'pensiero') senza però limitarsi a questo. Infatti, anche parole apparentemente più modeste come «fatto» (o «proposizione») stanno sullo stesso piano di parole che stanno per una totalità come «mondo» e «realtà» (o «linguaggio»). Tra i concetti formali (concetti apparenti) il *Tractatus* annovera esplicitamente «oggetto» e «fatto» (cfr. TLP 4.1272, pp. 66-67), ma non «mondo»; tuttavia, «mondo» e «realtà» non possono essere concetti reali se non lo sono «oggetto» e «fatto». Non solo «mondo» («realtà») e «linguaggio», ma anche «fatto» e «proposizione» ricorrono nelle non-proposizioni insensate di cui consiste la sedicente 'metalogica'. Nel *Tractatus* tutte queste parole finiscono col risultare prive di significato.

La retrospettiva insiste che nel *Tractatus* parole come «mondo», che potrebbero e dovrebbero stare solo per delimitazioni banali, in realtà non delimitano nulla. La conclusione è che non c'è nulla d'indicibile, ineffabile, che si possa tentare di dire. Non possiamo tentare di dire qualcosa che non si può dire (ma solo mostrare). Qui non ha senso parlare di un tentativo, nemmeno di un vano tentativo e quindi di una delusione. Quello che non si può dire – l'ineffabile del *Tractatus* – nel nuovo *opus in fieri* ormai non interessa più.

Quest'autocritica è importante perché ci mostra come già in una fase relativamente precoce della transizione lo stesso Wittgenstein legga il *Tractatus* in maniera molto diversa da come fanno molti suoi interpreti odierni. Già nel giugno del 1931 per lui diviene centrale ammettere ed evidenziare quel carattere 'magico' che secondo gli autori del *New Wittgenstein* il *Tractatus* invece proprio non avrebbe. In generale l'interpretazione avanzata da Conant e Diamond è estremamente difficile da conciliare con le critiche che lo stesso Wittgenstein formula del libro a partire dai primi anni Trenta³². Certo, l'autore non necessa-

³² Punto già notato da P. M. S. HACKER: *Was he trying to whistle it?*, in Alice Crary / Rupert Read (eds.), *The New Wittgenstein*. London-New York, Routledge, 2000, pp. 353-388, in part. p. 378 ss. Un bilancio più recente delle letture 'risolute' è JAMES CONANT / SILVER BRONZO, *Resolute Readings of the Tractatus*, in Hans-Johann Glock / John Hyman (ed.), *A Companion to Wittgenstein*., Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2017, pp. 175-194.

«Non ci sono considerazioni generali sul mondo e sul linguaggio».

Wittgenstein (1931) sulla 'metaloga' e la 'magia' del *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*

riamente è un'autorità assoluta: nella sua autocritica non sono affatto da escludere occasionali «vuoti di memoria», inesattezze o eccessive semplificazioni; bisogna poi senz'altro tener conto di una certa generale 'idiosincronicità' nell'approccio ermeneutico di Wittgenstein (non solo) al *Tractatus*. Però non c'è ragione di presumere che fraintenda sistematicamente il proprio libro. Invece, a partire dalle letture 'risolute' del *New Wittgenstein* il giudizio critico dello stesso Wittgenstein sul carattere ancora 'magico' del *Tractatus* risulta difficilmente comprensibile.

Il Wittgenstein intermedio vede ormai che l'ineffabile è un'illusione: l'essenza che si presume mostrare se stessa – ad esempio, la forma generale della proposizione – è in realtà un mito. Parlare del mondo e della sua essenza risulta ora una «magia», ma non per le stesse ragioni che conducevano il *Tractatus* a dichiarare tali delucidazioni insensate. Giacché il fatto che esse finissero col risultare tali non autorizza a concludere che il *Tractatus* non rimanesse coinvolto nella 'metaloga'. Al contrario. Il modo in cui il libro elimina la metaloga costituisce esso stesso una ennesima, seppur singolare, sorta di metaloga. Sostenendo che le (pseudo-)proposizioni che lo costituiscono finiscono per risultare insensate perché contengono (pseudo-)parole prive di significato, il *Tractatus* ribadiva il carattere peculiare ('metalogico') di parole come «mondo». È quindi proprio negando un senso ai propri 'chiarimenti' che 'mette fuori circuito' la magia magicamente ovvero la 'metaloga' metalogicamente, la metafisica metafisicamente. Il *Tractatus* non fuoriesce dal cerchio magico; piuttosto, una magia sostituisce l'altra. Il gesto finale era un nuovo incantesimo e costituiva un modo risolutamente magico di congedare la magia. Wittgenstein non intende quindi riproporre l'impostazione del *Tractatus*, ma al contrario smascherarne il carattere 'magico'.

Quale differenza sussiste tra le delucidazioni del *Tractatus* e i chiarimenti grammaticali del Wittgenstein intermedio? Questi ultimi sono spiegazioni di segni [*Zeichenerklärungen*], regole grammaticali, e come tali non vanno confusi con 'proposizioni metalogiche', nemmeno quando contengono le presunte parole metalogiche. Tali parole non vengono usate come concetti formali nel senso del *Tractatus* nemmeno quando vengono impiegate per operare distinzioni grammaticali. La grammatica filosofica non è una «metaloga» perché non è universale (cfr. TS 213, p. 2; cfr. TS 213, p. 13). Se ci fosse un unico linguaggio universale la sua grammatica sarebbe una metaloga. Però il linguaggio universale al singolare è un'illusione. Non esiste né come linguaggio oggetto né come metalinguaggio: quindi né come qualcosa di cui possa parlare (o no) né come qualcosa in cui si possa parlare delle singole lingue.

All'inizio Wittgenstein si limita a rifiutare l'uso metalogico di termini come «parola» e «proposizione». Già nel 1931 sostiene che la forma generale della proposizione non esiste. «Caratterizzare la proposizione completa è tanto impossibile quanto caratterizzare il fatto completo» (MS 110, p. 188). Tuttavia, al tempo delle sue osservazioni sulla metafisica come una sorta di magia, Wittgenstein non è ancora pervenuto al risultato che, contrariamente a quanto sostenuto nel *Tractatus*, le parole normali sono «vaghe», anche se proprio nella sua discussione del *Golden Bough* pone le premesse di tale intuizione. Solo, in seguito, il fatto che anche i presunti concetti «metalogici» facciano parte del linguaggio quotidiano significa che sono altrettanto «vaghi» quanto le altre parole. Il loro uso è confuso perché hanno i bordi sfocati e soprattutto perché sono 'concetti di famiglia'. Il fatto che «proposizione» sia una parola come qualsiasi altra significherebbe che tra ciò che chiamiamo così non sussistono nulla di più che mere «somiglianze di famiglia». Witt-

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genstein allora si rende conto che «parola» o «proposizione» sono concetti di famiglia e che tra «parola» e «proposizione» non sussiste un confine rigido e definito una volta per tutte.

Si può naturalmente parlare della grammatica delle singole lingue esistenti, ma non di un linguaggio universale. Si possono descrivere o impostare i singoli giochi linguistici, ma essi non sono metacalcoli, bensì solamente termini di paragone. Tali «oggetti di paragone» [*Vergleichsobjekte*] sono autonomi. Non giustificano o fondano il linguaggio né privano i linguaggi esistenti della loro autonomia. Una grammatica universale non sarebbe autonoma. Lo è invece la grammatica dei singoli linguaggi. Se questa è autonoma, non esiste una metalogica. Si può parlare dei singoli linguaggi, ma dicendo solo qualcosa di esteriore, quindi nulla di metalogico, superiore, magico. Le considerazioni metalogiche sull'isomorfia di mondo e linguaggio – sulla 'conformità' di linguaggio e realtà – cedono ormai il passo all'idea della loro autonomia.

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Descartes and theology. An overview¹

Abstract. L'articolo consiste in una presentazione generale della teologia cartesiana, intesa in senso ampio. In effetti, per Descartes la teologia coincide con quella che è solitamente chiamata "teologia rivelata" e il cui oggetto dipende dalla rivelazione. Tuttavia, egli sviluppa anche quella che in seguito sarà chiamata "teologia razionale" (o "teologia filosofica"). La prima parte dell'articolo tratta dei principali elementi della filosofia cartesiana classificabile come "teologia razionale". La seconda parte passa in rassegna gli aspetti più strettamente teologici del pensiero cartesiano, soffermandosi in particolare sul caso dell'Eucarestia.

Abstract. This article is a general presentation of Descartes's theology. In fact, according to Descartes, theology coincides with what we are accustomed to call «revealed theology», whose object is anything dependent on revelation. Nevertheless, he also develops what will later be called «rational theology» (or «philosophical theology»). The first part of this article deals with the main elements of Descartes' philosophy which can be classified as his «rational theology». The second part addresses the more strictly theological aspects of Descartes' thought.

Parole chiave: Teologia cartesiana/ Rivelazione/ Ragione e fede/ Teologia filosofica/ Eucarestia

Keywords: Cartesian Theology/ Revelation/ Reason and Faith/ Philosophical Theology/ Eucharist

Descartes has a strict definition of theology: «Anything dependent on revelation [...] is what I call theology in strict sense», AT I 144/B 30, p. 144/CSMK 22), whose aim is the achievement of salvation (AT VI 6, 8/BOp I 30, 32). So defined, theology actually coincides with what we are accustomed to call «revealed theology». Descartes has always declared the impossibility of a conflict between philosophy and theology (AT III 259/B 291, p. 1346), but also established a clear distinction between them: the revealed truths are above human reason (AT VI 8/BOp I 30), but the questions of God's existence and the immortality of the soul are, first of all, philosophical problems (AT VII 1/BOp I 680). The Cartesian separation between philosophy and theology turns out in a precise decision: not to deal with theology (AT I 153/B

¹ The following acronyms are used:

AT: RENÉ DESCARTES, *Œuvres de Descartes* (ed. Charles Adam and Paul Tannery; rev. ed. Joseph Beaudet et alii; 11 vols.; Paris, Vrin, 1964–1974).

B = René Descartes. *Tutte le lettere 1619-1650*, a cura di G. Belgioioso, con la collaborazione di I. Agostini, F. Marrone, F. A. Meschini, M. Savini e di J.-R. Armogathe, Bompiani, Milano, 2ª ed. 2009

BOp I = René Descartes. *Opere 1637-1649*, a cura di G. Belgioioso, con la collaborazione di I. Agostini, F. Marrone, M. Savini, Bompiani, Milano, 2009

BOp II = René Descartes. *Opere postume. 1650-2009*, a cura di G. Belgioioso, con la collaborazione di I. Agostini, F. Marrone, M. Savini, Bompiani, Milano, 2009

CSM: RENÉ DESCARTES, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vols. 1–2 (ed. and trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch; Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984–1985)

CSMK: RENÉ DESCARTES, *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes*, vol. 3: *The Correspondence* (ed. and trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, Dugald Murdoch, and Anthony Kenny; Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991)

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32, p. 152; AT IV 119/B 454, p. 1914; AT IV 250/B 506, p. 2040; AT VII 598/BOp I 1468), unless for his own personal education (AT VII 429/BOp I 1220). By his separation, Descartes introduces an aptitude that characterizes all the Modern Era², though this innovation must be related to its historical contest: at the beginning of the seventeenth century, speculative theology, surrounded by mystical and positive theology, experienced a crisis³. Descartes is perfectly aware of this: Scholastic theology, embroiled in never-ending disputes, must be banned in favour of a «simple theology» (AT V 176/BOp II 1300).

However, Descartes develops what will later be called «rational theology»⁴ (or «philosophical theology»⁵), whose object he denominates «theological» (AT I 144/B 30, p. 144), though pointing out that this term is ambiguous (AT VIII-2 164/BOp I 1660): for these questions are rather «metaphysical» and «to be examined by human reason» (AT I 144/B 30, p. 144). It is possible that it was towards the elaboration of a rational theology that Cardinal Pierre Bérulle (1575-1629), in 1628, had encouraged him⁶, but it is certain that, in 1629 (probably independently from Bérulle's requests⁷), Descartes works on a «petit Traité de Métaphysique» aiming to prove the existence of God and the immortality of the soul (AT I 182/B 36, p. 178). This aim is also mentioned in the subtitle of the *Meditationes de philosophia prima* (1641), «in which is demonstrated the existence of God and the immortality of the soul». Moreover, in dedicating the *Meditationes* to the Faculty of Theology of the Sorbonne, Descartes plays the role of the Christian philosopher who defends God's cause (*Epistola dedicatoria*), as the Second Objectors and Antoine Arnauld (1612-1694) will highlight (AT VII 128, 197/BOp I 848, 944).

Moreover, in spite of his separation between philosophy and theology, Descartes actually dealt with revealed theology. This was inevitable: as the Sixth Objectors will observe, the Christian philosopher (as Descartes claims to be) *must* be ready to enter the field of Theology to answer the difficulties made by the non-believers (AT VII 416/BOp I 1204); furthermore, Descartes's innovation in Philosophy actually crossed theological questions on several occasions.

I am going to consider in the first part of this article the main elements of Descartes' philosophy which can be classified as his «rational theology». In the second part, I will address the more strictly theological aspects of Descartes' thought.

² JEAN-CRISTOPHE BARDOUT, JEAN-LUC MARION, *Philosophie cartésienne et théologie: Distinguer pour mieux unir?*, in *Philosophie et théologie à l'époque moderne, Anthologie tome III*, éd. par J.-C. Bardout, Paris, Cerf, 2010, pp. 199-217.

³ HENRI GOUHIER, *La crise de la théologie au temps de Descartes*, in Id., *La pensée religieuse de Descartes*, Paris, Vrin, 2^{ème} éd. (revue et complétée) 1972, pp. 279-309. Gouhier's masterful reconstruction of the historical context is still accepted nowadays: see the recent work by AURÉLIEN CHUKURIAN, *Descartes et le christianisme. L'approche philosophique de l'eucharistie*. Paris, Garnier, 2019, pp. 15-16.

⁴ H. GOUHIER, *La pensée religieuse*, cit., p. 232; VINCENT CARRAUD, *Descartes*, in *Dictionnaire critique de théologie*, dir. J.-Y. Lacoste, Paris, PUF, 2^{ème} éd. 1988.

⁵ IGOR AGOSTINI, *Descartes' Philosophical Theology*, in *The Oxford Handbook of Descartes and Cartesianism*, ed. by Steve Nadler, Tad M. Schmaltz, and Delphine Antoine-Mahut, Oxford, UP, 2019, pp. 209-225.

⁶ See STEPHEN MENN, *Descartes and Augustine*, Cambridge, UP, 1998, p. 49.

⁷ H. GOUHIER, *La pensée religieuse*, cit., p. 61. On the «Petit traité» see, now, VINCENT CARRAUD - GILLES OLIVO, *Étude du bon sens. La recherche de la vérité. Et autres écrits de jeunesse (1616-1631)*, Paris, PUF, 2013, pp. 217-227.

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I. Descartes rational Theology

1. God

Unlike in the Scholastic treatises, the *Meditationes* do not contain a question on the existence of God: what is ordinarily called the first Cartesian proof of God's existence does not constitute the answer to the question: «Does God exist?». Such a question is posed as a kind of *occasional* opportunity («as soon as the opportunity [*occasio*] arises»: AT VII 36/BOP I 728/CSM II 25; «it is pleasing to enquire»: AT VII 47/ mine); «a possible basis for another argument to prove the existence of God»: AT VII 65/BOP I 742/CSM II.45), and not required by the precepts of order, which imposes, after the discovery of the *ego*, an analysis of the *cogitationes* (AT VII 36/BOP I 728). Descartes' proof answers another question: does a thing «beyond myself» exist (AT VII 42/BOP I 736) ? or more precisely, do «some of the things of which I possess ideas» exist (AT VII 40//BOP I 730/CSM II 27)?

This explains why the core of Descartes' three demonstrations of God – two *a posteriori* (in the Third Meditation: AT VII 40-49, 49-51//BOP I 732-744, 744-746) and one *a priori* (in the Fifth Meditation: AT VII 65-68/BOP I 766-770) – are all grounded on the doctrine that we have a positive (1) and a clear and distinct (2) idea of God. 1) Far from being formed through the negation of the finite, the idea of God as *ens summe perfectum et infinitum* (AT VII 46/BOP I 740⁸) is a «true idea [*vera idea*]», insofar as it contains more objective reality than the idea of any finite thing. Consequently, the perception of the infinite (God) is in some way prior to my perception of the finite (AT VII 45/BOP I 738-740). 2) This is a «true idea [*idea vera*]», actually one «true in the highest degree» [*maxime vera*], because it is utterly clear and distinct (*maxime clare et distincta*) and contains more objective reality in itself than any other idea. Indeed, whatever is clearly and distinctly perceived as being real and true, and implying any perfection, is wholly contained in it. Far from limiting the clearness and distinction of the idea of God, the fact that God is incomprehensible confirms it because incomprehensibility is contained in the *ratio* itself of the infinite. And it is enough that I understand and judge that all things that I clearly perceive and know to imply some perfections, and perhaps (*forte*) innumerable others of which I am ignorant, are in God formally or eminently to make the idea that I have of God the truest and most clear and distinct of all my ideas (AT VII 46-47/BOP I 740/742).

This doctrine radically breaks with the tradition of the negative theology and provoked many objections. In replying to Caterus – who claimed to Aquinas's authority (AT VII 96/BOP I 808) – and then constantly in the *Responsiones*, Descartes distinguishes between *comprehendere* and *intelligere*: the infinite *qua* infinite can in no way be comprehended, but it can be understood (AT VII 112, 140, 367-368/BOP I 828, 866, 1170). However, in spite of Descartes' own explanation, the argument used to «anticipate» [*prævenire*] (AT VII 112/BOP I 828) this objection in the Third Meditation is quite different. Here, if there

⁸ Descartes's argument supposes the identity between infinity and perfection in the notion of God as *ens summe perfectum et infinitum*. *Contra*, Jean-Luc Marion argued that infinity and perfection express two opposite determinations of Descartes's definition of God: see *Sur le prisme métaphysique de Descartes. Constitution et limites de l'onto-théo-logie dans la pensée cartésienne*, Paris, PUF, 1986, p. 276 ff. On Descartes's infinite, see also the recent book by DAN ARBIB, *Descartes, la métaphysique et l'infini*, Paris, Vrin, 2017.

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are some limitations affecting our knowledge of God, they do not come from incomprehensibility, but from its intelligibility: there are in God, perhaps [*forte*], innumerable things that I cannot even touch (*atingere*) by my thought and of which I am ignorant.

In the Third Meditation, the possibility is left opened of an incomplete intelligibility of God. This explains the textual fact that Descartes never affirms in the six Meditations that the objective reality of the idea of God is «infinite» (as a deeply rooted interpretation is accustomed to claim), but only that it contains more reality (*plus realitatis*: AT VII 40, 45, 46/BOp I 734, 740) than any other idea. In claiming so much, the Third Meditation attempts the difficult task of balancing two opposing demands: a) not to claim an infinite knowledge of God; b) to guarantee a sufficient ground for the demonstration of God's existence, which requires that the idea of God contains *more* reality than the idea of finite things. In the *Responsiones*, Descartes tries to resolve the difficulties advanced by the objectors against the unstable balance of these two demands. The solutions he offers are not always coherent with one another or with the Third Meditation, though he will never abandon the basic point that we have a clear and distinct idea of God⁹.

This basic point determines a modification of the structure of traditional proofs of God's existence for many respects. To begin with, Descartes reverses the traditional order for the demonstration of God's existence: contrary to Aquinas, the *an est* question follows the *quid est* question (AT VII 107-108/BOp I 820-822). In affirming so much, Descartes claims the authority of «some theologians» (AT III 273/B 293, p. 1356) that can be perhaps identified with Henry of Ghent, Duns Scot, Suárez¹⁰ and, especially, with Thomas De Vio 'Cajetan' (1469-1534¹¹). However, Descartes not only affirms the precedence of the *quid est* question: his unprecedented claim is that the idea of God «contains the essence [*quid sit*] of God» (AT VII 107/BOp I 822/CSM II 78) and his «true definition [*vera definitio*]» (AT III 383/B 315, p. 1466). This was for him a mandatory condition for demonstrating God's existence: «It is this same idea which shows me not just that I have a cause, but that this cause contains every perfection, and hence that it is God» (AT VII 107-108/BOp I 822/CSM II 78; see also AT III 112/ B 454, p. 1908). In this way, Descartes was offering his own solution to the crisis of the demonstrations that, still in his time, were considered as the most authoritative model of a *posteriori* demonstration of God's existence, that is, Aquinas's Five Ways, accused of not being capable of demonstrating the identity of the first cause with God. This difficulty had a long history that can be traced back at least to Peter Auriol and William of Ockham, but the crucial fact

⁹ See, on this, I. AGOSTINI, *L'idea di Dio in Descartes, dalle Meditationes alle Responsiones*, Florence, Le Monnier, 2010, pp. 60-68 and 131-259. This interpretation has been recently discussed by J.-L. MARION *L'infini, dépli de la finitude*, in *Questions cartésiennes III: Descartes sous le masque du cartésianisme*, Paris, PUF, 2021, pp. 131-173, respectively at pp. 132 and 148, n. 2. On Marion's reply, and more generally on Levinas's understanding of the idea of the infinite in Descartes, see, now, I. AGOSTINI, *Thinking the infinite. On the alleged infinity of the objective reality of the idea of God in Descartes*, to be published on in the first 2022 issue of «Rivista di storia della filosofia».

¹⁰ HENRICUS GANDAVENSIS, *Summa quaestionum ordinariam theologiae*, Parisiis, Ascensius, 1520, XXII, 5, 134C; JOHANNES DUNS SCOTUS, *In Sent.*, I, 3, 1, in *Opera omnia*, ed. C. Balić et al., Città del Vaticano, Typis Polyglottis Vaticanis, 1950-, vol. III, p. 6; F. SUÁREZ, *Disputationes metaphysicae*, XXIX, 1, 41, in *Opera omnia*, Parisiis, apud L. Vivès, vol. XXVI, p. 33b. Cfr. EMANUELA SCRIBANO, *L'esistenza di Dio: Storia della prova ontologica da Descartes a Kant*. Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1994, pp. 102-103 e *Angeli e Beati: Modelli di conoscenza da Tommaso a Spinoza*, ivi, 2006, pp. 125-126; SERGIO LANDUCCI, *I filosofi e Dio*, ivi, 2006, pp. 141-147.

¹¹ THOMAS DE VIO Cajetanus, *Commentaria in primam partem Summae theologiae* (1507), I, 2, 2, n. 3, in THOMAS AQUINAS, *Opera omnia*, ed. Leonina, Romae-, Typographia polyglotta-, 1882-, vol. IV, p. 30b. See I. AGOSTINI, *Premières objections et Réponses*, in *Les Méditations métaphysiques, objections et réponses de Descartes. Un Commentaire*, éd. par D. Arbib, Paris, Vrin, 2019, pp. 201-223: 212.

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is that at the beginning of the sixteenth century Cajetan let it penetrate into the heart of Thomism itself. Descartes was certainly somehow familiar with this crisis, that he also mentions in the *Epistola ad Voëtium* (AT VIII B-2 176). Moreover, he explicitly confronted the key difficulty when Caterus addressed it to him: a thing could be uncaused and, at the same time, finite (AT VII 95/BOp I 806¹²). Descartes's solution implies a transformation of the traditional *a posteriori* structure of Aquinas's proofs: here, the effect replaces the definition (*quid est*) of the cause and only expresses God's *quid nominis*; in Descartes, the idea of God, though still an effect, nevertheless contains God's *quid est*, which, according to Aquinas, constitutes the point of departure of an *a priori* demonstration¹³.

The second proof has an even deeper *a priori* structure. The possibility that the *ego* comes from itself is excluded not because of «the common Scholastic axiom» (AT III 336/B 305, p. 1426) that makes it impossible for a thing to come from itself, but because the *ego* does not have the capacity to give itself all the perfections contained in the idea of God. The possibility is therefore open for a being that comes from itself and gives itself all the perfections, and this is God (AT VII 48/BOp I 742-744). The argument is developed in the *Primæ responsiones*: it is self-evident that whatever exists derives its existence either from a cause or from itself as well as from a cause (*tanquam a causa*) (AT VII 112/BOp I 828); this is the case with God, in which exists «such great and inexhaustible power [*tanta et tam inexhausta potentia*] that he never required the assistance of anything else in order to exist [...] and does not require any assistance for its conservation, so that he is, in a way [*quodammodo*] its own cause [*sui causa*] [...] not in a negative sense [*negative*], but in an absolutely positive sense [*positive*]» (AT VII 109-110/BOp I 822-824/CSMK 78-80 modified¹⁴). Descartes can therefore resolve, for his second proof as well, the classic difficulty repeated by Caterus: the first cause is God not because he is uncaused but because he is cause of himself. In this way, the *a posteriori* proof reveals an inner *a priori* structure, because the *sui causa* implies the containment of the existence in the essence of God, and this containment constitutes the fundament of the *a priori* proof.

Indeed, the proof of the Fifth Meditation is a *propter quid* demonstration (or *ex causis*) in the sense of Aristotle's *Posterior Analytics*, to which Descartes explicitly refers (AT III 383/B 316, p. 383), that moves from the *nature* of the thing itself (AT VII 65/BOp I 766¹⁵). This explains why Descartes refuses Caterus' assimilation of his proof to Anselm's argument criticized by Aquinas in his *Summa theologiæ* (I.2.1), claiming that his own argument is not a *per se nota* proposition, but a true *a priori* demonstration, because it starts from God's «true and immutable nature, or essence, or form [*vera et immutabilis natura, sive essentia, sive forma*]» (AT VII 115/B 315, p. 1466). Descartes relates his own proof to the true *a priori* demonstration discussed by Aquinas in the following article of the *Summa theologiæ* (I.2.2¹⁶) and rejected both in the *De potentia* (7.3.) and in the *Summa contra gentiles* (I.25).

¹² I. AGOSTINI, *L'infinità di Dio: Il dibattito da Suárez a Caterus. 1597–1641*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 2008, pp. 306-310.

¹³ I. AGOSTINI, *Descartes' Philosophical Theology*, cit., p. 217.

¹⁴ For a detailed study of *sui causa* in Descartes, see V. CARRAUD, *Causa sive ratio. La raison de la cause de Suárez à Leibniz*, Paris, PUF, 2002, pp. 66-287 and 295-302.

¹⁵ E. SCRIBANO, *La conoscenza di Dio nelle lettere di Descartes*, in *La Biografia Intellettuale di René Descartes attraverso la Correspondance*, a cura di J.-R. Armogathe, G. Belgioioso, C. Vinti, Napoli, Vivarium, 1999, pp. 433-454.

¹⁶ Descartes refers explicitly to article 2, that was not at all mentioned by Caterus. This proves that Descartes is composing the *Primæ responsiones* with a copy of the *Summa theologiæ* in his hands.

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The role of the *sui causa* in the *a priori* proof becomes explicit in the *Primæ responsiones*, where the proof is grounded on the immense power (*immensa potentia*) of the supremely powerful being. We cannot think of its existence as possible without also recognizing that it can exist by its own power (*propria sua vi*) (AT VII 119/BOp I 836). However, Descartes concedes to Arnauld that nothing can give itself existence in the strict sense usually implied by the proper meaning of the term «efficient cause», because this is a contradiction (AT VII 240/BOp I 1002). The expression *sui causa* «simply means that the inexhaustible power of God is the cause or reason [*causa sive ratio*] for his not needing a cause» (AT VII 236/BOp I 998/CSM II 165), and it is only by analogy (*per analogiam*; AT VII 240/BOp I 1002) that God's essence can be related to efficient causality (AT VII 241). The power of God is therefore the «formal cause» or reason derived from God's essence (*causa formalis, sive ratio ab essentia Dei petita*), «in virtue of which God needs no cause to exist or to be conserved» (AT VII 236/BOp I 998/CSM II 165, modified) and God comes from Himself as a formal cause (*tanquam a causa formali*) (AT VII 238/BOp I 1000).

Descartes's *a priori* proof marks the last and most radical step of a debate, begun in early-modern Scholasticism, on the possibility, claimed by some theologians against the orthodox Thomistic doctrine, of a *priori quoad nos* demonstration of God's existence¹⁷. Descartes has not been the first to propose an *a priori* demonstration of God's existence, but the first in claiming that this is an *a priori* demonstration *stricto sensu*, that perfectly conforms to the model of the *Posterior Analytics*, which is the *modus demonstrandi omnium perfectissimus* (AT III 83, B 315, p. 1466). In order to achieve this point, Descartes overcomes the two restrictions that had led the advocates of the *a priori* demonstration to consider such a proof as a merely *quoad nos* demonstration: the impossibility of knowledge of God's essence and the impossibility of a true and real cause in God.

This idea of God as a supremely powerful being constitutes the distinctive trait of this new conception of God, which also emerges from the theory formulated by Descartes in three famous letters to Marin Mersenne (1588-1648) in 1630 and constantly in his correspondence, but never exposed in his published writings, except in the *Quintæ* and *Sextæ responsiones* (AT VII 380, 431-433, 435-436/BOp I 1184-1186, 1224-1226, 1228¹⁸). According to this theory, all the truth traditionally qualified as eternal – «have been laid down by God and depend on him entirely no less than the rest of the creatures» (AT I 145/B 30, p. 146/CSMK 23). They are true or possible because God knows them as true or possible (AT I 148/B 31, p. 150), and they have been established «by the same kind of causality as he created all things, that is to say, as their efficient and total cause», for God «is the author of the essence of created things no less than of their existence; and this essence is nothing other than the eternal truths» (AT I 152//B 32, p. 152/CSMK 25). Every form of theological exemplarism is here set aside: in God, to wish and to create are one thing only, the one not preceding the other one *ne quidem ratione*; accordingly, it does not exist anymore in the

¹⁷ About this history, see the second part of I. AGOSTINI, *La démonstration de l'existence de Dieu: Les conclusions des cinq voies de Thomas d'Aquin et la preuve a priori dans le thomisme du XVIIe siècle*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2016.

¹⁸ On this theory, see ÉTIENNE GILSON, *La liberté chez Descartes et la Théologie*, Paris, Alcan, 1913, pp. 5-210; S. LANDUCCI, *La teoria della creazione delle verità eterne*, in ID., *La teodicea nell'età cartesiana*, Napoli, Bibliopolis, 1986, pp. 127-193; J.-L. MARION, *Sur la théologie blanche de Descartes: Analogie, création des vérités éternelles et fondement*, Paris, PUF, 1986.

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divine intellect a region of eternal truths which would constitute the model and the aim of the creation. This theory constitutes the conceptual foundation of the Fourth Meditation's dismissal of finalism: the final causes have no function at all because it would be temerarious to assign some ends to God¹⁹.

This elimination of a domain of uncreated truths explains why the scholars' attempts to identify a connection between the *sui causa* and the creation of the eternal truths²⁰ have always been unsatisfactory. The theory of the creation of the eternal truths does not imply at all a God producing himself, precisely because it claims the created nature of the so-called eternal truths; it is in this sense that Descartes' answer in the letter to Mersenne of May 27th, 1630 on the generation of the Word must be interpreted (AT I 150/B 31, p. 150). It is certain, nevertheless, that the two doctrines of the creation of the eternal truths and of the *sui causa* are both grounded on a new conception of God as a supremely powerful being. The divine power is no more an operational attribute of God, as in the tradition, but it constitutes the divine essence itself, as it was implicit also in the second proof of the Third Meditation.

The very fact that the question of the existence of God constitutes nothing more than an *occasional* opportunity explains the absence of the theory of the creation of the eternal truths in the *Meditationes*, in spite of the efforts of some interpreters trying to retrace an implicit presence²¹. The theory does not have an essential place within the order of its reasons²²; but this non-essential place must indeed be explained by the fact that, for Descartes, God constitutes an object of metaphysics only insofar as it permits to answer the question of the existence of a being of which I possess the idea and not the question «*An sit Deus?*».

2. Immortality of the Soul

In the *Epistola dedicatoria*, Descartes responds to the call of the Lateran Council (in 1513) for Christian philosophers to try to prove by natural reason that the soul does not die with the body: faith is sufficient for believers, but unbelievers require rational arguments for immortality (AT VII 3/BOp I 682). In spite of this and the title of the First Edition, however, the *Meditationes* do not present any reference to the immortality of the soul, as the second objectors will point out (AT VII 128/BOp I 848; see also III 266/B 292, p. 1352²³). Descartes will answer through an addition to the *Synopsis*: what is required to prove the immortality of the soul is the knowledge that the natures of mind and body are, in some way, opposite; such a knowledge, indeed, is enough to prove that the corruption of the body does not imply the destruction of

¹⁹ The rejection of finalism, however, must be understood as a denial of the possibility of knowing the ends of God, and not a denial of their existence. See MAURICE DE WULF, *Séance du 19 Mars 1914. La doctrine cartésienne de la liberté et la théologie*, «Bulletin de la société française de Philosophie», XIV (1914), pp. 207-258. Moreover, as concerns the mind-body union, Descartes endorses the finalism (*Meditationes*, VI, AT VII 83-89/BOp I 790-798).

²⁰ See, for instance, É. GILSON, *Études sur le rôle de la pensée médiévale dans la formation du système cartésien*, Paris, Vrin, 1930, p. 231.

²¹ See, especially, J.-L. MARION, *Sur la théologie blanche*, cit., pp. 9-23; 231 ff.

²² MARTIAL GUEROUULT, *Descartes seon l'ordre des raisons*, 2 vols, Paris, Aubier, 1953, vol. I, p. 24.

²³ THEODOR EBERT, *Immortalitas oder Immaterialitas. Sum Undertitel von Descartes' Meditationen*, in «Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie», LXXIV (1992), pp. 180-202, argues that *immortalitas* in the subtitle was a misprint for *immaterialitas* (this is actually the old interpretation by Adrien Baillet). *Contra*, MATTHIJS VAN OTEGEM, *A Bibliography of the Works of Descartes (1637-1704)*, 2 vols, Utrecht, Zenon, 2002, vol. 1, p. 158.

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the mind. Nevertheless, this is not sufficient to demonstrate the immortality itself because other premises are still required in order to prove that the soul is immortal, and they depend on the whole of Physics (AT VII 13-15/BOp I 694-696). Descartes will recognize explicitly that it does not follow from the fact that the soul is distinct from the body that it is immortal, since it could still be claimed that God gave it such a nature that its duration comes to an end simultaneously with the end of the body's life; nevertheless, it remains that the mind, in so far as it can be known by natural philosophy, is immortal (AT VII 153-155/BOp I 882-884); and this is all that Religion requires (AT III 266/B 292, p. 1352).

Descartes, moreover, is persuaded that he has been the only one to offer, by demonstrating the real distinction between mind and body, an incontrovertible foundation to the demonstration of the immortality of the soul, damaged by the Aristotelian doctrine of the soul as form of the body: «One cannot think of any opinion on this subject that is more congenial to theology» (AT III 503/B 343, p. 1598/CSM II 208).

In the title of the second edition, however, all references to immortality will disappear²⁴.

3. Evil

Though only indirectly, Descartes addresses in his *Meditationes* the problem of evil at least twice: in the Fourth and in the Sixth meditation. The Fourth Meditation is original in considering the error as a form of evil, but it remains perfectly traditional in claiming that this sort of epistemological evil in which error consists is a privation (AT VII 55/BOp I 752). In the Sixth Meditation, dealing with that form of evil that Leibniz will call «physical evil», Descartes offers a much more original account: in spite of the immense goodness of God, the nature of the man, as composed by mind and body, can be fallacious (AT VII 84, 88/BOp I 792, 796); the hydroptic man, for example, is affected by a real error of nature (*verus error naturæ*) (AT VII 85/BOp I 794). As will be pointed out by Pierre Poiret (1646-1717), in the Sixth Meditation evil is not a simple privation, but a true reality²⁵. It is here that the origins of Malebranche's radical doctrine of evil must be traced back²⁶.

II. Descartes and revealed Theology

Descartes actually crossed theological questions on many occasions: a) As soon as he received the news of the condemnation of Galilei, he abandoned the project of publishing *Le Monde*, where he endorsed the Copernicanism, and he even thought to set the manuscript on fire (AT I 270-271/B 60, p. 248) ;

²⁴ More on this topic in C.F. FOWLER, *Descartes on the Human Soul: Philosophy and the Demands of Christian Doctrine*, Dordrecht, Kluwer, 1999.

²⁵ PIERRE POIRET, *Cogitationum Rationalium de Deo, Anima, et Malo Libri Quatuor* [...]. *Editio Tertia, et aucta*, Amstelodami, apud Joannem Pauli, 1715, III, 3, 3, p. 576 ff. See GIANLUCA MORI *Tra Descartes e Bayle: Poiret e la teodicea*, Bologna, Il mulino, 1990

²⁶ S. LANDUCCI, *Da Descartes a Bayle*, in *La teodicea*, cit., 17-68. On the Sixth Meditation account of evil, see also LEX NEWMAN, *Error, theodicies of*, in *The Cambridge Descartes Lexicon*, ed. by L. Nolan, Cambridge, UP, 2005, pp. 240-246: 243-245.

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b) Arnauld titles a section of his *Objectiones* «*De iis quæ Theologos morari possunt*» (AT VII 214/BOp I 970); c) Mersenne repeatedly urged Descartes on theological questions, largely debated in his circle, both in the correspondence and in the *Secundæ* and *Sextæ responsiones*²⁷; d) The conflict with theology was also one of the crucial points of the crisis of Leiden and Utrecht: according to the *Judicium Academiae Ultrajectinae*, influenced by the Dutch Calvinist theologian Gjsibert Voëtius (1589-1676), from Descartes' philosophy follow «opinions which are false and absurd, and that contrast with the orthodox theology» (AT VII 592, 593, VIII-2 34; BOp I 1462, 1528). Descartes responds to Voëtius's attack in his *Epistola ad Dinet*, published in the second edition of the *Meditationes* (1642). The result was the *Admiranda methodus* (1643)²⁸, a violent pamphlet by Voëtius' sodal Martin Schoock (1614–1669), based in part on disputations held by Schoock in Groningen and in part on materials provided by Voëtius, who was in fact the real author of the book²⁹, as Descartes will denounce in his monumental reply, the *Epistola ad Voëtium* (1643) ; e) After Descartes' death, and certainly beyond his intentions, the Cartesian philosophy influenced the rationalistic interpretation of his writings proposed in 1653 by Daniel Lipstorp (1631-1684) in his *Copernicus redivivus* (1653), and then by Christoph Wittich (1625-1687) and Lambert Van Velthuysen (1622-1685). After the publication of the *Philosophiæ Sacræ Scripturæ Interpres* (1666) by Lodewijck Meyer (1629-1685), this controversy will be addressed in *De abusu philosophiæ cartesianæ* (1670) by Samuel Desmarts (1599-1673). Facing the crossroad of his philosophy in theological problems, Descartes answered by arguing the orthodoxy of his philosophy and supporting his arguments both with the Biblical Exegesis³⁰ and the use of Councils. As concerns the two particular cases of the Eucharist and the *Genesis*, Descartes proposed an explanation, according to his philosophical principles, claiming not only the agreement of his own philosophy with theology, but also its superiority compared to Aristotle's philosophy, to which the official theology is «enslaved» (AT I 85/B 25, p. 100). Descartes went as far as to propose contributing to a «course» of theology if Mersenne would extract it from his writings (AT III 296/B 301, p. 1392). It is decisive to understand that what he proposes is actually a philosophical explanation (*philosophico more*, AT VII 252/BOp I 1018). Nevertheless, in so far as this explanation concerns theological questions and makes use of theological arguments, it is also theological – a *Theologia cartesiana*, as it was called by Peter van Mastricht (1630-1706) and then by a prominent scholar³¹.

Here I will list the points in which Cartesian philosophy crossed theological questions; then, I will analyze his explication of the Eucharist in greater detail. Finally, I will sketch a rough picture of the theological friction produced by the many innovations introduced by Descartes in mentioning the main condemnations of the Cartesian philosophy.

²⁷ On Mersenne's theological interest in Descartes' Metaphysics, see CLAUDIO BUCCOLINI, *Mersenne : Questioning Descartes*, in *The Oxford Handbook of Descartes and Cartesianism*, cit., pp. 271-286: 281-285.

²⁸ MARTEN SCHOOCK, *Admiranda Methodus Novæ Philosophiæ Renati Des Cartes*, Ultrajecti, Joa. van Wæsberge, 1643.

²⁹ As definitely stated by ERIK JAN BOS, *Epistolarium voetianum*, in *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*, LXXVIII, 1998.

³⁰ See V. CARRAUD, *Descartes et la Bible*, in *Le Grand siècle et la Bible*, dir. J.-R. Armogathe, Paris, Beauchesne, 1989, pp. 277-291 and *Les références scripturaires du corpus cartésien*, «Bulletin cartésien» XVIII / «Archives de philosophie», LIII, 1990, pp. 11-21

³¹ JEAN-ROBERT ARMOGATHE, *Theologia Cartesianana. L'explication physique de l'Eucharistie chez Descartes et Dom Robert Desgabets*, Nijhoff, La Haye, 1977.

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1. Levels of Intersection

– Doubt. Arnauld observed that Descartes' «somewhat free style of philosophizing» (AT VII 215/BOp I 970/CSM II 151), that calls everything into doubt, may cause offence to someone. Arnauld suggests Descartes to point out that doubt concerns matters of science and not matters of faith and conduct of life (AT VII 216/BOp I 970), and Descartes follows this suggestion (AT VII 15/BOp I 698). The incompatibility of doubt with the theology arises from the fact that theology requires firm principles, as Desmarets³² will explain later. The fact that doubt concerned the existence of God will also be at the origin of the accusation of *atheism*. Doubt will be mentioned also in the Parisian condemnation of 1691 and the Jesuit list of 1706.

– The hypothesis of God as deceiver. This hypothesis caused the accusation of blasphemy from the theologian from Leiden, Jacob Revius (1586-1658), in some disputations held in Leiden in 1647, between February 4 and March 20. Descartes defended himself in claiming to have distinguished between God as the source of the Truth (*Fons veritatis*) from the Malicious Demon (AT V 5-8/B 611, p. 2426-2430). This same doctrine that God cannot be a deceiver had been challenged as theologically controversial by the Second Objectors, who claimed both the authority of Gabriel Biel and Gregory of Rimini³³ and the many passages of the Holy Scripture, in which God asserts many things that did not happen, such as when he claims – through the Prophet – that Niniveth will be destroyed (*Es* 4, 21 e 7,3) (AT VII 125/BOp I 844-846). The same objection will be again advanced in the *Sextæ objectiones* (AT VII 415-416/BOp I 1202-1204).

– The detachment from the senses. The ideal of a clear and distinct knowledge independent of the senses, in particular of the axioms (culminating in the statement of an intuitive knowledge of the existence of God), puts the man in the state of being independent of the sensorial conditions, which is in contrast with the *pietas* and teaching of the Holy Scripture. It is here that Schoock's accusation of *enthusiasm* originates³⁴.

– The existence of God. Schoock and Voëtius accused Descartes of aiming to reject all the traditional proofs of God's existence and to replace them with new demonstrations, which are far from being strong: in the *Epistola dedicatoria*, Descartes qualifies his own arguments as the best ones (*meliores*, AT VII 4/BOp I 684), but, if they are carefully analyzed, they turn out to be weak and deceitful (*elumbia et ficulnea*, AT VIII-2 175/BOp I 1670³⁵).

– The clear and distinct idea of God. Caterus and Mersenne observe that it is difficult to conciliate

³² SAMUEL DESMARETS, *De abusu philosophiæ cartesianæ surrepente et vitando in rebus theologicis et fidei dissertatio theologica*, reprint of the 1670 edition, Preface by G. Belgioioso, introduction by I. Agostini and M. Savini, (Hildesheim, Olms 2009), § 22, p. 13.

³³ TULLIO GREGORY, *Dio ingannatore e genio maligno. Nota in margine alle Meditationes di Descartes*, «Giornale critico della filosofia italiana», XXVIII, 1974, pp. 477-516.

³⁴ M. SCHOOCK, *Admiranda Methodus*, cit., III, 1, p. 173; IV, 2, 255-261 (see also the *Præfatio*). See MICHAEL HEYD, *Be sober and reasonable. The critique of Enthusiasm in Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries*, Leiden-New York-Köln, Brill, 1996, pp. 109-143.

³⁵ See I. AGOSTINI, *Descartes' Proofs of God and the Crisis of Thomas Aquinas's Five Ways in Early Modern Thomism: Scholastic and Cartesian Debates*, «Harvard Theological Review», CVIII, 2015, 235–62.

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the doctrine of the clear and distinct idea of God with the traditional theological authorities, both Thomas (AT VII 96-97/BOP I 808) and Augustine (AT III 284/B 299, p. 1380). Hobbes anticipates the criticism that will be advanced against Descartes in the following debates, stressing the incompatibility between the Cartesian doctrine and the teaching of the Christian religion (AT VII 189/BOP I 932).

– The theory of the creation of the eternal truths seems to imply a form of trinitary subordinationism. In the letter of May 6, 1630, Descartes writes to Mersenne that the theological doctrine of production of the Word does not conflict with the theory of the creation of the eternal truths (AT I 150/B 31, p. 150). It is quite possible that the objection advanced by Mersenne was that if God creates the eternal truths, as the eternal truths coincide with the Word, the consequence would be that the Word is created too, in contrast to the *Credo*. If this is correct, what Descartes argues is that claiming that the eternal truths are created does not imply that the Word itself is created, insofar as what the Cartesian doctrine establishes is that the ‘so called’ eternal truths are in fact created beings and the Verb is not their place.

– The conception of the divine omnipresence. Asked in 1648-1649 by Henry More on the way of the divine presence, Descartes states that God has no relation with the place in virtue of his essence, but only in virtue of his power (AT V 343/B 694, p. 2682). Later, he will specify that as in God the power is identical to the essence, so God is omnipresent also in virtue of his essence (AT V 403/B 706, p. 2742), but this will not be sufficient to save him from the accusation of having expelled God from the world. More will invent the name *nullibilists* for Cartesians «who, forsooth, imagine themselves superlatively *intellectual* above other men, in declaring that *God is no-where*, though they cannot deny but that he is»³⁶.

– The rejection of finalism. Gassendi first observes that the dismissal of final causes in Physics, when one is dealing with God, constitutes a «clear danger», insofar as it abandons what constitutes «the principal argument for establishing by the natural light the wisdom, providence and power of God» (AT VII 309/BOP I 1094/CSM II 215). As it is well known, the rejection of final causes will be the main target of Leibniz’s criticism.

– The human freedom. In the Fourth Meditation, Descartes states that we experience within us a will, or freedom of choice so great that I cannot have the idea of «anything greater» [*nullius majoris*] (AT VII 57/BOP I 756). In his disputations of 1647, Revius accused Descartes of having equalized the freedom of the man to the freedom of God, challenging Descartes of Pelagianism. Descartes reported the accusation and defended himself in the letter to the Curators of the University of Leiden (AT V 4/B 611, p. 2426). This accusation was then reiterated in Revius’ *Statera philosophiæ cartesianæ* (1650) and in Cyriacus Lentulus’ (1620-1678) *Nova Renati Descartes sapientia* (1651) and started a long debate³⁷. Descartes’ pretention of the infallibility of the *lumen naturæ* was involved in this criticism. However, the accusation of Pelagianism was also (and first, in 1642) advanced against Descartes because of his doctrine of the infallibility of the *lumen*

³⁶ HENRY MORE, *Divine Dialogues*, 2 vols, London, J. Flesher, 1668, The Publisher to the Reader, vol. I, f. A3r. See ALAN GABBEY, *Philosophia Cartesiana Triumphata: Henry More (1646–1671)*, in *Problems of Cartesianism*, ed. Thomas M. Lennon, John N. Nicholas, and John W. Davis. Montreal, McGill Queens, 1982, 171-250, at 238.

³⁷ Cf. E. SCRIBANO, *Percorsi della teologia razionale nel Seicento*, Milano, Angeli, 1988, pp. 5-81.

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naturæ and, in particular, his proofs of the existence of God³⁸. Descartes replied by refusing any affinity of his doctrine with Pelagius's (AT III 544/B 352, p. 1624).

– The conception of faith. Descartes's doctrine of free will also imply theological consequences concerning the conception of faith. The Second objectors observe that if the will never strays as long as it follows a clearly and distinct perception, the unbelievers will never sin in refusing to accept the Christian religion because they do not have a clear and distinct knowledge of it (AT VII 127/BOp I 846). Descartes's answer is grounded on the distinction between the matter of faith, that is the thing we assent to (*materia sive res ipsa*) and its formal reason (*ratio formalis*), that is the reasons moving the will to give its assent. Evidence is required only in the formal reason, and no one has ever denied that the matter of faith can be obscure. The formal reason of faith consists in a certain inner light that God supernaturally beams into us, and, as it is absolutely impossible that God lies, this inner light is more certain, and often even more evident, than any natural light because of the light of grace (AT VII 147–18/BOp I 874-876).

– Descartes was also involved in the controversy concerning the compatibility between human freedom and divine providence and omnipotency. In his *Principia*, he acknowledges that we can get ourselves into enormous difficulties if we attempt to reconcile the divine preordination with the freedom of our will: as divine power is incomprehensible, we do not see how it can leave the free actions of men undetermined (AT VIII-1 20/BOp I 1736; see also his correspondence with Elisabeth, AT IV 332, 336/B 529, p. 2116, 2120). Though Descartes's thought is not uncontroversial³⁹, and in spite of his stressing God's unique efficient and total cause (see also AT IV 313-314/B 526, p. 2106, as well as of his criticism of the freedom of indifference (AT VII 58/BOp I 756), Descartes's reliance on the evidence of human freedom makes his doctrine incompatible with forms of rigid Augustinianism, in particular with Jansenism, with whom his philosophy was associated after his life (especially because of Arnauld's attempt to conciliate Augustinianism and Cartesianism⁴⁰).

– The necessity of the laws of physics. The doctrine of the eternity of the essences of the Fifth Meditation, which guarantees the metaphysical foundation of the necessity of the laws of Physics, seems incompatible with God's eternity and omnipotence: Gassendi (AT VII 319-320/BOp I 1106-1108) claims that it seems hard to admit something eternal and immutable beyond God; Arnauld and More observe that to admit that the void not only does not exist but is impossible seems to contradict the divine omnipotence (AT V 190, 240–241/B 656, p. 2552, B 672, p. 2596-2598). A similar point will also be made in the Roman Condemnation.

– The Copernicanism. The cause of Descartes' dismissal of the project of the *Monde* was determined by the conflict with the authority of the Church. Descartes' fears were well-founded: in the *Corollaria Theologico-Philosophica*, added to the theses of December 1641 against Henricus Regius (1598-1679), who affirmed the Copernican hypothesis, Voëtius will declare the evolution of the earth as directly and evi-

³⁸ The difference between the accusation of Pelagianism of 1642 and 1647 was pointed out by H. GOUIER, *Cartésianisme et Augustinisme au XVII^e siècle*, Paris, Vrin, 1978, pp. 26-27.

³⁹ For a recent overview, see C. P. RAGLAND, *The Will to Reason: Theodicy and Freedom in Descartes*, New York, Oxford UP, 2016.

⁴⁰ There is only one reference by Descartes to Jansenius's *Augustinus* (1640), in his letter to Mersenne of 23 June 1641, where Descartes affirms not to have yet seen the book (AT III 386-387/B 317, p. 1478).

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dently conflicting with the Holy Scripture (AT III 487/B 340, p. 1572-1574⁴¹).

– The infinity of the World. Since the end of 1629, Descartes had asked Mersenne whether there is «anything definite in religion» concerning the extension of created things, that is, whether it is finite or infinite (AT VII 86/B 25, p. 100). After the publication of the *Principia philosophiæ*, in which Descartes claims that the World is indefinite (AT VIII-1 15/BOp I 1728-1730), Chanut will state the difficulty explicitly. It seems difficult to believe in the prerogatives which religion attributes to human beings if the extension of the universe is supposed infinite (AT V 53/B 624, p. 2468).

– Eucharist. Arnauld points out the incompatibility between the Cartesian negation of the accidents and the real qualities and the dogma of the transubstantiation, that cannot remain «completely intact» at the light of the Cartesian principles. Indeed, the Church teaches that the substance of the bread is taken away from the bread and only the accidents remain, that is extension, shape, colour, smell, taste and other qualities perceived by the senses. Now, according to Descartes, the sensible qualities are nothing other than different motions in the bodies surrounding. As concerns shape, extension and mobility, they are not intelligible apart from the substance for them to inhere in, and therefore, they cannot exist without such a substance (AT VII 217-218/BOp I 972-974).

– Due to Regius' teaching, the Cartesian philosophy was also alleged to have denied the substantial forms (while Descartes limited himself to dismiss the forms as not necessary), and that this negation is incompatible with the Mosaic Physics of the *Genesis*. This criticism was, for the first time, formulated by Voëtius in his *Corollaria Theologico-Philosophica* (AT III 488/B 340, p. 1574⁴²).

These difficulties took form in a series of labels denoting unacceptable theological consequences of Cartesian Philosophy. The most harsh is *atheism*, advanced, for the first time in Leiden by Revius, who, in the *Disputatio XXI*, affirmed that doubt on the existence of God implies, although provisionally, the negation of God, and, therefore, a form of atheism which, in the terminology of the time, was called 'direct'⁴³. This accusation, which Revius will make explicit in the *Consideratio*, was stronger than the one which was stated in Utrecht by Voëtius, which appeared in the terms of an indirect atheism, in the sense that Descartes aims at denying the existence of God by proposing arguments that leave themselves open to the objections of the atheists (AT VIII-2 174-175/BOp I 1670). Voëtius himself, however, in 1648, will see a form of direct atheism⁴⁴ in the universal doubt.

⁴¹ The text of the *Corollaria* is reproduced in Regius's letter to Descartes of 24 January 1642 (AT III 487-491/B 340, pp. 1573-1579).

⁴² The *Corollaria* were followed by *Appendix*, later published in *De rerum naturis et formis substantialibus*, in GISEBERTUS VOËTIUS, *Disputationes theologicæ selectæ* (5 vols; vols. 1-3: Utrecht, Janssonius van Wæsberge, 1648-1659; vol. 4: Amsterdam, Janssonius van Waesberge and Weyerstraet, 1667; vol. 5: Utrecht, Smytegelt, 1669), vol. I, pp. 871-881. On this criticism, see ANDREA STRAZZONI, *Dutch Cartesianism and the Birth of Philosophy of Science. From Regius to 's Gravesande*, Berlin, Walter de Gruyter GmbH, 2018, p. 25. On Descartes and the *Genesis*, see now ÉDOUARD MEHL, *Descartes et la fabrique du monde : Le problème cosmologique de Copernic à Descartes*, Paris, PUF, 2019, pp. 29-59.

⁴³ See JACOB REVIUS, *A Theological Examination of Cartesian Philosophy. Early criticisms (1647)*, ed. Aza Goudriaan, Leiden and Boston, Brill, 2002, p. 8. A revised version of the disputations, containing explicit references to Descartes, will be published by Voëtius in his *Disputationes theologicæ selectæ*, cit., vol. I, pp. 114-226.

⁴⁴ G. VOËTIUS, *De atheismo*, IV, in *Selectæ disputationes theologicæ*, cit., vol. I, p. 176 (the first edition of the disputations *De atheismo* were published in 1639, with no explicit reference to Descartes). See THEO VERBEEK, *From 'Learned Ignorance' to Scepticism: Descartes and Calvinist Orthodoxy*, in *Scepticism and Irreligion in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. by R. H. Popkin, A. Vanderjagt, Leiden, Brill, 1993, pp. 31-45.

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Other labels came up beside and overlapped the label of atheism, as we have seen: *Pelagianism*, *Enthusiasm*, and, after Descartes' death, *Nullibilism*. Descartes and his disciples were also charged of *Socinianism*, both because of their nullibilism and of their rationalist interpretation of the Bible (Lipstorp, Wittich and Velthuysen). These labels spread in the second half of the seventeenth century, particularly in the Netherlands, and in contexts that were often quite different from one another, especially because of the different theological confessions in which the Cartesian doctrines were discussed⁴⁵.

After the death of Descartes, the compatibility of his philosophy with theology was questioned also on the explication of the passions of the soul. Descartes' mechanic account of the passions, indeed, was accused to compromise both the distinction between men and beasts and the difference, in the human soul, between good and bad passions⁴⁶.

2. The Cartesian Theology and Eucharist

The Cartesian doctrine of the Eucharist is introduced for the first time as an answer to Arnauld's objection to his metaphysical *Meditationes*, but eucharistic issues emerged in Descartes much earlier. Descartes deals with them as a physician⁴⁷: in his correspondence, in particular with the Jesuits, in 1638, maybe with the intention of helping his philosophy to penetrate the teaching of their schools, Descartes had not only claimed the compatibility between his Physics and the doctrine of Eucharist (AT I 179/B 36, p. 174), but also stated that it would have been easy «to explain» [*expliquer*] the Eucharist in the light of his principles (AT I 564/B 149, p. 552). He repeats this also to Mersenne in 1641 (AT III 295-6/B 301, p. 1392⁴⁸).

Since 1638 Descartes had already considered the difficulty of conciliating the negation of the real qualities with the dogma of the transubstantiation, and he intended to explain how the whiteness of the bread remains in the Holy Sacrament. But Arnauld's objection is more radical: it involves all qualities, and also the modes, and presumes a deep knowledge of the doctrine of the modes which, unlike the accidents (on which the Scholastic doctrine of Eucharist had imposed a redefinition in terms of mere aptitudinal inherence⁴⁹), are conceptually included in the substance.

Descartes recognizes the difficulty: though pointing out that he has never denied that there are real accidents, he acknowledges that his Physics works very well without them. Accordingly, his doctrine of Eucharist is based on an explication of the phenomenon of the permanence of the species independently

⁴⁵ AZA GOUDRIAAN, *Descartes, Cartesianism, and Early Modern Theology*, in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theology, 1600-1800*, ed. by U. L. Lehner, R. A. Muller, and A. G. Roeber, New York, Oxford UP, 2016, pp. 533-549. See also A. Del Prete, «Accomodate la teologia alla mia maniera di filosofare». *Descartes sui rapporti tra la filosofia e la teologia*, «Rivista di filosofia», CIX, 2018, n. 2, pp. 197-215.

⁴⁶ S. DESMARETS, *De abusu*, cit., p. 24.

⁴⁷ H. GOUIER, *La pensée religieuse*, cit., p. 252; J.-R. ARMOGATHE, *Theologia Cartesiana*, cit., p. 49.

⁴⁸ On the word 'expliquer', see J.-R. ARMOGATHE, *Theologia Cartesiana*, cit., p. 67.

⁴⁹ PEDRO FONSECA, *Commentaria in Libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis*, Coloniae, Lazari Zetzneri, 1615 2nd edition, VII, 1, 1, 2, vol. III, p. 197a.

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from any recourse to the notion of accident. The key concept is the concept of surface, defined as «the boundary that is conceived to be common to the individual particles and the bodies that surround them» and that «has absolutely no reality except a modal one» (AT VII 251/BOp I 1014-1016/CSM II 174; see also AT III 387/B 317, p. 1478; AT IV 163-165/B 482, p. 1962-1964). What affects our senses is solely the surface that constitutes the limit of the dimensions of the body perceived by the senses, because contact with an object takes place only at the surface. Consequently, bread and wine are perceived by the senses only insofar as the surface of the bread or wine is in contact with our senses. It is therefore possible to explain without recurring to transubstantiation the statement that the substances of the bread and wine are changed into the substance of something else in such a way that this new substance is contained within the same boundaries as those occupied by the previous substances or exists in precisely the same place where the bread and wine were – or, rather, in the same place where they would be if they were still present. For, in the light of the Cartesian explanation, it is necessary that the new substance must affect all our senses in exactly the same way as that in which the bread and wine would be affecting them if no transubstantiation had occurred.

An essential piece of Descartes' strategy is to support his doctrine on the authority of the Church. This explains the delay of the redaction of the *Quartæ responsiones*, caused by the study of the texts of the Councils (B 305, p. 1430, AT III 340), notably of Trento's canons 2 and 4 of session 13⁵⁰. Descartes' exegesis is grounded on the identification of the species with the surface. On the one side, he claims that in Trento's statement what is meant by the 'species' of the bread is nothing other than the surface that is common to the individual particles of the bread and the bodies which surround them, because it is at this surface alone that contact occurs; indeed, according to Aristotle himself, not just the sense that is specifically called «touch», but all the other senses perceive by means of touching⁵¹. On the other side, he points out that the Church «has never taught» that the species of the bread and wine that remains in the Eucharist are real accidents miraculously subsisting in themselves (AT VII 256/BOp I 1022). Descartes is here right, because the expression «real accidents» had never been used in any Council⁵². His exegesis was in order to show the orthodoxy of his doctrine and its superiority in respect to Aquinas's, who, though not using the expression «real accidents», had claimed that in the Eucharist the accidents miraculously subsist in themselves (AT VII 252/BOp I 1016-1018).

A long section of his reply was omitted in the first edition of the *Meditationes* on the suggestion of Mersenne, worried because of the possible heterodoxy of the Cartesian account (AT III 416/ B 321, p. 1506). This section will be inserted in the second edition, where Descartes will consider two other difficulties which, in the meantime, the *Sextæ objectiones* had expressed on Descartes' notion of surface and

⁵⁰ On the contrary, Descartes does not claim to the Council of Constance which, unlike Trent's, uses the terminology of accidents, and not of species: when this omission was pointed out (by Jean Durelle) through Mersenne, Descartes answered that Constance did not contradict his explanation (AT III 545/B 352, p. 1626).

⁵¹ Descartes quotes here ARISTOTLE, *De anima*, 435 at 18.

⁵² V. CARRAUD, G. OLIVO, *Présentation et Notes*, in *Quatrièmes Objections et Réponses*, in René Descartes. *Œuvres complètes*, dir. D. Kambouché, J.-M. Beyssade, vol. IV-1/2 et 2: *Méditations métaphysiques. Objections et Réponses. Lettre au Père Dinet*, 2 vols, Paris, Gallimard, 2018, vol. II, p. 1106, n. 108.

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his refusal to admit real accidents, which can subsist without the divine virtue (AT VII 417/BOp I 1204).

In the expanded text of 1642, Descartes observes that the theologians who first (*primi theologi qui*) offered a philosophical account of the Eucharist were so persuaded that the accidents affecting our senses were something real that they concentrated all their efforts in explaining how these accidents could exist without a subject. Descartes is here clearly referring to the Thomistic account of the Eucharist; and, in pointing out that this is both a recent and purely philosophical explanation, he aims to deprive it of its authority. In order to do that he claims that here are insurmountable difficulties arising from the Thomistic doctrine, because the supposition of real accidents is not consistent with theological arguments and turns out to be completely opposed to philosophical principles. Moreover, it obliges to gratuitously add to the miracle of the transubstantiation another miracle, that is how the alleged real accidents can exist apart from the substance of the bread without becoming themselves substances. This is contrary not only to human reason, but also to the theological axiom that the words of the consecration bring about nothing more than what they signify, and the theologians themselves prefer not to attribute to miracles what can be explained by natural reasons. On the contrary, Descartes pretends that, in his own account, not only no miracle at all is necessary in order to explain the preservation of the accidents once the substance has been removed, but it is impossible for the accidents to be removed without a brand new miracle, that is a miracle that would alter the dimensions. There is nothing incomprehensible in affirming that God has the power to change one substance into another and that the latter substance remains within the same surface containing the former. Moreover, nothing can be more reasonable or is more widely accepted among philosophers than the idea not only that all sense-perception but, in general, every action among bodies occurs through contact and that this contact can take place only at the surface. From this, it follows that a same surface must always act and react in the same manner, in spite of the fact that the substance is changed.

An essential piece of Descartes's strategy would have been played, in his intentions, by his *Principia philosophiæ*: indeed, he announces to Arnauld that his philosophical *Summa* will «clearly demonstrate» that all the sensible qualities are entirely dependent on the external surface of bodies (AT VII 254/BOp I 1020). The conclusion of the *Quartæ responsiones* is, therefore, absolutely optimistic: «So if I may speak the truth here without fear of causing offence, I venture to hope that a time will come when the theory of real accidents will be rejected by theologians as irrational, incomprehensible and hazardous for the faith, while my theory will be accepted in its place as certain and indubitable» (AT VII 255/BOp I 1022/CSM II 177–178). And, in a letter to Mersenne of 1642, Descartes attributes to the Jesuit Antoine Vatier (1596-1659) the claim that his account of Eucharist «explain[s] very clearly the mystery of the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, without any accidental entities» (AT III 591/B 374, p. 1676).

However, it is far from clear if Vatier is actually persuaded of the orthodoxy of Descartes' explanation⁵³; and it is sure that things turn out differently than Descartes expected.

Descartes develops his doctrine in 1645-1646, especially in his correspondence with Father Denis

⁵³J.-R. ARMOGATHE, *Theologia Cartesiana*, cit., p. 67 and *Cartesianism and Eucharistic Physics*, in *The Oxford Handbook of Descartes and Cartesianism*, cit., pp. 547–564: 552.

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Mesland (1615-1672), in which he deals with the traditional problem (only alluded to in the *Quartæ responsiones*: AT VII 252/ BOp I 1016) concerning the way of the presence of Christ in the Eucharist (see AT IV 163-169 and 346-437/B 482 and 535). The problem is also addressed in the letter to Claude Clerselier (1614-1684) of March 2, 1646 (AT IV 372-373/B 544, p. 2152), in another letter whose fragment will be quoted by Clerselier in a missive to the Augustinian Father François Viogué (AT IV 741-744/B 555), and finally in his correspondence with Arnauld, who questions him on his identification between extended things and local extensions. Descartes answers that since the Council of Trent itself did not aim to explain how the body of Christ is in the Eucharist, and wrote that this is a manner of existing that we can hardly express in words, «I should fear the accusation of rashness if I dared to come to any conclusions on the matter [...] I would prefer to communicate by word of mouth rather than in writing» (AT V 194/B 657, p. 2556/CSMK 355). It is quite probable that Descartes has not renounced his explanation, but it is sure that he has judged it more prudent for now to be silent on this matter⁵⁴.

However, in spite of Descartes' last words, as well as of the first attacks against his explanation of Eucharist, some of his followers tried to diffuse his doctrine. Clerselier, in particular, was convinced that a key piece of his project of disseminating an orthodox image of Descartes was to divulgate the Cartesian explanation of the Eucharist. He, therefore, decided to let circulate the correspondence with Mesland opening a wide debate involving, among others, Robert Desgabets (1610-1678), one of the main advocate of the Cartesian explanation⁵⁵.

3. The Condemnations

The theological friction produced by the many innovations introduced by the Cartesian philosophy, in particular – also if not only – the principles of his Eucharistic explanation, explain how it was repeatedly the subject of official condemnations after Descartes' death.

The story began in Leuven when, in August 1662, a medical dissertation defending the Cartesian thesis that bodily qualities consist only in the modes of extension was suppressed because of its conflict with the official doctrine of the Church. Under the pression of the papal Nuncio in the Netherlands, Girolamo de Vecchi, who pushed towards a condemnation of the Cartesianism, the Faculty of Arts of Leuven promulgated a deliberation denouncing, in general, some theses adverse to the Church, without nevertheless prohibiting the Cartesian theses. However, after the medical dissertation, a declaration was published by the Faculty of Theology that condemned, as a consequence of Descartes' account of Eucharist, the assertion that «the accidents of the bread and wine do not remain in the Eucharist».

The echo of Leuven condemnation arrived in Rome: Pope Alexander VII (1699-1667) asked Vecchi to send a report of the Controversy to the Congregation of the Holy Office. The Congregation charged the

⁵⁴ J.-R. ARMOGATHE, *Theologia Cartesiana*, cit., p. 81 and *Cartesianism and Eucharistic Physics*, cit., p. 558.

⁵⁵ SIEGRID AGOSTINI, *Les lettres de Monsieur Claude Clerselier (1644-1681)*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2021.

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Carmelite Father Giovanni Agostino Tartaglia and the Somascan Father Stefano Spinula to censor some of the most important of Descartes' writings. On November 20, 1663, some of Descartes's works and his *Opera philosophica* were placed on the Roman *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* until corrected [*donec corrigantur*]. The question of Eucharist was at the center of the Condemnation, which hit other Cartesian theses as well, all connected, directly or indirectly, to the theological field⁵⁶.

This was a very relevant attack against Descartes, though the *donec corrigantur* was the lowest level of condemnation and this condemnation had no authority in the Protestant United Provinces. In France, on the contrary, things evolved much differently. As a matter of fact, the condemnation was at the base of the prohibition of the Cartesian philosophy at the University of Angers in 1675 and at the University of Caen in 1677. The Faculty of Arts condemned the Cartesian philosophy in Paris in 1691, and the Jesuits, after prohibiting the teaching of Cartesianism in 1678, formally condemned it in 1706⁵⁷.

⁵⁶ On the doctrines condemned by Spinula (denial of the substantial generation; denial of substantial forms, prime matter and accidents; movement of the Earth; infinity of the world; existence of possible worlds; mechanical explanation of the passions of the soul; denial of the soul as principle of the movements of the bodies; denial that the soul of the man are in themselves not equally noble and strong; the idea that the soul can easily acquire a domain on the passions) and Tartaglia (denial of the freedom from necessity; denial of real accidents; dismissal of the *a posteriori* demonstrations of God's existence from created effects and of the primacy of the *an est* question on the *quid est* question; denial of the possibility of knowing the truth independently from the knowledge of God's existence; the alleged evidence of the faith; the superiority of the certainty of the *cogito* in front of the certainty of the faith; the eternity of the essence (V Meditation); denial of the substantial intentional species), see J.-R. ARMOGATHE, V. CARRAUD, *The First Condemnation of Descartes' Œuvres: Some Unpublished Documents from the Vatican Archives*, «Oxford Studies in Early Modern Philosophy», I (2005), pp. 67-109.

⁵⁷ On the condemnation, see also G. MONCHAMP, *Histoire du cartésianisme en Belgique*, Bruxelles, Hayez, 1886; R. ARIEW, *Quelques condamnations du cartésianisme, 1663-1706*, «Bulletin cartésien» XXII / «Archives de philosophie» LVII (1994), pp. 1-6; R. ARIEW, *Descartes among the Scholastics*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2011, pp. 217-266; T. McCLAUGHLIN, *Censorship and Defenders of the Cartesian Faith in Mid-Seventeenth Century France*, «Journal of the History of Ideas», XL (1979), pp. 563-581.

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La pubblicazione nel 2018 di *Les aveux de la chair* (Paris, Gallimard), l'ultima opera composta da Michel Foucault prima della sua morte nel giugno del 1984 – ora nella versione italiana –, può essere considerata un vero e proprio evento editoriale, tanto atteso quanto discusso. Rimasto inedito per più di trent'anni, il manoscritto è stato finalmente pubblicato grazie alla decisione dei detentori della proprietà intellettuale dell'opera di Michel Foucault, in seguito all'acquisizione da parte della *Bibliothèque nationale de France*, nel 2013, dell'intero archivio di lavoro del filosofo¹. Nell'intenzione del suo autore, questo volume doveva aggiungersi agli altri tre concepiti tra il 1976 e il 1984 (*La volontà di sapere*, *L'uso dei piaceri*, *La cura di sé*) come parti di una *Storia della sessualità* il cui progetto avrebbe subito diversi rimaneggiamenti nel corso di quel decennio. Secondo quanto indicato da Foucault nella quarta di copertina della *Volontà di sapere* (1976), la serie doveva comprendere altri cinque titoli: *La chair et le corps*, *La croisade des enfants*, *La femme, la mère et l'hystérique*, *Les pervers*, *Population et races*, nessuno dei quali tuttavia verrà pubblicato. *Le confessioni della carne* viene menzionato per la prima volta da Foucault in una scheda inserita nei due volumi della *Storia della sessualità* usciti nel 1984, dove annuncia uno studio che, dopo l'analisi dei comportamenti sessuali nel pensiero greco classico e nei testi greci e latini dei primi due secoli della nostra era, affronterà «l'esperienza della carne nei primi secoli del cristianesimo e il ruolo che in essa giocano l'ermeneutica e la decodifica purificatrice del desiderio» (*Nota del curatore*, p. 4). In realtà, come viene spiegato da Frédéric Gros nella breve nota che accompagna il volume, la redazione del manoscritto può essere situata già tra il 1981 e 1982, allorché il progetto iniziale della storia della sessualità moderna dal XVI al XIX secolo viene abbandonato «in un primo tempo (1979-1982), a vantaggio di un ricentramento in direzione di una problematizzazione storica della carne cristiana [...] e poi, in un secondo tempo (1982-1984), a vantaggio di un decentramento verso le arti di vivere greco-romane e il posto che occupano in esse gli *aphrodisia*» (p. 7).

Ricostruire la genesi di quest'opera postuma è un'operazione complessa e in parte ancora da compiere: l'elaborazione del manoscritto, infatti, non può essere disgiunta dalle riflessioni che Foucault va compiendo a partire dalla metà degli anni settanta non solo nei corsi al Collège de France e nelle varie serie di

¹ Cfr. MARIE-ODILE GERMAIN, *Michel Foucault de retour à la BnF*, «Chroniques de la Bibliothèque nationale de France», LXX (2014), pp. 26-27, URL: http://chroniques.bnf.fr/chroniques_70/index.htm (consultato il 12 agosto 2020); Id., *Un continent inexploré*, «Le Magazine Littéraire», DXL (2014), dossier: *Foucault inédit*, pp. 53-55; ARIANNA SFORZINI, *Les nouvelles archives Foucault. Temporalités errantes*, in *La philosophie et l'archive. Un dialogue international*, a cura di F. Jedrzejewski e D. Sardinha, Paris, L'Harmattan, 2017, pp. 41-51.

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conferenze pronunciate in Europa e negli Stati Uniti, ma anche nei numerosissimi appunti e manoscritti inediti conservati alla *Bibliothèque nationale de France (fonds Michel Foucault)*. Secondo la testimonianza del suo editore Pierre Nora, a cui Foucault aveva consegnato una copia del manoscritto dell'opera nell'autunno del 1982, è per *Le confessioni della carne* che il filosofo avrebbe intrapreso il progetto della *Storia della sessualità*. Inoltre, egli avrebbe realizzato un primo abbozzo del volume già nel 1977-1978². Il ruolo fondamentale del cristianesimo nel progetto foucaultiano di una storia della sessualità è d'altronde già chiaro nel corso al Collège de France del 1974-1975 sugli *Anormali*, dove Foucault esplicita alcuni dei principi metodologici e delle tematiche principali che ritroviamo nelle *Confessioni*, prima fra tutte la centralità della confessione e della pastorale cristiana, come anche il rifiuto di un'analisi del potere centrata sulla repressione a beneficio di un approccio inteso invece a metterne in luce le tecniche positive. L'idea, inoltre, che la storia della sessualità non debba coincidere con una semplice storia delle pulsioni, ma debba rendere conto delle trasformazioni delle regole del «gioco tra il potere e ciò che si dice, ciò che si desidera, e ciò che si sa»³, ovvero di ciò che nelle *Confessioni della carne* emerge come il «soggetto del desiderio», è presente già nei manoscritti preparatori della *Volontà di sapere* composti tra la fine del 1975 e l'inizio del 1976. Qui, infatti – come è stato messo bene in luce dalla ricerca svolta da Michel Senellart presso l'archivio della *Bibliothèque nationale de France* – Foucault definisce la sessualità non come un blocco unitario, ma come una «figura passeggera nella distribuzione politica dei discorsi, dei piaceri e dei saperi, attraverso i corpi e le relazioni tra gli uomini»⁴.

A tale distribuzione politica è dedicato precisamente *Le confessioni della carne*, che si concentra sui primi secoli del cristianesimo, da Clemente di Alessandria ad Agostino, per mostrare come a quest'epoca si stabilisca un legame tra sessualità e soggetto in base al quale quest'ultimo si costituisce al tempo stesso come soggetto del desiderio e soggetto di diritto. È in tal modo che, secondo Foucault, vengono gettate le basi di quella «concezione generale dell'uomo del desiderio e, al tempo stesso, i fondamenti di una giurisdizione sottile degli atti sessuali che segneranno profondamente la morale dell'Occidente cristiano» (p. 349). Ciò sarebbe stato reso possibile da una ridefinizione dei temi classici della verginità (cap. II: *Essere vergine*), del matrimonio e della procreazione (cap. III: *Essere sposato*) a partire dal modello della pratica della penitenza (dalla seconda metà del II secolo) e degli esercizi della vita ascetica venuti definendosi nel contesto monastico (dalla fine del III secolo). Sono le pratiche o discipline dell'esame di coscienza e della confessione a fondare l'esperienza del rapporto con se stessi o di conoscenza di sé da parte di se stessi intesa come un'«analitica del soggetto della concupiscenza» (p. 389) a partire dalla quale vanno determinandosi i nessi tra «mal fare» e «dire il vero» (p. 55) nell'Occidente cristiano.

Nella prospettiva delineata da Foucault, ciò costituisce un processo di «soggettivazione» nel quale non vige più un'etica sessuale incentrata sull'economia degli atti, ma un'etica centrata sull'«obbligo di cercare e dire la verità di sé» (p. 265). Per ciò stesso questa soggettivazione si presenta al medesimo

² CLÉMENT FABRE, *L'histoire était le milieu intellectuel de Foucault. Entretien avec Pierre Nora*, «L'Histoire», CDXLIV/2 (2018), pp. 18-21.

³ Cfr. MICHEL SENELLART, *Histoire de la sexualité I. La volonté de savoir. Notice*, in MICHEL FOUCAULT, *Œuvres*, Paris, Gallimard, 2015 («Bibliothèque de la Pléiade»), vol. II, pp. 1496-1507 (trad. nostra).

⁴ Citato in *ibid.*, p. 1501 (trad. nostra).

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tempo anche come un'oggettivazione indefinita di sé da parte di se stessi, ovvero come «costituzione di se stessi come oggetto di investigazione e di discorso» (p. 55). Va sottolineato, infatti, che nel modello della disciplina monastica «questa soggettivazione sotto forma di ricerca della verità di sé avviene attraverso complessi rapporti con gli altri» (p. 266). Foucault introduce tale tematica già nel primo capitolo dell'opera (*La formazione di una nuova esperienza*), allorché tratta della «direzione spirituale» e mostra in modo problematico come l'addestramento all'obbedienza e la pratica permanente dell'«esame-confessione» finiscano per determinare un paradosso essenziale in queste pratiche della spiritualità cristiana, poiché «la veridizione di se stessi è fondamentalmente legata alla rinuncia di sé» (p. 161).

Questo non è l'unico paradosso che Foucault ravvisa nel dispositivo della spiritualità cristiana. Un altro, infatti, è ravvisabile a proposito della pastorale relativa all'«arte della vita matrimoniale», ossia a tutti quei precetti e pratiche tesi a regolamentare gli atti sessuali all'interno del matrimonio, che ebbero un ampio sviluppo nella letteratura omiletica della fine del IV secolo. La definizione del matrimonio come «professione cristiana», secondo Foucault, sarebbe indice dei nuovi rapporti tra il cristianesimo e l'Impero che vanno definendosi in quell'epoca: se da una parte la Chiesa cristiana assume sempre più le «funzioni di organizzazione, di gestione, di controllo e di regolamentazione della società», «la burocrazia imperiale, dal canto suo, cerca di aumentare sempre più la propria influenza sugli individui, al di sopra delle strutture tradizionali» (p. 275). Ora, questa pastorale della vita quotidiana concepita sulla base del modello monastico, ossia in rottura con il mondo e la società civile, finisce per far giocare i valori ascetici della vita monastica «all'interno di forme istituzionali sostenute o appoggiate dall'organizzazione dello Stato e delle strutture politiche generali» (p. 275). In ogni caso, il risultato di tale processo è che «la vita degli individui, nel suo ambito privato, quotidiano e singolare, diventa così oggetto, se non di una presa in carico, quantomeno di una preoccupazione e di una vigilanza che non sono certamente assimilabili né a quelle che potevano garantire le città ellenistiche, né a quelle esercitate dalle prime comunità cristiane» (*ibid.*). Tutto questo insieme di pratiche di controllo e autocontrollo della volontà, di direzione spirituale ed esame di coscienza rappresenta ciò che Foucault definisce più in generale le «tecnologie dell'individuo» (p. 56). È precisamente mediante l'analisi di queste pratiche che, nel corso al Collège de France del 1979-1980 sul *Governo dei viventi*⁵, in diversi interventi pronunciati tra la fine degli anni settanta e l'inizio degli anni ottanta – in particolare, le conferenze a Berkeley, al Dartmouth College⁶ e a New York⁷ nel 1980, così come il ciclo di conferenze all'Université Victoria di Toronto nel 1982⁸ –, egli traccia le linee programmatiche del progetto di una genealogia del soggetto occidentale moderno.

L'idea di fare la storia del soggetto a partire dall'analisi delle pratiche, che emerge come l'aspetto metodologico più importante delle *Confessioni della carne*, era già al centro della tavola rotonda con gli

⁵ MICHEL FOUCAULT, *Del governo dei viventi. Corso al Collège de France (1979-1980)*, a cura di M. Senellart, trad. it. di Pier Aldo Rovatti e Deborah Borca, Milano, Feltrinelli, 2014.

⁶ ID., *L'origine de l'herméneutique de soi*, ed. a cura di H.-P. Fruchaud e D. Lorenzini; introduzione e apparato critico di L. Cremonesi, A. I. Davidson, O. Irrera, D. Lorenzini e M. Tazzioli, Paris, Vrin, 2013.

⁷ Citato da Frédéric Gros nella sua *Nota* (*Le confessioni della carne*, p. 6). Il manoscritto degli interventi di Foucault si trova nell'archivio della *Bibliothèque nationale de France* (boîte XL, NAF 28730).

⁸ ID., *Dire vrai sur soi-même, conférences prononcées à l'Université Victoria de Toronto*, 1982, ed. a cura di H.-P. Fruchaud e D. Lorenzini, Paris, Vrin, 2017.

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storici alla quale Foucault aveva preso parte nel maggio del 1978, all'indomani della pubblicazione di *Sorvegliare e punire*. In questo contesto, trattando del metodo adottato in quest'opera, egli rivendicava l'opportunità per lo storico di rinunciare alle teorie o alle ideologie per scegliere invece come «punto d'attacco» l'analisi di un «regime di pratiche» inteso come «luogo di concatenamento fra ciò che si dice e ciò che si fa, fra le regole che ci si impone e le ragioni che ci si dà, fra i progetti e le evidenze»⁹. Si tratta di una posizione che, insieme alla critica foucaultiana di quelli che Paul Veyne, nel suo articolo del 1978 intitolato *Foucault rivoluziona la storia*¹⁰, definisce gli «oggetti naturali», rappresenta un aspetto importantissimo della riflessione metodologica di Foucault in questi anni. La «carne» della quale Foucault tratta nel quarto volume della sua storia della sessualità, infatti, non è un oggetto il cui significato permane immutabile lungo i secoli che vanno dall'Antichità all'era cristiana, ma è piuttosto un «modo di esperienza» (*Le confessioni della carne*, p. 55) che emerge come correlato di quelle pratiche, tecniche o «lavoro di sé su di sé» (p. 87) che hanno determinato la posizione centrale del sesso nella soggettività occidentale.

Per la sua edizione dell'opera, Frédéric Gros ha utilizzato il manoscritto autografo attualmente conservato presso l'archivio della *Bibliothèque nationale de France*, così come il dattiloscritto realizzato da Gallimard sulla base del manoscritto che lo stesso Foucault aveva consegnato all'editore nell'autunno del 1982. Oltre a quest'ultimo documento, Gros ha tenuto conto delle correzioni apportate da Foucault al dattiloscritto e delle numerosissime note di lettura relative ai Padri della Chiesa dei primi secoli conservate dal filosofo e oggi consultabili sempre presso il Dipartimento dei manoscritti della *Bibliothèque nationale de France*. Parte di questo materiale è pubblicato alla fine del presente volume, dove quattro *Appendici* riproducono rispettivamente: le prime tre, dei fogli contenuti in cartelle separate – e inseriti fisicamente nel manoscritto – che costituiscono una ripresa o uno sviluppo degli argomenti del testo principale, mentre la quarta consiste in un ulteriore sviluppo della parte conclusiva del manoscritto, che Gros ha scelto di separare dalla conclusione vera e propria poiché annuncia delle tematiche già affrontate in precedenza.

Benché si tratti della pubblicazione postuma di un manoscritto, l'editore e il curatore dell'opera hanno scelto di limitare al minimo gli interventi editoriali. Gli interventi di Gros, infatti, si riducono al completamento dei riferimenti bibliografici e all'aggiunta dei titoli dei capitoli e dei paragrafi dell'opera. Il volume non si giova pertanto degli apparati critici che accompagnano invece l'edizione dei corsi al Collège de France – soprattutto gli ultimi pubblicati, che beneficiano della recente disponibilità del materiale d'archivio¹¹ –, i «Cours et travaux de Michel Foucault avant le Collège de France» – di cui le Éditions du Seuil, assieme a Gallimard e alle Éditions de l'EHESS, hanno intrapreso nel 2018 un vasto programma editoriale¹² –, e il corso tenuto all'Université Catholique de Louvain nel 1981 sulla funzione

⁹ ID., *Perché la prigione? Quattro risposte, tavola rotonda, 20 maggio 1978*, in *Poteri e strategie, l'assoggettamento dei corpi e l'elemento sfuggente*, a cura di P. Dalla Vigna, Milano, Mimesis, 1994, p. 94.

¹⁰ PAUL VEYNE, *Foucault rivoluziona la storia*, in *Michel Foucault. La storia, il nichilismo e la morale*, trad. it. a cura di M. Guareschi, Verona, Ombre corte edizioni, 1998, pp. 7-65.

¹¹ Per questa ragione, l'editore Seuil ha deciso recentemente di intraprendere un programma di riedizione in versione tascabile dei tredici *Corsi al Collège de France*, al fine di uniformare i criteri editoriali e gli apparati critici di questi ultimi, la cui pubblicazione si estende dal 1997 al 2015. I primi due volumi, questa volta in ordine cronologico, sono stati pubblicati nel 2021 (collana «Points», ed. a cura di E. Basso e A. Sforzini).

¹² Il primo dei circa sette volumi previsti consiste nei corsi su *La sexualité* e *Le discours de sexualité* pronunciati da Foucault

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della confessione nella giustizia¹³. Rispetto ai volumi precedenti della *Storia della sessualità*, tuttavia, *Le confessioni della carne* sembra mancare di una solida strutturazione e lascia così al lettore una certa sensazione di incompiutezza e, inevitabilmente, di delusione. Ci basti qui precisare, a tale proposito, che dei titoli dei tre capitoli di cui l'opera è composta, solo il terzo è di pugno di Foucault (*Essere sposato*), così come i titoli dei primi due dei tre paragrafi di cui esso si compone (*Il dovere dei coniugi; Il bene e i beni del matrimonio*), e il primo paragrafo del primo capitolo (*Creazione, procreazione*). Il volume, pertanto, avrebbe guadagnato in chiarezza e completezza se si fosse giovato di un apparato critico più ampio, che ricostruisce la genesi e la cronologia della sua redazione, situandone le tematiche e le tesi all'interno del percorso di elaborazione del progetto generale della *Storia della sessualità*. Tanto più che la pubblicazione di quest'opera si avvale ormai dell'immensa mole di documenti dell'archivio di lavoro di Foucault ormai a disposizione dei ricercatori.

È per questa ragione che tale pubblicazione ha dato adito in Francia a numerose reazioni critiche, che si sono concentrate, prima ancora che sui contenuti dell'opera, soprattutto sulla questione della pratica e dell'etica dell'edizione postuma¹⁴. Si tratta della ripresa di un dibattito che si era aperto già nel 1994 con la pubblicazione della raccolta dei *Dits et écrits*¹⁵ e che si è riaperto a più riprese con il progressivo ampliamento del corpus foucaultiano. Se la pubblicazione dei corsi al Collège de France a partire dalla fine degli anni novanta ha scatenato la polemica relativa all'interdetto foucaultiano delle pubblicazioni postume¹⁶, l'uscita nel 2015 dei due volumi delle *Ceuvres* nella prestigiosa collana della «Bibliothèque de la Pléiade» ha dato adito a numerose discussioni circa l'opportunità di 'santificare' Foucault – critico feroce delle figure dell'"autore" e dell'"opera" – nel pantheon degli 'Autori' attribuendogli un corpus¹⁷. Gli archivi di lavoro di Foucault, tuttavia, di cui per lungo tempo non si è saputo nulla¹⁸, sono ormai a disposizione dei

rispettivamente nel 1964 e nel 1969 all'Università di Clermont-Ferrand e all'Università de Vincennes, editi a cura di C.-O. Doron (Paris, Seuil/Gallimard/EHESS, 2018, «Hautes Études»). Questa serie di pubblicazioni comprende, per quanto riguarda gli anni cinquanta, i corsi sull'antropologia filosofica tenuti da Foucault allo stesso tempo all'Università di Lille e all'École normale supérieure di Parigi all'incirca tra il 1952 e il 1954 (*Cours sur l'anthropologie*, ed. a cura di A. Sforzini), un manoscritto inedito su *Binswanger et l'analyse existentielle* (ed. a cura di E. Basso, 2021) e un denso manoscritto dedicato a *Phénoménologie et psychologie* (ed. a cura di P. Sabot, 2021), composti entrambi in quegli stessi anni. Per quanto riguarda gli anni sessanta, saranno pubblicate le lezioni su *Le parole e le cose pronunciate da Foucault in Brasile*, a São Paulo (ed. a cura di P. Sabot), subito prima della pubblicazione del volume che porta lo stesso titolo, e i corsi tenuti dal filosofo all'Università di Tunisi nel 1966-1968, rispettivamente, sul discorso filosofico e su Descartes (ed. a cura di O. Irrera e D. Lorenzini). La serie comprende inoltre i corsi su Nietzsche pronunciati all'Università di Vincennes (1969-1970), e due conferenze su Nietzsche tenute da Foucault negli Stati Uniti tra il 1970 e il 1971 (ed. a cura di B. E. Harcourt). Su tale progetto editoriale, si veda il numero monografico in uscita presso la rivista *Theory, Culture & Society*, dedicato precisamente a *Foucault before the Collège de France*, ed. a cura di S. Elden, O. Irrera e D. Lorenzini.

¹³ MICHEL FOUCAULT, *Mal faire, dire vrai. Fonction de l'aveu en justice*, ed. a cura di F. Brion et B. E. Harcourt, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, Louvain, UCL Presses Universitaires, 2012.

¹⁴ A tale proposito, si veda in particolare JEAN-FRANÇOIS BERT e JÉRÔME LAMY, *Michel Foucault "inédit"*, «Cahiers d'histoire. Revue d'histoire critique», CXL (2018), pp. 149-164; MAUD POURADIER, *Les aveux de la chair de Michel Foucault. Réflexions sur les enjeux éthiques et scientifiques d'une édition posthume*, «Archives de philosophie», LXXXII/4 (2019), pp. 808-812.

¹⁵ Si veda, in particolare, ANDRÉ ZAVRIEW, *Foucault et les autres*, «La Revue des deux mondes», Décembre 1994, pp. 145-149.

¹⁶ Cfr. CHRISTIAN DEL VENTO e JEAN-LOUIS FOURNEL, *L'édition des cours et les "pistes" de Michel Foucault. Entretiens avec Mauro Bertani, Alessandro Fontana et Michel Senellart*, «Laboratoire italien», VII (2007), URL: <https://journals.openedition.org/laboratoireitalien/144> (consultato il 12 agosto 2020); si veda inoltre DANIEL DEFERT, "Je crois au temps..." . *Daniel Defert légataire des manuscrits de Michel Foucault*, propos recueillis par Guillaume Bellon, «Recto/Verso», I (2007), pp. 1-7.

¹⁷ A questo proposito, si veda già PHILIPPE ARTIÈRES, JEAN-FRANÇOIS BERT, PASCAL MICHON, MATHIEU POTTE-BONNEVILLE, JUDITH REVEL, *Dans l'atelier de Michel Foucault*, in *Lieux de savoir 2. Les mains de l'intellect*, ed. a cura di Christian Jacob, Paris, Albin Michel, 2010, pp. 944-962.

¹⁸ Cfr. JULIETTE CERF, *Trente ans après sa mort, la seconde vie de Michel Foucault*, «Télérama.fr», 20 juin 2014, URL: <https://www.telerama.fr/idees/la-seconde-vie-de-michel-foucault,113884.php> (consultato il 10 agosto 2020).

ELISABETTA BASSO

ricercatori: si tratta di un materiale in gran parte ancora inesplorato e ricco di potenziali sorprese pronte a rimettere in discussione quanto fissato in quello che – come indicato dallo stesso Foucault nel suo celebre intervento su *Che cos'è un autore?* (1969) a proposito della pubblicazione delle opere di Nietzsche – solo provvisoriamente può essere considerato un corpus, se con ciò si intende «questa strana unità alla quale diamo il nome di opera»¹⁹.

Come è stato affermato dagli editori dei due volumi della Pléiade, dunque, anziché chiudere il cantiere foucaultiano, questa pubblicazione può aprirne molti altri²⁰, e lo stesso si può dire del quarto volume della *Storia della sessualità*, la cui ricezione a partire dal 2018 non potrà che dare adito ad ampie discussioni che vanno ben al di là di quelle relative all'opportunità o meno di pubblicare questo manoscritto divenuto ormai leggendario tra il pubblico foucaultiano.

¹⁹ MICHEL FOUCAULT, *Che cos'è un autore?* (1969), in *Scritti letterari*, a cura di C. Milanese, Milano, Feltrinelli, 2004, pp. 4-5.

²⁰ MARTIN RUEFF e FRÉDÉRIC GROS. *L'œuvre, cet îlot, fragile mais tenace*, «Critique», DCCCXXXV/12 (2016), pp. 1020-1029.

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