

# Conflict at the heart of the Human

On “Jagna Brudzińska, *Antropologia del conflitto. Lezioni Italiane*. Clinamen, Firenze 2022, pp. 78”

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Jagna Brudzińska's *Anthropology of Conflict* marks the launch of the new *Technique and Life* series by Clinamen Publisher, directed by Matteo Galletti. The book addresses, in just over seventy pages, a classic question of philosophy, that of human nature, from a renewed perspective that intends to combine the tools of phenomenology with the insights of psychoanalysis. The aim is to reveal the conflicting character of human nature, seeing it not as a secondary or even pathological aspect, but as the «fundamental paradigm of personal life».<sup>1</sup>

The text includes numerous suggestions, scattered over three short chapters, which, starting from a historical-philosophical excursus about conflict, analyses its psychoanalytical interpretations, up to the proposal of a phenomenological foundation. The first chapter offers an overview of the main philosophical declinations of conflict, moving from the Greek world to the Hegelian dialectic. The second chapter focuses on Karl Jaspers' proposal of understanding psychology and the psychoanalytic conception of conflict. Finally, the third chapter analyses conflictuality through the lens of Husserlian genetic phenomenology. All three chapters contribute to shaping and developing this essential insight: it is conflict that characterises «the nature of humans as persons, or more precisely, as personal unities».<sup>2</sup> In this way, Brudzińska's book has the great merit of shedding light, from an anthropological perspective, on a theme in the contemporary philosophical-political debate that is as topical as it is urgent.

In what follows, I first focus on the methodological premises of Brudzińska's book, analysing the novelty of the phenomenological approach in the study of the human being. Next, I focus on the premises and stakes of the possibility of a dialogue between phenomenology and psychoanalysis. Finally, I turn to the content analysis of the individual chapters of the book.

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1 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 67. My translation.

2 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 12. My translation.

## 1.

While the investigation of human nature is not foreign to the philosophical tradition, Brudzińska's proposal marks an important turning point within it, relaunching the value of the phenomenological perspective in the study of the human being. The latter is, indeed, a complex field of study, and numerous questions have been addressed to it by the philosophical tradition.

What characterises human nature? Is there a single human property that can fully capture its essence? What kind of relationship exists between the so-called rational components and the sphere of drives and instincts? Does maturity exist in the full mastery of one's passions, in their subordination to a pure ideal of rationality? While philosophers have given a wide variety of answers to these questions, a particularly deep-rooted temptation has been to approach these problems in normative terms, confusing questions concerning the nature of the human being with those concerning precepts, the sphere of *being* with that of *ought-to-be*. David Hume had already warned against the tendency of moral reflection to confuse these two spheres, easily shifting from the level of observations to that of prescriptions. In a passage from *A Treatise of Human Nature*, which became particularly famous during the 20th century and has become known as "Hume's law", he denounced precisely this sudden and unconfessed movement that led from the pure statement concerning facts to the domain of duty:

in every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remark'd, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am surpriz'd to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, *is*, and *is not*, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an *ought*, or an *ought*

*not.*<sup>3</sup>

Such an «imperceptible» but «of the last consequence»<sup>4</sup> shift was conceived as an undue inference of entirely new relationships lacking direct consequentiality. For Hume, liberation from this vice would have been able to «subvert all the vulgar systems of morality».<sup>5</sup>

This is a crucial point: only a moral inquiry free from normative attitudes can lead to a truly radical understanding of the human being, capable of grasping his nature beyond the expectations of abstract thought. In Hume, the demand for autonomy of the descriptive from the normative plane was, then, part of the more general project of a return to human nature as an object of study neglected by tradition, which was connected to the valorisation of subjective operations in the genesis of experience. This legacy is of great importance for phenomenology, and the presence of a thread between Humean analyses and the Husserlian project is now well known to scholars.<sup>6</sup>

Retracing the lines of this filiation is beyond the intent of this article. However, it seems possible to me to start from this famous Humean passage (whose reception during the 20th century has, by the way, stretched far beyond its author's intentions<sup>7</sup>) to present and enhance, from the outset, the radicality of Brudzińska's proposal and, more generally, the novelty of the phenomenological approach in the

3 HUME 1960 [1739], 469.

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6 Janoušek and Zahavi emphasise how, within Husserlian thought, the presence of harsh criticism of Hume coexists with the awareness that his philosophy is endowed with essential phenomenological insights. In the Husserlian perspective, it is above all the *Treatise* that is valued as the first sketch of a pure phenomenology: «as said, Husserl was very critical of Hume's empiricism, phenomenalism and fictionalism. He also considered Hume a self-defeating sceptic. But Husserl throughout appreciated the radicality of Hume's position. By challenging objectivism the way he did, Hume outshone both Descartes and Kant, and Husserl even went so far as to argue that Hume had delivered the first systematic attempt at a science of what is purely given in consciousness for which reason he considered Hume's *Treatise* the first outline of a pure phenomenology» (JANOŠEK & ZAHAVI 2020, 632). On this theme see also LOHMAR 2014, MALL 1973, and MURPHY 1980.

7 See, for instance, MOORE 1993 [1903].

analysis of the human being. The instance of a pure description of human nature seems, indeed, to be revived within it, and phenomenology appears to be capable of articulating an ethical-anthropological proposal untainted by normative prejudices.<sup>8</sup>

The primarily descriptive approach and the suspension of any normative attitude are, in this sense, important presuppositions of Brudzińska's proposal: only in light of these premises is it possible to discern in conflict anything other than a degeneration of the human. By extending the phenomenological description as far as grasping the most complex and conflicting aspects of the individual, Brudzińska's book appears, thus, able to order the tangle of issues concerning the human being, proposing to make him accessible in «his specific experience, in his vital world».<sup>9</sup>

## 2.

Philosophical anthropology is the specific field in which Brudzińska places her reflection. In the author's view, this discipline has precisely the task of freeing the study of human nature from the search for specific expectations, expressing itself in «an effort to *approximate* the human phenomenon».<sup>10</sup> As anticipated, it is, thus, to the joint work of phenomenology and psychoanalysis that Brudzińska turns for the fulfilment of this aim. Indeed, while phenomenology provides the «methodological tools for the explication of experience» the psychoanalytic perspective places under our eyes «the fullness and density of experience, grasped in its contradictions and developments, linked to the human being's capacity to know himself and suffer, and

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8 As Pugliese notes, «despite the limited space Husserl devoted to ethical research and certain rigidities of his analyses in this field, his model of a descriptive investigation based on the analysis of the subjective operations underlying experience paves the way for rethinking an ethics that is not normative but based on the discovery of fundamental traits of lived-experience» (PUGLIESE 2014, 211). My translation.

9 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 8. My translation.

10 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 7. My translation.

therefore irreducible to abstract formulas».<sup>11</sup> The points of contact between the two disciplines are many: first and foremost, a consideration of first-person experience as the focus of their investigation.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, before proceeding to discuss the individual chapters, I wish to dwell on the premises and stakes of this dialogue, which seems to have deep roots in the history of philosophy. Indeed, if an opening in this sense is already to be found in Husserl's thought, the results of this convergence extend far beyond his philosophy, representing, even today, a stimulus to phenomenological reflection.<sup>13</sup> On closer inspection, the reference to psychoanalytic questions is already internal to Husserl's investigation of consciousness. As scholars have pointed out, in *Ideas II* this is expressed in the realisation that «the 'motives' are often deeply buried but can be brought to light by 'psychoanalysis'»<sup>14</sup> and, more generally, in a conception of the unconscious «as the point where the chain formed by the conscious links has become obscured, the point where certain links in the chain are no longer directly accessible to reflection, to consciousness».<sup>15</sup> Volume XLII of *Husserliana* then makes explicit the convergence between phenomenological analysis of the drive and psychoanalysis, resulting in «a theory of the unconscious» closely linked to «a general theory of the drive and instinct, as the passive and original structure of intentionality».<sup>16</sup>

These Husserlian intuitions endure in later reflection, nourishing much of the French tradition to the point that, as Badiou notes, it

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11 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 8. My translation.

12 See TRINCIA 2023, 9: «the crucial passage consists of grasping the profound structural analogy that, beneath the entirely obvious epistemic divergences, but also against what Freudian thought considers its own authentic physiognomy, binds psychoanalysis to phenomenology by virtue of its being not (or not only) an operation aimed at the subject, but an experience literally unthinkable outside the pre-categorical, lived life of the subject that each person is». My translation.

13 On this theme see LEGRAND & TRIGG 2017.

14 HUSSERL 1989 [1952], 234.

15 COSTA, FRANZINI & SPINICCI 2002, 235. My translation.

16 COSTA, FRANZINI & SPINICCI 2002, 237. My translation.

seems possible to identify precisely in the fervent discussion with psychoanalysis one of the key aspects of the so-called “French moment” of contemporary philosophy.<sup>17</sup> Referring especially to the proposals of Bachelard, Sartre, and Deleuze, Badiou emphasises how the awareness of proximity to the psychoanalytic enterprise was such, for these philosophers, to take the form of a real competition, taking place under the banner «of fascination and hostility, love and hatred».<sup>18</sup> In the French scene, however, it is Merleau-Ponty’s acute gaze that, from my perspective, best captures the internal challenge of such a dialogue between phenomenology and psychoanalysis. In his preface to Dr Hesnard’s work on Freud, Merleau-Ponty emphasises how the openness to psychoanalysis is, in a way, urged by phenomenology itself, understood as a truly radical investigation of phenomenon, «which descends into its own substratum».<sup>19</sup> The latter appears capable of conferring consistency and rigour on the most obscure aspects of consciousness, showing the abstractness of an understanding of «intentionality as a relation of ideal objects».<sup>20</sup> The challenge posed by psychoanalysis, then, takes the form of an opportunity to explore the boundaries of phenomenological idealism and deploy the full potential of its concepts while reaffirming their specificity. Moreover, this offers psychoanalysis the possibility to rediscuss its own framework, seeing in phenomenology «certain categories, certain means of expression that it needs in order to be completely itself»<sup>21</sup> and to be freed from the risk – which had accompanied its initial reception – of «biologism and objectivism»,<sup>22</sup> preserving instead the proper and always open spirit of an

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17 By this label Badiou means the style of thought exemplified in France by the philosophers who alternated between the publication of Sartre’s *Being and Nothingness* (1943) and Deleuze and Guattari’s *What is Philosophy?* (1991).

18 BADIOU 2012, ix. In this regard, Badiou speaks of «a French appropriation of German philosophy» (BADIOU 2012, iv).

19 MERLEAU-PONTY 1993 [1960], 70.

20 MERLEAU-PONTY 1993 [1960], 70.

21 MERLEAU-PONTY 1993 [1960], 67.

22 MERLEAU-PONTY 1993 [1960], 70.

«interrogation».<sup>23</sup>

It is following these illustrious attempts, then, that it is possible to place the trajectory outlined by Brudzińska. Her research and clinical practice restart this fruitful dialogue, restoring the convergence between genetic phenomenology and psychoanalysis on the common ground of an effort to understand the human being. Identifying the conflict as the fundamental anthropological trait, Brudzińska emphasises how both contribute to the definition of a subjectivity that is in some ways obscure, crossed by opposing drives, exceeding both normativism and naturalism, but not for this reason alien to the cognitive effort.<sup>24</sup> If, from its earliest formulations, psychoanalysis has indeed emphasised the contrasts and tensions that structure psychic life, phenomenology recognises the drive as the «primordial and indispensable setting for the complex perceptual and exploratory dynamics of living corporeality».<sup>25</sup> In both cases, the conflict is removed from the normative sphere and relocated to the psychic sphere, which is understood, outside of any biologism, in its essential relationship with the body. The consequence of such an operation is threefold. If phenomenology and psychoanalysis are, indeed, united in the primary objective of elaborating an anthropological proposal free of both normative and naturalistic prejudices, then this project engages in the task of redefining both. Firstly, the aim is to follow in Husserlian footsteps by exploring the potential of the phenomenological method far beyond the static description of acts of

23 MERLEAU-PONTY 1993 [1960], 71.

24 As Husserl notes in some profound moments of his reflection (whose object is precisely the possibility of accounting for a subjectivity so broad as to include in itself the limit and “enigmatic” phenomenon of the unconscious), «confusions» and «obscurities» accompany the most radical analyses (HUSSERL 2021 [2014], 199). However, this obscurity demands not to be translated into the opposite of complete transparency, but rather to be recognised and understood in its concrete effects, in an interweaving of conscious and unconscious, active and passive aspects. «Phenomenological luminosity – Trincia writes in this regard – sheds light on the phenomenon of darkness, on the irrational fact not (yet) illuminated by phenomenological reason but does not reverse it in the phenomenon of full luminous transparency. Every phenomenon is based on and crossed by darkness» (TRINCIA 2022). My translation.

25 FAILLA 2021, 32. My translation.



consciousness, showing in what sense it can offer a fruitful perspective for understanding human conflictuality. Moreover, the defence of the phenomenological method overlaps with a contemporary work of systematic exploration of psychoanalysis, aimed at eliciting its heuristic potential. In this sense, Brudzińska opposes the prejudice that identifies psychoanalysis with mere «therapeutic practice» or a «technology to be applied to defects of consciousness».<sup>26</sup> In her view, it is precisely the phenomenological analysis of subjective experience that can provide the «epistemological foundation»<sup>27</sup> necessary for the full understanding of its indispensable contribution. The boundaries of the two disciplines appear, thus, rewritten. The result is a dynamic thought, open to its other, which draws the lines of a non-stereotypical subjectivity, capable of focusing on the structures and dynamics of human conflict.

### 3.

In the three short chapters that compose Brudzińska's book, the dual-disciplinary inspiration is complicated by recourse to a multiplicity of references and perspectives, ranging from ancient philosophy and tragedy to literature and conceptions of modern thought. The book's proposal appears, therefore, gradually built through approaches and deviations with the perspectives analysed: in this sense, the mainly critical references of the first part are followed by a closer comparison with psychoanalysis and genetic phenomenology, instrumental in unveiling a conception of conflict as a «characteristic feature of the life of consciousness and the keystone of an anthropology of the person».<sup>28</sup> Brudzińska thus restores the main interlocutors of her reflection while attempting to retrace the essential coordinates that have framed the philosophical consideration of conflict. The wealth of references is, then, mitigated and made accessible by the clear, concise style and

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26 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 59. My translation.

27 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 59. My translation. On this theme see also BRUDZIŃSKA 2019.

28 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 73. My translation.

didactic vocation of the book, which is the result of an international teaching activity at the Department of Philosophy and Education Sciences at the University of Turin. In this way, the reader is gradually introduced to the demands and questions of philosophical anthropology and the particular interpretation offered by Brudzińska.

The book begins with a historical-philosophical excursus on the topic of conflict, aimed at highlighting the substantial inadequacy of traditional considerations of conflictuality. The first chapter emphasises how, since modernity, the search for an irenic image of the human being and the progressive imposition of naturalistic instances have produced a veritable blindness to the conflicting and ambiguous aspects of experience. While this «obscurisation»<sup>29</sup> has supported anthropology's claim to scientificity, it has also resulted in a stereotyped and sweetened image of the human being, unable to account for concrete experience. Thus, the assumption that seems to have guided both theoretical and moral reflection was that of the presumed and necessary eliminability of conflict.<sup>30</sup> Science, thought of as a producer of coherent explanations and «discovery of identity»,<sup>31</sup> has considered conflict as «a contradiction of irreconcilable points of view, a clash of theories that cannot stand together».<sup>32</sup> In this sense, the conflict appeared to be a limit to its operation, a temporary obstacle to be overcome by affirming a true point of view. This tendency has not spared even moral philosophy. If the latter has always acted as an important sounding board for conflicts (insofar as it is attentive to the never pure emergence of passions and needs), it has addressed them, above all, in the form of a «collision of interests»<sup>33</sup> to be resolved through reflection. Although Richard Mervyn Hare's perspective is not directly mentioned in the book, one can see in it a particularly eloquent example of this research direction. Advocate of universal

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29 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 11. My translation.

30 BRUDZIŃSKA sees the antecedent of this scientific ideal in the Aristotelian view that scientific systems must be free from contradiction.

31 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 19. My translation.

32 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 20. My translation.

33 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 22. My translation.

prescriptivism, Hare sheds light on the role of rationality in moral reflection, showing a deep confidence in the possibility of conflict resolution. In *Moral Thinking. Its Levels, Method, and Point*, he identifies three levels of moral thinking – the meta-ethical, the intuitive and the critical –, entrusting the former with more formal questions and the latter with substantive issues, including conflict management. In Hare's perspective, this classification can explain why, strictly speaking, there are no genuinely irresolvable conflicts. While it is, indeed, characteristic of the intuitive level to remain stuck within the opposition of equally worthy duties, the critical level can weigh the values at stake and establish a solution. In this sense – Hare notes – «those who say, roundly, that there can just be an irresolvable conflict of duties are always those who have confined their thinking about morality to the intuitive level [...]; at the critical level there is a requirement that we resolve the conflict».<sup>34</sup> Hare's proposal thus embodies, in a particularly sophisticated form, a widely held view in moral philosophy: that of conflict as a limit to rationality, which the good use of reason can resolve. Brudzińska's book seems to respond to such perspectives with the assertion of «an inevitable, intrinsic conflict»<sup>35</sup> that dwells at the heart of the human being. However, it is not confined to the strictly subjective sphere, since it is connected to the very functioning of intentionality. This conflict eludes complete resolution precisely because it is driven by essential and ineliminable polarities, prompting its acceptance rather than its elimination.

While there has been no lack of attempts in the history of modern thought to overturn this view of conflict as a threat to rationality, it is, above all, in the ancient world that Brudzińska sees important insights for an understanding of it that reaches beyond the limits imposed by naturalism and normativism. It is in this context that the fruitfulness of Heraclitus' philosophy is highlighted. It is presented as the first exponent of what Brudzińska calls the «polarity paradigm».<sup>36</sup> That is a

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34 HARE 1981, 26.

35 BRUDZIŃSKA 2002, 72. My translation.

36 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 28. My translation.

tradition of thought that, reaching as far as phenomenology, sees ambiguity as an ineradicable aspect of experience and a fundamental philosophical theme. In contrast to certain degenerations of Hegelian thought, there is indeed in Heraclitus a lively desire not to enclose differences in a superior synthesis but to embrace the intrinsic mutability and processuality of reality, the ambivalence «of human and natural life».<sup>37</sup>

More generally, sensitivity to the tensions and conflicts that characterise human experience emerges as an essential feature of Greek culture. In this sense, the book refers to the poignancy of the expression *Παθειν-μαθειν*, used in Greek proverbs as a «key example of an internal conflictuality that defines the human being's own way of being».<sup>38</sup> Indeed, this oppositional pair expresses – with particular eloquence – the intertwining of activity and passivity, of receptivity and exposure, that characterises our being in the world, and so revealing, in particular, the educational value of suffering. This translates into an operation of true appreciation of conflict in the genesis of the person, which becomes particularly evident in ancient tragedies. These exemplify how even the most adverse aspects of experience can contribute to the formation of character, by promoting the development of an aptitude for reading and interpreting reality, which transforms the totality of the person, opening him or her up to new possibilities. The Greek tragedies thus constitute precious evidence of the inadequacy of a normative plan detached from concrete experiences and of the tragic forms that human conflictuality can take. Brudzińska's discourse here touches on some crucial aspects of moral reflection, which can be related to what Paul Ricoeur writes in his text *Oneself as Another*. Reflecting on the figure of Antigone, he gives rise to very acute reflections on the transformative power of the tragic phenomenon and the specific kind of knowledge it conveys. In Ricoeur's eyes, tragedy indeed sheds light on the existence of non-negotiable conflicts that go beyond the institutional framework and, as

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37 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 28. My translation.

38 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 17. My translation.

such, cannot be resolved on a mere normative level. Precisely by virtue of its complexity, the tragic event represents, then, an irreducible moment whose value lies not in the possibility of conveying a moral teaching that can be expressed rationally, but rather in its capacity to act on the practical identities of subjects, provoking a real reorientation of the gaze:

if one expected from the instruction of tragedy the equivalent of a moral teaching, one would be entirely mistaken. The fiction forged by the poet is one of conflicts which Steiner rightly considers intractable, nonnegotiable [...]. In this respect, one of the functions of tragedy in relation to ethics is to create a gap between tragic wisdom and practical wisdom. By refusing to contribute a “solution” to the conflicts made insoluble by fiction, tragedy, after having disoriented the gaze, condemns the person of praxis to reorient action, at his or her own risk, in the sense of a practical wisdom in situation that best *responds* to tragic wisdom.<sup>39</sup>

Abandoning the assumption of an irenic structuring of humanity, a new approach, no longer aimed at the elimination but at the acceptance and positive transformation of conflict, begins to make its way.

#### 4.

Continuing in this direction, the second chapter leaves behind the abundance of references that characterises the first part of the book, to make room for a tighter analysis of Jaspers and Freud’s position and contemporary psychoanalytic conceptions. It is in this perspective that Brudzińska refers to the distinction – central to the study of the human

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<sup>39</sup> RICOEUR 1992 [1990], 247.

being – between understanding and explanation, thus reaffirming, once again, the limits of a naturalistic consideration of subjectivity. Indeed, understanding an individual does not mean seeking an explanation for his or her behaviour. On the contrary, it is overcoming the rigidity of the causal plane «to recognise his behaviours, desires and expectations in a differentiated way, to open up a space for expression and development of the individual personality».<sup>40</sup> Embracing these instances, the chapter refers, therefore, to Karl Jaspers' proposal of understanding psychology, and his desire to base the method of understanding on the deep exploration of the opposing movements that characterise the psyche. Without aiming at finishing this discussion, I intend to refer to what are, from Brudzińska's perspective, the main strengths of Jaspers' framework and its weaknesses, thus presenting the book's proposal as the desire to develop the anthropological potential that remained unexpressed in the German philosopher's acquisitions. In Brudzińska's eyes, Jaspers' thought does indeed seem to harbour important insights rendered ineffective by certain persistent prejudices that prevent him from grasping the full value of his acquisitions and, in particular, from bringing phenomenology and psychoanalysis into dialogue. At issue, then, is the possibility of developing this dialogue with and beyond Jaspers, restoring to phenomenology all the complexity of the genetic approach.

Although Jaspers does appear sensitive to the ambiguity and intrinsic conflictuality of the human psyche, figuring as a valuable ally in the construction of a non-naturalistic approach, his conception of phenomenology and psychoanalysis reveals the presence of assumptions that are still too rigid, distancing him from the albeit fundamental intuition of «observing the personality in its fluid, ambiguous, never once and for all defined making».<sup>41</sup> Firstly, by distinguishing between static and genetic understanding and ascribing phenomenology to the former category, Jaspers would have

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40 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 33. My translation.

41 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 40. My translation.

conceived it as a description of single psychological qualities and states, thus failing to recognise its potential as a radical understanding of the person. Secondly, focusing his investigation mainly on the question of evidence, he would have reproached psychoanalysis for unduly extending the process of understanding to the realms of biology and existence, conceived as «necessary blind spots of introspection».<sup>42</sup> Finally, by advancing the need to identify ideal-typical structures that account for the conflictual experiences and dynamics of the psyche, Jaspers would have distanced himself from precisely what was most worthwhile in his thinking: the evidence of conflict and ambivalence as meaningful realities per se.

It is on this front that psychoanalysis unfolds its full potential. Interpreting it as a «science of conflict»,<sup>43</sup> according to Léon Wurmser's contemporary version, Brudzińska emphasises how, from its very beginnings, it has been concerned – certainly with therapeutic intentions but not without theoretical depth – with the polarities and contrasts that characterise the psyche, thus giving back to conflict its central role which had been removed in the philosophical field. By tracing the Freudian complicity of love and hate, the phenomena of attraction and repulsion, the mechanisms of defence and undoing, the fundamental polarities of the ego-external world, activity-passivity, and pleasure-displeasure, Brudzińska highlights the extent to which psychoanalysis has embarked on the fruitful attempt to study and give expression to that ambiguous dimension, made up of drives, tensions, and undosings which characterise the balanced, as well as the pathological, manifestations of subjectivity. As Brudzińska notes, these concepts are not for Freud mere descriptive tools, useful for illuminating the patient's experience, but real conclusive results that rise to the role of «ontic postulates of the theory».<sup>44</sup> It is precisely reflection on these foundations, then, that makes it possible to trace, at the heart of psychoanalysis, a profound empirical and systematic

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42 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 39. My translation.

43 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 42. My translation.

44 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 43. My translation.

vision of humanity and a «determined, individual, concrete»<sup>45</sup> conception of freedom. Thus, not only would the psychoanalytic discourse manifest a broader depth than the strictly therapeutic one, but, in a certain sense, it would seem to have been precisely the pathological exploration of conflict that has offered significant cues for recognising its essentiality. By facing conflictuality with unsuccessful solutions, illness revealed the inner disputes and tensions at the core of subjectivity and the continuous and tacit management of polarity characterising the healthy life of consciousness.

## 5.

The third chapter is the shortest of the three but also the one in which Brudzińska's proposal fully matures. Having reached the end of this journey into human nature and having recognised – through psychoanalytic exploration – the evidence of its conflictuality, now the task is to examine more closely the contribution of phenomenology to this debate. As we have seen, the interdisciplinary interest of this operation is twofold: the proposal of an epistemological foundation for the results of psychoanalysis coincides with phenomenology's annexation of new territories, not foreign to its research vocation and to the internal developments of Husserlian thought. The chapter thus engages in the demonstration of a fundamental thesis: the idea that phenomenology is not a static philosophy of consciousness, but an empiricism that starts «from first-person experience, in order to find recognisable regularities and dynamics, and reconstruct, from there, a non-static and non-abstract vision of consciousness».<sup>46</sup> Retracing some of the milestones in Husserl's thought, from *Logical Investigations* to *The Crisis of European Sciences*, Brudzińska points out how phenomenology has progressively widened its scope, overcoming

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45 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 48. My translation.

46 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 60. My translation.



«the boundaries of cognition and even of aroused consciousness»<sup>47</sup> and gaining a promising genetic approach. A significant example of this is the Husserlian consideration of the person and the progressive lexical shift – from natural to spiritual and finally to the transcendental person – which serves to highlight the increasingly complex aspects of subjectivity, taking into account its volitional and desiring tensions. In continuity with this movement, the chapter identifies the practical reinterpretation of intentionality by genetic phenomenology as the element that provides a theoretical and systematic framework for the analysis of conflictuality gained through the observations of Jaspers and Freud. Brudzińska emphasises how, for Husserl, the relationship between subjectivity and the world is never neutral but mutually involved, according to a precise conflictual logic, in a dynamic of attraction and repulsion, activity and passivity, thus expressing itself in a movement of «unrelenting tension toward the realisation of needs and desires».<sup>48</sup> This movement, although endowed with its own sense and teleology, nevertheless reveals a polemical heart: it presents itself as an «uninterrupted current of clashes and contrasts» in which some interests impose themselves on others, in which active elements literally «struggle against the passive background to emerge and assert themselves».<sup>49</sup>

Far from crystallising into an untamed set of passions to be subjected to the control of reason, conflict thus begins to take the form of a positive force capable of contributing to the genesis of the person and his or her world. It is well-exemplified by that set of «directions, tendencies, drives, primary forms of organisation of perception, and affects, which together strongly determine our world of experience»,<sup>50</sup> to which Husserl refers under the term *Getriebe*.<sup>51</sup>

47 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 62. My translation.

48 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 66. My translation.

49 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 68. My translation.

50 BRUDZIŃSKA 2022, 67. My translation.

51 For an analysis of the theme of *Trieb* and its occurrences in the Husserlian corpus, see also Pugliese 2021. As she notes, «if at the beginning of his reasoning on drives Husserl had emphasised the opposition between the drive dimension and the higher sphere of reason and will, in the more properly genetic phase of his thought what strikes him is,

Thus, phenomenology abandons the appearance of a static description of rationality, asserting itself as living thought which is animated by an authentic effort to understand the human and its world. Indeed, Husserlian analysis of motivational connections allows subjectivity and the world to be removed from the abstract poles of a rigid dualism, bringing to the philosophical stage their inextricable intertwining, a tension animated by precise conflictual dynamics. Through these insights, the book pursues not only the important goal of interdisciplinary openness, but also a radical exploration of the potential of the phenomenological method and the genetic approach. Although this line does not find full development in the text – where only a generic reference to authors such as Lévinas, Merleau-Ponty, and Derrida appears – it thus seems to provide a potential defence of Husserlian thought from the accusations of his successors. It appears to show how the future radicalisation of phenomenological thought, which some of them pursue, actually responds to the internal needs of Husserlian philosophy and to research paths already explored by the father of phenomenology.

Therefore, the book is valuable for all who wish to investigate human nature beyond the limits of normativism and naturalism. Despite its brevity, it constructs a frank and original anthropological proposal, able to restore the human phenomenon in all its complexity, and freeing the world of instincts and drives, both from naturalistic residues and from a tradition of thought that relegates them to mere chaos. The emphasis placed on the possibilities of conflict transformation also makes it possible to restore to phenomenology and psychoanalysis their value as *militant* enterprises with an interest in improving the subjects' living conditions. Indeed, the anthropological hypothesis of conflict appears amenable to further exploration in the political and social fields, with particular reference to the possibilities for self-determination of the subjects. As emphasised by Magrì and McQueen in a recent volume introducing

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instead, the continuity of these connections and the emergence of the person from the reciprocal dynamic of the two dimensions» (PUGLIESE 2021, 270-1). My translation.

the aims and themes of critical phenomenology, «human subjectivity is placed not only in social and cultural networks that develop historically, but also situated in contexts that largely prevent individuals and groups from pursuing and achieving freedom as self-determination».<sup>52</sup> In this sense, Brudzińska's proposal is not far removed from the interests of critical phenomenology, opening up the field to possible developments in this direction.

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