

## Thresholds between Thresholds

We realize we live in a world in which it is no longer possible to divide disciplines and isolate activities if we want to understand our world; our everyday life is permeated with the language of science, exact disciplines borrow vocabulary from fiction, art does not serve the aesthetics but rather invents metaphors and imagery symbols capable of directing our learning about reality. There may be borders between various fields of theoretical and practical life but it is our understanding that transforms them into bridges. The notion is a threshold of an image and the image is a threshold of a notion and in this sense the threshold means an open beginning.

Both the philosopher and the painter play their irreplaceable roles in this world of thresholds and transitions: the patron of the both is Hermés, a messenger, the one who travels between different worlds and brings messages from one world to another since nothing is more important than the fact that people living in one world should learn about those living in the other one, not just about themselves. And of course: the messenger can also be the one who can find his way in unknown territories and who is able to communicate, that is to say, to translate local idioms.

And it is just this very capability that is characteristic of philosophical thinking. If one has ever had a cursory look at the history of philosophy, then he/she can understand that it is completely impossible to specify the subject of philosophy: the history of philosophy reveals that philosophers would eventually talk about anything. And in spite of that there is something that makes us sense: yes, indeed, this thought is a powerful one whereas that one may be an interesting piece of knowledge, however, it lacks some kind of an important dimension.

Undoubtedly, this fact consists in a very strange and precarious uncertainty of philosophical questioning and, consequently, of the philosophical attitude to the world. And this attitude can be explained perhaps only by a comparison. Let us therefore take a very simple equation  $X = Y$ . On both sides there are unknowns.

On the left side, there is a question, on the right side, an answer. The philosopher seeks "solution" of the equation by trying to answer the question and it is just his answers that indicate the outline of questions (and thus define the status quo of knowledge in a particular historic situation). Once it is possible to formulate a question by means of answers, there is no need for answering them any more. A philosophical attitude to the world, it means what we might call thinking, first of all consists in and perhaps is even determined by this endeavor to give answers even before we know the question we answer: thinking here deprives itself of a firm foothold. And we sense that it is just this fall that is a specific dimension of a thought, its strange and dangerous depth, like a threshold that means the beginning and opening.

I do not think art finds itself in a different situation.

The notion of a steadily flowing time as the neutral parameter of descriptions is fictitious because the dimension of historic time lies just in the awareness of unrepeatable answers, in our memory of thresholds -- those that were overcome and those that have been preserved. Reality is consistent not because it is an ordered set of realities but because it is interconnected through meanings that are inter-related both in space and time. Knowing is the memory of a journey: preserving the past in every present situation with regard to the future; we always deal with the present with regard to the up-coming; the attention we pay to anything present is always an attention which is tense, expecting, the future however attracts us and drives us along the way of historic time. It can be after all explained by the fact that we "act" because action or activity means reaching into the future. Historic time is in fact three kinds of movement: to hold, to imagine and to step forward. The word as well as the image cease being the substance and become a process.

Such a process that is irreversible since it is free. A human being, heading to the future, makes choices, options and takes actions, simply stated, it creates. Henri Bergson, however, says: we are free only then when our actions come out of our whole personality, when there is an undefinable resemblance



between our actions and our personality, that kind of resemblance that we can sometimes observe between a work of art and its creator.

From the 20th century's abstraction in the work of Vasilij Kandinski, František Kupka, Paul Klee, Piet Mondrian and Kazimir Malevič up to the contemporary cognitive disciplines, we have been witnessing the assertion of the conception of borders and thresholds as "gradients" or turning points. Each act of perception of reality is an encounter of the spirit and the matter, as if each perception would mirror the cosmic drama. For in the moment in which our consciousness (in other words: the ability of free action) emerges in the course of evolution, the spirit gradually permeates the matter and develops by overcoming the inertia of the matter -- and just this is a historic time, the history of creative evolution. Henri Bergson says in the closing of his book Matter and Memory: "Freedom... takes deep roots in the necessity and together they make an internally intertwined organism. The spirit finds its percepts in the matter, out of which it draws its nourishment, and perceptions pass it to the spirit in the form of movement, into which the spirit imprinted its freedom." Reality is revealed to us only when it appears against the background of our freedom. Movement and light, an object rising out of its color, radiance of things themselves, an object as a point of intersection of cosmic energies -- are all of these notions or images? It is not that important after all; what is important is that we encounter here the sign of a new form of knowledge.

Here we are not concerned only with the fact that the attention of the 20th century is not focused on states but on processes and events; in this "non-substantial" ontology we must first of all grasp the very sense of being, for instance we must understand processes and events not simply as mere opposites of the single states. And if we behold this idea, we may become dazzled by it, we may get bewildered at the new way of seeing, we may struggle for an adequate language (of images, notions) and we may also have difficulties coping with paradoxical, almost unacceptable consequences of this idea: the real, the objective is never "given", it is always a part of a process: even a stone is an event in its

own way. And our consciousness, which “lasts“ in the Bergsonian sense, is identical with itself (with my consciousness, my self, my personality) and at the same time this consciousness is nothing else but “changing“.

Perhaps this de-substantialization of being can be more sharply rendered in the arts. Abstract pictures from the first decades of this century resign to identifiable forms; what remains, however, are the basic rhythms of the Cosmos, genuine soundings and vibrations. Shortly after the quantum physics comes into existence, next to it there appears a monumental attempt at writing the cosmology -- in Whitehead's book entitled Process and Reality: reality as a happening organism. Which besides other things means: events cannot be described as isolated units, their (former and present) relations to other events constitute an important inner moment of each of them, and they also include a grasp by the so-called consciousness. Whitehead for instance does not even say that events change in order not to give us an impression that there is “something“ that changes into “something“ else -- therefore he says that events change with regard to those events into which they transform. Perhaps this processuality was even more clearly formulated by Kazimir Malevič who said: “There are no bodies in the nature, there exists only the force. /.../ Each color is independent in its motion, it has its own force and energy... The color is condensed energy and the painter expresses its state.“

Thresholds between science, philosophy and art are discernible but they become more and more permeable. Their mutual connections may be conspicuous but something else is much more interesting. It is a question about what forms their common ground if it is apparent that it cannot be any absolute and given facts.

Thinking, philosophy, art, as well as practical acting communicate with each other through an intricate net of relationships, dependencies, reactions and irritations. And it is just this net, this process of communication itself that could be understood as the common ground, if only just stated in quotation marks, of all these activities, because they always find themselves in this situation. But the



common ground has a rather strange dimension, it is controlled neither by visualization nor by words, it has no center, it connects and disconnects in an unpredictable way, it cannot be examined and far less it can be controlled. Perhaps on this model we might imagine that what Gilles Deleuze tries to avow through the Artaudian dream about the body without organs and most certainly it is very similar to what is mirrored in the very contemporary reflections on chaos or virtuality, on the “virtual reality“.

Our consciousness as well as all the phenomena perceived are nothing but folds of this virtual world of thresholds and gradients, they are mere knots in this net, which is in a constant motion.

If art and philosophy try to render things in their own radiance, then the so-called consciousness is nothing but a tiny solid facet without which all the light would disperse in all possible directions and would not get reflected anywhere. Perhaps that what we call consciousness is just this threshold-like impermeability: a fold that wraps the cosmic brightness and implies it into itself, by which doing the brightness becomes, even though only temporarily, compact. Creation, be it that of philosophical, scientific or artistic nature, then tries to search these folds and let the brightness enter from outside into the inside. Perhaps all new meanings originate just from accidental interventions into this light, the light penetrating the folds of our consciousness. Consciousness being a fold, however, is not made from any other substance than the light itself.

Philosophy, art and science not only co-exist but also communicate with each other, no matter how impossible it is to find some kind of a foundation ground that would be common to all of them. And what do they communicate then? The most eccentric answer is: simulacra. This provocative answer may not be so aberrant. Considering the fact that the simulacrum is such an image that is not a re-presentation of an original, that it is always a “copy of a copy“, and this line has no limits on either side, then this provocative answer asserts also that: neither philosophy, nor science, nor art have and are able to have the last word. Of course, they communicate “reality“ but both philosophy, science and also art

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perceive it in their respective modes and none of these modes can be superior to the others.

Perhaps some of the vocabulary used here is not very felicitous but what is being revealed by its means would be worthwhile at least a reflection.

Thresholds: permeability of borders; they can be crossed but they cannot be broken. Or vice versa?

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