De Incontinentia
Based on a project by *Roberto Cuoghi*

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Contenuti

Milovan Farronato

Preface

Death by the ceaseless accumulation of the Collyer brothers and the Hikikomori. The Epicurean *lathe biōsas*, the myth of Sisyphus and the image of the monstrously immoderate Priapus. The maps of Mark Lombardi (together with the omnivorous reading that made them possible): constellations and nebulas of points, patterns framed by intricate lines, arches and circumferences that precociously illustrated the existence and nature of the links between global finance and international terrorism.

The war games of Kim Jones in a state of total solipsism, alternating between the roles of victim and tormentor. The supposed autism of Andy Warhol, his wig and his *Time Capsules.* Yayoi Kusama's polka dots and Hanne Darboven's musical staves. (Without dwelling on that generically obsessive art. Not to speak of art brut. Remaining poised, yet leaning towards an all-out dysfunctionality.) The diaries of many, but above all those of Dieter Roth and the notebooks of Manuel Montalvo. Mike Kelley's harems and his all too troubled life. The *timballo* in *The Leopard*, *Babette's Feast* and Manuel Uribe. Molly Bloom's life in bed and John Lennon's *Bed-in* with Yoko Ono. The *Corypha umbraculifera* and St Teresa of Ávila's love. Leopold and Rudolf Blaschka's nature in blown glass and the cornucopia. The lands of excesses: Antarctica. Monte Verità, the Museum of Everything and Harald Szeemann's Museum of Obsessions. *Citizen Kane!*

A few tutelary deities, above all a host of images and just as many impressions that passed through my mind as I followed the research carried out together with Roberto Cuoghi to uncover traces of dismeasure within an immeasurably indistinct archive (DOCVA, the only one of its kind in Italy) which over the last 20 years has accumulated material from aspiring and professional artists: the introvert and the extrovert, specifically planned or impromptu and lacking an overall vision. I was looking for an unprecedented, possible drift into folklore, while Cuoghi sought out samples of dismeasure. A Great Sea in any case, whose waves we have sailed in search of traces, attempts and expressions of disproportionate urges. Research carried out by discarding the 'happy medium' a priori. The results are brought together in the exhibition entitled *Arimortis*, presented in the vetrines of the Sala Archivi of Milan City Council's Museo del Novecento between April and September 2013, to which the following have contributed works, simulacra, visual notes and various memorabilia: Alfredo Aceto, Giorgio Andreotta Calò, Riccardo Arena, Andrea Aversa, Betty Bee, Giona Bernardi, Lorenza Boisi, Sergio Breviario, Katthy Cavaliere, Enrico David, Luigi D'Eugenio, Chiara Fumai, Alessandro

di Giampietro, Cecile Genovese, Alberto Guidato, Matteo Guarnaccia, Saverio Lanza, Manuel Larrazabal, Gino Lucente, Francesco Mannarini, Laura Matei, Michele Napoli, Katja Noppes, Cristiana Palandri, Paola Pivi, Sabrina Sabato, Olga Schigal, Gabriele Silli, Sissi, Alberto Tadiello, Maria Stella Tiberio, Ghergely Toth, Carlo Gabriele Tribbioli and Christian Tripodina.

I look upon *Arimortis* as a statement on the Italian art of recent decades, while for Roberto Cuoghi it is just the starting point for a much more complex piece of research, which has led him to plan *De Incontinentia* simultaneously: another piece to the puzzle that goes well beyond the scope of the exhibition and visual art produced in Italy; a volume that draws on a range of contributions, with the aim of programmatically outlining the far side of immoderate behaviour, the physiognomy of the extravagant and the very value of dismeasure.

Roberto Cuoghi

The tumour set free

The good surgeon, operating on a patient suffering from a nasty cancer, promised to himself he would do everything that had to be done, and so he operated and the tumour was removed in textbook fashion, in full and without a trace left behind. After thinking deeply about the need to be on his guard against false appearances, and out of an enthusiasm that flowed forth from his heart, the good surgeon decided to make a radical choice. And this is what he chose: the patient was thrown away and he took satisfaction in the fact that the tumour had finally been set free.

Despite explanations being due, there is no need on this occasion to unify space and time or weights and measures. It is better instead to take one's mind off such things, overlook the sense of proportion, lose sight of the relationship between the parts and the much vaunted overall view (which would be better forgotten or left at home) in order to be ready, with loving insistence, for even the most misfortunate of accidents.

Imagining that we are approaching a common sense perspective from which to examine the issue, we misunderstand the sense from quite the opposite perspective, without believing it to be wrong. Before drawing hasty conclusions about the surgeon's perverse choice, let us weigh up the motives of one of the parties involved, the much defamed cancer, rather than those of the patient, always too young, on finding himself dumped on the rubbish heap.

First of all, a bit of professional advice on the elements of the conflict shows the cancerous cell to be part of the patient himself; it is not extraneous and therefore has a right to its own structural definition. What marks the cell in question is hyperdynamism; it suffers from ataxia, a shameful disorder. Nevertheless it is nothing but free enterprise that controls what is being defended here: an impulse acquired from a system conspiring against self-determination, a system that pursues self-sufficiency, for as a system, its sole prerogative and faith is conformity. However, the original cell, lone victim of an organic revolution, instrument of its own destiny, embarks on the tumoural process, attaining at every moment to its own truth. The fatal prognosis is only the result of energetic resistance to the possibility of the whole organism being branded as heretical. If the cohesion that guarantees life is a condition of morality, cohesion is moral because it is moral to encourage cooperative behaviour for the living community. Cohesion brings order, which is better than disorder and conflict. Well, the tumour is the most effective ambassador for these facts, despite its well-documented offence of infiltrative growth that exploits the body's vascularisation to obtain not only nourishment but also new scope for proliferation. Its defence is a blind one, orchestrated in the desperation to cling to life as the most elementary principle, in an accidental endowment of a degree of deter-

mination and relentless strategies, and in the claim of unintentionality. The neoplastic process is one of endless proliferation, without any aim other than its own growth.

Persevering despite its numerical disadvantage, engaging with a comprehensive system of immuno-surveillance, the guilty cell has therefore won by right; therefore the assumption that guilt must lie with the neoplastic process seems wholly unfounded. Any blame is to be shared with the co-factors that intervene during the phases of initiation and promotion of carcinogenesis, factors that undoubtedly precede the appearance of the cancerous unit and that, consequently, testify in its favour. Proposing a charge of attempted murder would mean carrying a motion not supported by the evidence. In making an attempt on the life of its host, the developing tumour is attacking itself. The only accusation that the tumour cannot reject is that of not being a self-supporting organism, but this is a formal not a substantive charge, *de facto* a characteristic like any other. In accordance with the principles of law and morality – however much these are universally accepted and applied – the tendency to prefer the patient to his disease finds no corroboration here. It is a gloomy, dark idea, founded on false premises that only serve to foster the prevailing conventionalism. All responsibility should in fact be ascribed to so-called environmental factors: to the patient's habits in relation to carcinogenic agents, to endogenous factors, to spontaneous mutations stemming from occasional flaws in the copying process of the genetic code. In this context, speaking the very essence of the role of the cellular genetic matrix, an analysis of the rules of conduct with regard to the ethical position maintained toward the host organism has no probative significance.

This is the essential point: every somatic cell contains non-pathogenic oncogenes, designed to bring about neoplastic change, a characteristic – not a stigma – that entails the potential for improvement. Not only is the aberration present, but its significance is even more noble if we look at it in evolutionary terms. All progress comes from the tested error, given concrete expression. Were we to deny the scope for error, we would have to do away with the basic principle of the evolutionary process, condemning ourselves to a stasis that would not be adaptive and

thus would, over time, become involutionary. However, with all due modesty and deference, the defence does not wish to undermine justice. No one has been treacherously stripped of the privilege of immortality, and there is no doubt that the cancerous initiative is the manifestation of a necessary evil, guided by its own lights. Such deleterious data do not damage the genetic line; it has no effect on the next generation. In other words, this is the story of an impulsive exploit that, were it not for the lack of mental capacity, would have the heroic character of a noble sacrifice in the name of a most worthy cause.

Gian Antonio Gilli

Dismeasure: news from the digs

A Morphology of Dismeasure

This essay, which might appear to the reader somewhat 'archaeological' in its approach, is in fact an attempt to analyse a phenomenon – Dismeasure – by reconstructing its pedigree. It is a phenomenon of which we will speak in the past tense, but which has striking connections with the present.[1] It is a phenomenon that lies at the heart of a series of fundamental events of extraordinary complexity, for which it will be necessary to refer to true models of the Origins. →

[1] We have tried to allow for these peculiar characteristics of the phenomenon of 'Dismeasure' and other phenomena related to it, in part through the use of capital letters and inverted commas (' ') that indicate the dual level of meaning of the terms used.

In what follows, however, I will try as far as possible to avoid abstract concepts and definitions, and let the sources (which are, in most cases, venerable) speak for themselves. Thus, even the notion of dismeasure will be presented in a concrete fashion, avoiding definitions and rather aiming to draw the phenomenon out from its aforesaid sources.

The first source presented here refers to the best-known of the Prophets; the second to a swineherd; the third to poultry farmers. Despite the differences in their action, all three figures appear strongly bound together by their practice.

› And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.
(Gospel according to Luke, 9:59-62)

› [...]but the swineherd liked not
a bed in that place, that he should lay him down away from the boars;
so he made ready to go outside[...]
and he picked up the fleece of a large, well-fatted goat,
took a sharp javelin to ward off dogs and men,
and went forth to lie down to sleep where the white-tusked boars
slept beneath a hollow rock, in a place sheltered from the North Wind.
(Homer, Odyssey, 14. 524-533)

› And what has been said applies equally well to the herdsmen, who receive the care of animals from their parents as if by a law of inheritance, and lead a life devoted to poultry-rearing all the days of their existence. They have received, it is true, much from their ancestors relative to the best care and feeding of grazing animals, but to this they add not a little *by reason of their own zeal for such matters.* The most astonishing fact is that, *by reason of the excessive nature of their concern for such matters*, those who are in charge of poultry and geese, in addition to producing them in the natural way, universally known, raise them by their own hands, *by virtue of their peculiar*

involvement in their techne (of which more later), in numbers beyond telling. For they do not use the birds for hatching the eggs, but, in bringing this about themselves artificially, by their own wit and skill in an astounding manner, they are not surpassed by the operations of nature.
(Diodorus, *Bibliotheca historica*, 1.74.3-5)

Each of these people (the Prophet/Son of God, the swineherd, the poultry farmer) manifests an 'immoderate' disposition in the way he acts (i.e. in the way he expresses his own 'Specialisation'). The first demands the attachment of his disciples to himself to take precedence over fundamental commitments and obligations, including the duty – inescapable in ancient culture – of carrying out funeral rites for the dead (for one's own father, to boot!). The swineherd sleeps with the pigs, being closer to the animals in his charge than to other men and to dogs, which are men's oldest allies (and of which the swineherd seems, rather, to be afraid). The poultry farmers, owing to the 'passion' they have for their birds (as we have seen, Diodorus refers repeatedly to this involvement), take personal responsibility for brooding the eggs they have laid.

The Specialisations chosen to provide the first examples of dismeasure (the prophet, swineherd and poultry farmer) have precise parallels in the 'job descriptions' of society: they correspond to the social and economic roles present in it. This means that an institutionalised 'script' has been drawn up which they are supposed to keep to, and that there are corresponding social expectations. Yet the presence of this social component does not seem able to curb the expressions of dismeasure that we have seen. So what might we say of other Specialisations that have no counterpart in the set of roles allowed for by society, and whose practice is therefore, in a sense, uncontrolled? In fact, as we shall see, the universe of Specialisations to which we refer in this essay extends well beyond those that have parallels in the repertoire of occupations provided for in the social division of labour.

To familiarise the reader with the way in which we are using the term 'Specialisation', we will make reference to a group of Specialisations in which a parallel of this kind is completely lacking (and would even be unthinkable).

These are Specialisations on a corporeal basis; i.e. Specialisations whose object is the intense and repeated employment of body parts or systems, in connection with a corporeal experience that is not 'harmonious' with regard to the organism as a unified entity, but which is, in fact, completely 'Specialised'. And yet even these Specialisations, remote as they are from those of a social and productive nature referred to above, reveal a form of dismeasure in their practice. Here we briefly present three Specialists of this kind. The first is a 'proprioceptive' Specialist, for whom sensations deriving from posture and movement (or the absence of movement) are important; the second, an 'interoceptive' Specialist, for whom the important sensations are of a visceral type; the third, whose Specialisation consists in the Gift of Tears, in whom the sensations have a different source: from the respiratory system to the *facial muscles* (sensations to which the range of meanings that shedding tears has in human experience lends additional colour).

› When he first came to the desert he stood underneath a protruding rock face for three years continuously, always praying, never sitting or lying down. He took only what sleep he could standing up. He took food only on Sunday. For on that day a priest came and offered the Holy Sacrifice for him, and the Sacrament was his only food.
(*Historia monachorum in Aegypto*, 13. 4)

› Living in this place he is observed by all comers, since he has, as I said, no cave or tent or hut or enclosure or obstructing wall; but he is to be seen praying or resting, standing or sitting, in health or in the grip of some infirmity, *so that it is unceasingly under the eyes of spectators that he strives in combat and repels the necessities of nature* [...]. It was the height of summer, and the heat of the sun's rays was kindled more intensely, with a lulling of the winds and the air remaining motionless. The disease was a flux of bile moving downwards, hurting the guts, causing pressure and forcing one to run outside. It was then that I witnessed the great endurance of this man. A large crowd having gathered round him […] he was not overcome by nature, but maintained his endurance until the dead of night set in and compelled everyone to go home.
(Theodoret, *Historia Philothea*, 21:5)

› Among other benefits he had received from God the gift of tears, so that, in prayer, he began to weep continually and without a break, for which reason, having consumed his power of sight, he lost the strength of his eyes, which however by divine intervention (this was the opinion of all) he recovered [...].
(*Acta Sanctorum Maii* V 1013 B)

How can we interpret such expressions of Dismeasure, whether they are these last, relating to bodily Specialisations, or those examined at the beginning, connected with the social repertoire of occupations, or any of the others we are going to look at? They should not be seen as aspects of the character or personality of the individual who manifests them: as we will try to show, these expressions of dismeasure *pertain to the essence of the person*, or rather, to the way s/he is compelled to express his/her own Specialisation.

We will also try to show that the Dismeasure of which we are speaking must not be confused with the innumerable expressions of Lack of Restraint, or Intemperance, or with other 'excesses' of this kind (including those of a Romantic tone). In fact, while for unbridled and intemperate modes of behaviour of any kind the choice of their content on the part of the individual seems, as it were, irrelevant, the content of dismeasure is never 'free', but, as we have begun to see, always *closely connected with the Specialisation of the person in question.*

Dismeasure, in short, is not Specialisation, but the way in which a Specialist expresses his/her Specialisation.

We can now look at the term which we have begun to use – the still generic one of Specialisation – and ask ourselves: what is a Specialisation, and what is a Specialist? The reader will have noticed that our examples allude to situations of the past, and this is not by mere chance: in fact, the Specialisations referred to are archaic experiences; experiences not easy to discern in today's society, to the extent that in order to grasp them, it is necessary to refer to a particular model of the Origins. Let us take a brief look.[2]

[2] For an analytical exposition of the model, and the related documentation, I refer the reader to my *Origini dell'eguaglianza – Ricerche sociologiche sull'antica Grecia.* Turin: Einaudi, 1988.

› *The Universe of Specialisations*

As a condition of the Origins – i.e. *prior to Society* – the model we are referring to hypothesises a landscape peopled by innumerable subjects, each 'specialised' *in just one direction*: a direction that engaged the bulk of his resources and actions, and fully expressed his identity. This is not the place to go into the extent to which these Specialisations recapitulated the genetic, biological, physical and constitutional characteristics of the individual. It can instead be said – precisely because of this infinity of possible combinations that underpinned them – that Specialisations differed widely from one individual to another. So if we wanted to identify a dominant feature in the landscape of the Origins, we could say: *inspired by Diversity.* This Diversity – we argue – came through Specialisation, differing from one person to the next. In many of the ancient Greek sources, a Specialisation of this kind is called *techne,* and we will use the two sets of terms: *techne*/Specialisation, and bearer of *techne*/ Specialist, as synonyms.

There were innumerable *technai*, and the examples given above (to which we shall return) give an idea of their great variety. But the two groups already identified (those of the 'professional' *technai* and of the bodily *technai*) were just part of the Diversity of the Origins. The *technai* included individual experiences which – stretching the terms a little so as to give them names which are comprehensible (yet misleading) today – could be the Beggar, the Braggart, the Beau, the Liar, the Host-at-any-cost, the Contemplative, the Generous-minded, the Exhibitionist, the Scrupulous, the Loser, the Jack-of-all-trades, the Envious, the Fire-raiser, the Permanently Sick and others. (These examples have not been made up on the spot, but have parallels in the ancient sources). None of these Specialisations, of course, would be seen as a 'technique' today. But we will return to this later.
Instead let us here go back to take a closer look at the illustration of that group of *technai* in which we have recognised a corporeal base, expressing themselves through the preponderant use of one part of the body, or one of its systems. We find here Specialists who are 'proprioceptive', 'visual', 'visceral', 'vestibular', 'respiratory', 'olfactory' and so on. Let us dwell for a moment on these Specialisations, both because the dismeasure of their action

is particularly evident, and because many of them re-emerge in the historical period too, through the experience of ascetics and mystics.

'Vestibular' Specialists were those such as the Stylites, ascetics of ancient Syria, who spent their life perched on top of a pillar: the stimulus of the vestibular system (which presides over the sense of balance), and the enjoyment of a corresponding 'vestibular pleasure', was unending for them, both while maintaining an erect posture and during the innumerable prostrations before God made over the course of the day. (An authoritative first-hand testimony, that of Bishop Theodoret, who visited the pillar of Simeon, the first and most famous Stylite – 390 to 459 AD – declares that a man in his retinue, taking the trouble to count the Stylite's prostrations, tired of the task after having counted over one thousand two hundred in less than a day.)[3]

Essential for the 'proprioceptive' Specialists, on the other hand, were sensations deriving from stimuli of various kinds perceptible at the level of the muscles and tendons of the joints: sensations often inextricably bound up with perceptions of pressure. This is the most heterogeneous class of bodily Specialists, and the one richest in examples in the literature of late antiquity, including as it does the numerous Carriers-of-weights and Suspended as well as those who practised Being-bent.
A member of this last group was the ascetic Marcion (a man of enormous build, as well as being "very handsome" according to the sources), who not only carried around with him iron chains weighing eighty pounds, but also had a hut built in the desert, so low that "the ceiling made him bow his head and neck," and so short that it prevented him, when he lay down, from stretching out his legs.[4]
Another Specialist, Titus, a former warrior, must have experienced intense sensations of pressure when he suspended himself from the ceiling of a sacred place by a rope passing under his armpits; a small board propped on his chest provided support for a book, as well as for his head during the little

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[3]   Theodoret, *Historia Philothea*, 26:22. For a detailed analysis of the Stylitic Specialisation
see Gilli, *Arti del corpo – Sei casi di stilitismo*. Cavallermaggiore: Gribaudo, 1999.

[4]   Theodoret, *Historia Philothea* 3.5

sleep that he permitted himself.[5]

At the extreme opposite as far as content is concerned, but very much the same in relation to dismeasure, stood the other group of *technai* we mentioned above: *technai* with an equivalent in modern experience, such as the 'Blacksmith', the 'Seafarer', the 'Physician' and so on. Such names are at first sight familiar, but this familiarity is to a great extent more apparent than real: to translate *techne* as 'technique' would be decidedly misleading. The inverted commas around their names are intended to stress that they were experiences very different from the modern ones.

This distance between the remote past and the present day is based on some fundamental characteristics of the archaic *technai*. One of the most important of these characteristics, and indeed at the source of all of them, is the *compulsiveness* of the Specialised action, an action from which the subject seems unable to abstain. In other words, the Specialisation is carried out not on the basis of other advantages and considerations, but compulsively, almost out of a liking for it, as an end unto itself.

The second characteristic is that the Specialised action is carried out in response to an inner need that the person feels to be inescapable: this entails, predictably, an *indifference on the part of the individual to the social mechanisms of reciprocal exchange*, and the related monetary aspects that normally govern all work. The archaic Specialist appears, as we would say today, completely 'uninterested' in such mechanisms.

From the compulsiveness noted above stems the final characteristic of the archaic mindset: the *indifference of the Specialist to the identity or social position of the beneficiaries* of their action. Such an attitude might be called 'universalistic', in the sense that it ignored the overwhelming particularism of archaic Society, filled as it was with social ascriptions of every kind, and hinged on the *quid pro quo*.[6]

[5]   *Sancti Danielis Stylitae vita antiquior*, 60-63.

[6]   For a more in-depth analysis of this point I refer the reader to Gilli, *Genesi dell'universalismo – Sociologia della società arcaica* (Florence: Nicomp Saggi, 2005), where the figures of the 'Bard', 'Ferryman', 'Host' and 'Warrior' are also analysed from this perspective.

These three characteristics can be grasped very well, for example, in 'The Ferryman', one of Aesop's fables. It is revealing in this connection, showing us the reactions of Society to the ingenuous universalism of an archaic Specialist:

›   On his travels, Diogenes the Cynic came to a stream that was flooded. He stood on the bank, unable to go any farther. One of *those fellows who are in the habit of carrying people across rivers* saw that Diogenes did not know what to do, so he approached the philosopher, picked him up, and kindly carried him across the water. Diogenes then stood on the opposite shore, bewailing the poverty that prevented him from rewarding the man for his good deed. While Diogenes was still pondering this state of affairs, the man saw another traveller who could not get across, so he ran off to offer his assistance. Diogenes accosted him and said, "Well, *I do not feel in your debt any longer* for the favour that you did me. It is not an act of judgment on your part, but an addiction."
(Fable 98 Chambry)

The protagonist is Diogenes, famous for making his home in a barrel, and the Cynics are often regarded as rebels against Society (at least in their attitude to 'consumption'). This fable suggests that such a rebellion was still 'internal' to Society. On the other hand, there were, on the margins of Society, and even more distant from it, archaic figures engaged in compulsively repeating (*...saw...ran off...*) a particular action, without distinguishing, among its beneficiaries, between those who were 'deserving' and those who were not; those who appeared solvent and those who did not; and, of course, without asking for anything in exchange. Figures who were not recognised as having any *techne* (*...who are in the habit of carrying...*), but rather as suffering from an '*addiction*' which they were unable to resist, and perhaps did not even wish to.[7]

The same characteristics (compulsiveness of the 'technical' action; indifference to the social standing of its beneficiaries; indifference to the monetary

[7]   In medieval legends about the ferryman (and future martyr) Christopher, the 'bearer of Christ' does not realise the nature of the child whom he has taken on his shoulders, and whose 'weight' threatens to sink him.

aspects of the 'technical' service) appear with even greater force in the 'Seafarer'. The case of the Phaeacians, who were, in Antiquity, the Seafarers *par excellence*, is revealing. In mythology, the Phaeacians lived on an isolated island and were in the habit of shipping back to their homeland all those who washed up on their shores. Not only did they do this without worrying about receiving anything in exchange, but they did so *for everyone*, without even ensuring whether that the castaway (as in the case of the most famous one, Odysseus) had not been shipwrecked for having offended Poseidon, god of the sea and father of the Phaeacians themselves. (In Odysseus' case, Poseidon would take revenge on the Phaeacians because of this custom of "giving safe escort to all men.")

The archaic nature – and dismeasure – of the 'Seafarer' *techne* is also apparent from his lack of concern for what was to be regarded in his historical era as 'normal' obstacles to navigation: darkness, bad weather, the lack of fixed routes and known points of references. Evidently this apparent recklessness adds colour to dismeasure: it is made possible by the fact that the technical skill of 'Navigation' (including his knowledge of the routes) is, for the Seafarer of the Origins, *built into the ship*, and he is at one with it. Hence the beautiful words of Homer:

> › For the Phaeacians have no pilots
>   nor any rudders after the manner of other ships,
>   but their barques themselves know the thoughts and intents of men;
>   they know the cities and fat fields of every people,
>   and most swiftly they traverse the gulf of the salt sea,
>   shrouded in mist and cloud, and never do they go in fear
>   of wreck or ruin...
>   (Homer, *Odyssey*, 8:557-563)

Even greater is the distance of another *techne*, the archaic 'Physician', from his apparent modern counterpart.
Today we see the Physician as a unitary figure, the bearer of knowledge structured as a system: a unity that is certainly not compromised by the presence of an ever-growing number of medical 'specialisms' within it.

This unity of the figure of the Physician, however, was originally not at all the case. Rather it was the endpoint of numerous 'Specialised' experiences, different from one another, even though they all referred to an injured or sick body. Only slowly did the idea emerge of what today we call 'general practice', a body of scientific knowledge capable of dealing with any ailment or injury; rather there were, alongside each other, unaware of each other, various *specific* segments of treatment, unconnected to any other. Machaon, the oldest doctor figure mentioned in literature (he was one of two medics active on the Greek side under the walls of Troy), seems to have confined himself to "the cutting out of arrows and the spreading of soothing simples."[8]
Some of these archaic Specialisations that would later come together in the unitary figure of the all-purpose doctor can still be discerned in the treatises of the *Corpus Hippocraticum* (dating from the 5th century BC onwards). One of them was the 'Bandager', who would appear to be rebuked in the Hippocratic texts for a possible dismeasure in his practice:

> › A bandage is a real medical treatment only when it is of use to the patient [...] elegant and ostentatious bandages, which are no use for anything, should be foregone [...]. Those who are sick are not looking for embellishment, but for what is useful [...].
>   (*De medico*, 4)

› *The Advent of Society and the End of the* Technai *of the Origins*

Up to now we have stressed, in the various Specialisations examined, the character of excess – expressed in different ways depending on the nature of the individual Specialisations – under the label of Dismeasure.
However, Dismeasure (and its manifestations, and the curbs placed upon it in Society), cannot be understood well if we do not go into more detail about the nature of the *technai*, i.e. of the Specialisations with which Dismeasure rubs shoulders.

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8   Homer, *Iliad*, 11:515.

So let us go back to the *techne;*, i.e. that entity which, in the model we have begun to expound, is the original form of individual experience, which is a 'specialised' experience, differing from one person to another.

To sum up: from the model in question it transpires that in the beginning, there were the *technai*, i.e. Specialised experiences; secondly, that they represented Diversity; and thirdly (we might conclude), that this Diversity turned into Complexity.

A very different picture is presented by the traditional model, first taught to us in primary school (under the heading 'Prehistory'), according to which the first men lived in absolute simplicity, poor in resources and often in need. Yet Simplicity and Need were the same for all, and this condition manifested itself as Equality. An Equality (we emphasise) that stemmed from a common Simplicity.

In the beginning therefore – asserts the traditional model – there were Simplicity and Equality. A state of Complexity was reached only gradually, with the advent of Society. According to this model, every technique, every art, every material and spiritual expression is a product of Society: it was born in Society, and it developed in Society. Gradually.

Challenging each of these postulates, however, the model followed here suggests, instead of Gradualness, *Violent Origins* linked to the abruptness of these processes, and to the way in which they occurred.

The model suggests that Society did not create Complexity, but has peremptorily *replaced* the original Complexity with a new Complexity shaped by Complexity itself.

It also suggests that Society was formed not simply following, but also *in opposition to* the *technai*.

Why "in opposition"?

The *technai* represent Diversity, and the diversity of the *technai* prevented the formation of a society. Society, to exist, needs a common register for its members, a shared 'language', the same for everyone.

To come into existence, Society had to introduce an opposing principle: Equality in opposition not to inequality but to Diversity).

Let us look more closely at this point.

As we have said, Diversity of origins was a decisive obstacle to any prospect of the establishment of Society: it signified the absence of any common register; it meant that individuals were unknowable, even unrecognisable, to one another.

(We might even wonder what on earth might drive a Blacksmith, for example, to 'get to know' a Mourner?)

How to overcome this condition? The myth illustrated by Plato in the *Protagoras* – a myth devoted to the great Distributions of Qualities of the Origins – suggests an answer.

Great was the compassion of Zeus for men, who, incapable of uniting, were prey to wild beasts. So Zeus, who in a first, founding Distribution had given all men *different techne*, thought of a second Distribution, this time *egalitarian*, which gave *each of them* a set of virtues: Respect and Justice.

Shared by all, the two political virtues of Respect and Justice allowed men to form Society. In fact these virtues established a common identity for all, the 'political' identity (i.e. as citizens) which – when laid on top of the 'technical' identity, different for each person – ensured mutual recognition.

(To this dual identity, this twofold level of each person's experience, we will return.)

Naturally, acceptance of this political identity was not a free choice.

It was an identity that could not be rejected, imposed by law on all. Zeus, patron of the impending Society, had accompanied his gift with threatening words:

› Moreover you must lay it down as my law, that if anyone is incapable of sharing respect and justice, he shall be put to death as a plague to the city.
(Plato, *Protagoras*, 322 d)

So it is clear that in this sense, Society was established in opposition to the *technai*. The extreme diversity that they represented was an obstacle to the very existence of Society.
(Violent origins...)

What were the consequences for the world of the *technai*?

According to the model, we are summarising briefly here, in the process of the establishment of Society, the gigantic original body of Knowledge represented by the *technai* was lost.

(Lost also in the sense that, reclassified in the light of modern criteria – what is science?, what is knowing? – an enormous part of this 'Knowledge' would not be regarded by us as such, and much of it would appear embarrassing, or distasteful).

Society intervened drastically in the *corpus* of the *technai*. The selection criterion followed was that of social Utility: *only the* technai *"that seemed useful, and intended to be useful"* had some 'technical' recognition, and were allowed into the City, although with profound modifications, as required by adherence to the principle of Utility.

This utility Judgement concerned all *technai*, including those about whom it might seem there could have been no possible doubts. This was the case with the 'Physician'. It should have been suffice to recall the famous 'Hippocratic Oath' which though very short, contains two exhortations to the physician to keep only the benefit to the patient in mind: the physician has to swear that the dietary regime he will prescribe is solely "for the good of the patient," and that he will only enter a house to which he is called "for the good of the patient."

Clearly, there was doubt over whether the pre-Hippocratic physician really stuck to these principles, i.e. whether he did not succumb to his *techne* impulses.

Throughout antiquity, from Homer to the Byzantine commentators on Homer (a period of around two thousand years), every reference to the *technai* is accompanied by considerations on their Utility for society: a Utility sometimes recognised, often denied and always the subject of discussion.[9]

Thus the *technai* were subjected by Society to an interminable 'Utility Judgement', which would have been strange enough if the *technai* had actually been a product of Society but they were not.

The existence of this Judgement seems rather to provide confirmation that

[9]   On this 'Judgement of Utility' the reader is referred to *Origini*, op. cit., pp. 467-99.

the *technai* are a body extraneous to Society: something it encountered along the way, and with which – despite having made it subordinate – it still has to reckon.[10]

Thus only some of the original *technai*, not all of them, were allowed into Society. The majority – those who appeared Useless, or socially harmful – were rejected in one way or another, either by erasing every trace of them or by 'pigeonholing' them (with modifications) far away from modern science and technology, and subjected to strong social control. *Technai* have vanished without a trace to the extent that today, even from the sympathetic perspective proposed here, we would be unable to represent them as Specialisations: they would seem too insubstantial, slight and evanescent, linked to simple moods, minimal patterns of behaviour, feeble reactions to situations.

Other more robust *technai* have also been placed into pigeonholes, as described above. There are however at least three niches in which it is possible to find echoes of the original Specialisations, and it seems important, for the purposes of this essay to refer to them briefly, for unlike the Specialisations accepted in society (i.e. the *technai* that were turned into 'techniques'), the dismeasure of the rejected Specialisations appears relatively undisturbed. (The 'walls' of these pigeonholes are there after all to provide any necessary control.)

The first niche is that of *psychiatric and neurological nosography*. From catatonia to self-harming behaviours, from voyeurism to neglect, from depression to various kinds of sociopathy, from kleptomania to Cotard's syndrome, the family likeness to the archaic *technai* that hovers around these 'entities' is more than merely a suspicion. And while the current diagnostic categories, increasingly analytical in their cutting across disciplinary boundaries, are less and less focused on concrete 'entities', many of the fig-

[10]   Control over the admission of bearers of *techne* into Society would never be definitive: for millennia there were examples of insurgencies, entailing the re-emergence of original characteristics. On this theme see Gilli, *L'individuazione – Teste date per molti*. Turin: Scriptorium, 1994.

ures we encounter, often anecdotally, in the psychiatric literature of the 19th and early 20th century (e.g. in Italy, in the works of Lombroso) are suggestive of this remote derivation. And it is not just psychiatric nosography: Plato is at once humorous and perfunctory in his portrayal of the 'Permanently Sick'. The Dismeasure of these conditions defined as 'pathological' is clearly (even if not completely) expressed in their perceived degree of 'clinical seriousness'.

The second pigeonhole into which the archaic *technai* were stuffed is that of *legally punishable deviant conduct.* From the thief to the assassin of the powerful, from the exhibitionist to the fire-raiser, from the necrophiliac to the plagiarist, numerous deviant forms of conduct, sanctioned without exception in all the Penal Codes of the world, suggest possible derivations. (However, alongside Specialists this pigeonhole probably also contains mere imitators, who use deviant conduct not out of any fondness for such behaviour, but to attain societally-valued ends.) Here the original Dismeasure is expressed in the 'seriousness' (perceived this time in criminal terms) of the act, as determined partly by factors such as the assumption of a deviant *habitus* on the part of the perpetrator, the circumstances, the relationship with the victim – we were about to say the beneficiary – and so on (some of these factors may now figure among the so-called 'aggravating circumstances').

The third pigeonhole is that of *ethics*, i.e. the repertoire of Vices and Virtues. Vices and Virtues, in modern society, are gradually fading out. They are ceasing to be concrete entities and turning into analytical categories: each of them has been broken down into a series of psychological qualities, thereby losing the unitary nature they once had. In short, modern ethical thought, like psychiatric diagnostics, is no longer based on 'types', but on analytical categories. A look at the ancient (or even merely old) treatise writers is illuminating here. Aristotle's treatises on ethics clearly and efficiently identify such genuine anthropological types, like the Profiteer, the Philanthropist and the Loser.

And then there is the formidable 'typological' repertoire built up by the

Church over centuries of work by its theologians and thinkers: behind the seven deadly Sins (Wrath, Lust, Sloth and Gluttony etc) the three theological Virtues (Faith, Hope and Charity), and the four cardinal Virtues (Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance), we may find countless Archaic Specialists. Moreover, these entities are not an invention of the Church, but rather an adaptation (with some substantial modifications) of Specialisations from the Origins.

It is interesting to note, in this connection, that only the Vices (Sins) are 'allowed' the original dismeasure; in fact – faced with excesses of vice/sin (dismeasure, in short), neither the Church nor 'the people' can do anything but disconsolately acknowledge their existence. For the Virtues, on the other hand, this is not the case. As we shall briefly demonstrate, when it comes to excesses of Virtue (dismeasure once more), 'the people' grumble, and the Church swiftly intervenes.

› *The Sense of Measure*

This point – social hostility towards excesses of Virtue – is a very important one.

When a person possesses several Virtues, to some extent, in their exercise, they temper one another.

Thus, in the case of the Four Theological Virtues, Fortitude, for example, is always moderated by Prudence, and guided by Justice. Temperance, for its part, serves to mitigate these three, each of which acts to give it backbone.

It is impossible, in short, to be a 'model of many virtues', and at the same time to be immoderate.

The picture changes drastically in the presence of a single Virtue, possessed and exercised in a Specialised way.

All the person's activities, all his resources in fact, are then concentrated on it. The person derives his identity from it. No space is given to other values, to other courses of action, except those that directly serve the Virtue itself. It is exercised without measure.

No society, great or small, conceives of the Dismeasure of Virtue; i.e. a Virtue that has no concerns outside of itself.
We will look at this point in Society, and in the Church.

In Society, Justice is certainly a much-praised virtue. Let us remember, moreover, that it is a 'political' Virtue, and Society shows some indulgence towards it, even in its immoderate forms. Yet for Society, Justice in these forms often proves itself to be the most 'socially dangerous' of the virtues.

In fact the Specialist in Justice exercises Justice 'to the bitter end', applying the precepts that he/she derives from some Authority, from some Principle, or even from him/herself to every situation and to anyone.
These are Universalistic precepts, and thus empty of content: Justice takes care to 'fill' them in what we today would call a projective and self-referential way:

›   For conscience, however, certainty of self is the pure, direct, and immediate truth: and this truth is thus its immediate certainty of self presented as content; [...].
(Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind*, p. 378) 11

Justice as Specialisation, in short, is nothing but "pure duty indifferent towards all specific content, and duty consists merely in *being thus indifferent towards it*" (p.357).

The men of Israel, while staying in the camps of Moab, carried on with the Moabite women, thereby arousing the wrath of the Lord. On Moses' orders, the offenders were to be put to death.

›   And, behold, one of the children of Israel came and brought unto his brethren a Midianitish woman in the sight of Moses, and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping before the door of

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11   This passage and the others cited here are taken from section VI.C ('Spirit in the Condition of Being Certain of Itself: Morality') of Hegel's work, cited here in J.B. Baillie's translation (London-New York: Macmillan, 1931).

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the tabernacle of the congregation. And when Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose up from among the congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; And he went after the man of Israel into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her belly.
(*Numbers*, 25:6-8)

Specialists in Justice are to be found in every Society, of any kind, and Society ends up repudiating them, even though at times it is willing to make use of them. It is psychologically impossible to carry out the task of cutting off heads (thousands of heads) without being Just. And it is impossible to do it if you are not 'indifferent to the content'; in other words if you allow yourself to be affected by it. Being Incorruptible is the banner of the Just. And Incorruptibility signifies (we insist) not letting yourself be moved by the situation, or by its concrete contents. In fact, "each content has upon it *the stain of determinateness*" (Hegel, p. 379). (Hegel, p.379)
The Just person is undoubtedly free of that stain.

Again: being Specialists of this kind means not compromising in "carrying out the *whole* of Christian justice *without distinguishing* whether a thing is big or small" (Abbé de Saint-Cyran) 12.
This signifies indifference to causes and circumstances, not in the innocent version of the Ferryman, but in the Warrior's more savage one.

Although gentler than Justice, Egalitarianism is also practised in Society, but with adjustments that take into account other values, other Virtues.
In Rousseau's hands, Egalitarianism becomes a Specialisation13,and is therefore exercised immoderately. It is true, however, that the very limited power that he had gave him access only to small situations, in which

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12   (1581-1643). A Jansenist theologian heavily committed to reform of the Church's customs, he was imprisoned for heresy by Richelieu (following his denunciation by the Jesuits) in the Vincennes fortress for five years. He died shortly after his release as a result of the sufferings he had undergone.

13   Although undertaken in a vicarious manner; Rousseau's own Specialisation, in fact, seems to have been a quite different one.

dismeasure merely raises a smile.

This is illustrated by an encounter Rousseau describes: out strolling with his wife, he met a group of little girls, accompanied by a nun, who stopped to play nearby. Then up came a wafer-seller with his drum and wheel: he had wafers to be won, but only by 'drawing' the right paid-for ticket. All the little girls wanted wafers, but only two or three of them had the money to buy a ticket. This situation of obvious inequality disturbed Rousseau, who asked the wafer-seller to let *all* the girls draw tickets, saying he would pay. Joy *all* round. A Specialist in Equality, however, does not limit himself to proclaiming it, but makes sure it is applied down to the smallest detail.

› Seeing that they were rushing up in a rather confused way, with their governess's permission *I made them all stand to one side and then go over to the other side one by one as they drew their tickets*. Although there were no blanks and there would be at least one wafer for *each* girl with nothing, so that *none* of them could be really upset, in order to make the festivities jollier still, I secretly told the wafer-seller to put his usual skill to unusual ends by making as many good numbers come up as he could possibly manage and that I would reward him for doing so. Thanks to this foresight, almost a hundred wafers were given out, although *each* young girl drew only one ticket each, *as I was unwavering on this, not wanting to encourage any abuses or show any favouritism* which might have led to some girls being upset. My wife subtly *persuaded those who had plenty of wafers to share them with their friends*, and in so doing *almost everyone* received the same number and the joy was spread *more evenly around* the group.
(*Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, Ninth Walk)

Rousseau adds that "throughout this whole process there were disputes, which were *brought before my judgement seat*," with "these little girls *coming one after another to plead their cause*," but these disputes only made the triumph of Equality more solemn, and more complete (it goes without saying that Rousseau succeeded in persuading the nun to take part in the Distribution as well).
He concludes: "that afternoon was one of those from throughout my life

that I remember with the greatest satisfaction."

Dismeasure is obviously unacceptable for Society, even if at certain moments it seems to have recourse to it. The struggle of Society against Specialisations passes through the struggle against Dismeasure.
Society, oriented as it is towards Multiplicity, towards the range-of-possibilities (such as those represented in the pairing of work and leisure) has come up with the idea of the Optional Activity (for example, the notion of a 'hobby').
More significantly, it has developed values such as the Happy Medium, the Sense of Proportion, and the Golden Mean (the *mesòtes* of the Greeks, the *medietas/aurea mediocritas* of the Romans).
These are the opposite of Dismeasure.

› Here the middle course, the right balance, traditionally regarded as ethical values, reveal with particular clarity their political, that is Societal centrality. The inordinate unilaterality of the original specialisations, their intensity, precluded any possibility of reproducing them; the middle course, on the other hand, the most accessible to all/each of the members, the richest in common contents, ensured, at the level of the personality, social values and practices, the desired societal reproducibility. No longer specialists in single virtues: everyone engaged in all the virtues, even though, necessarily, with the right balance [...].
(Gilli, *Origini*, p.375)

We find the same concerns, and the same solutions, in a 'society' that is not just much smaller, but extremely particular: the Church. Allow us to insert a parenthesis here. The reader will have noticed that many references are to religious subjects, or religious experiences of various kinds. However, this is not a choice we have made from a range of possibilities. Any research that sets out to gather material – ranging over millennia – on the bearers of *techne*, on their dismeasure and on their frequent insurgences, will find that a significant proportion of them are religious people.
This stems from the fact that religion possesses, to a much greater extent than other spheres, 'protective' qualities; in other words the capacity to

serve as a shelter for those who turn to it.

The religious sphere has offered innumerable Specialists protected spaces in which to practise their Specialisation.

They were 'protected' in the sense that even socially incongruous modes of behaviour could be tolerated as long as they were proposed as an expression of devotion to God; that is to say, by playing up the idea of the internalisation of religious values in everyone.

A man who spends his whole life perched in a tree (as the dendrites did); a voluntary prisoner in a tiny enclosure, constantly standing upright and motionless; a person ceaselessly racked with tears, totally defenceless: none of these would have survived for long without the protection guaranteed by their devotion to God, and by their appeal to him – an appeal all the more effective the more it appeared sincere.

Otherwise they would have been a target for anyone, perhaps even the civil authorities, and no trace of them would have been left.

This is why the religious experience teems with examples of dismeasure.

But for the same reasons as in civil Society, the Church too has always been hostile to any Specialisation, and the dismeasure that accompanies it.

t too has forcefully rejected the idea of practising just a single Virtue, and it too prescribes an *aurea mediocritas* (or, if you prefer, a *sancta mediocritas*); that is, a practice in which there are many Small Virtues.[14]

It could almost be said that there has never been an ascetic, a mystic, a saint, who has not been subjected, as a result of his Specialisation, to curbs and sanctions imposed by the Church.

Such curbs and sanctions have always been aimed at the monotropism of the individual, at, an the insistent aiming in a single direction, which would turn into dismeasure. The Church strongly urged polytropism, i.e. striving in more directions than one (all of them, obviously, virtuous), in order to reach the polyphonic Harmony-of-the-virtues.

One of the most striking examples is the virtue of Surrender: Surrender to

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14 In the opposite sense, thus the intransigent Saint-Cyran: 'There are monstrous virtues that are a mixture of Roman and Christian, and it would be much better if they were entirely pure, or that they did not exist at all [...]' (Port-Royal, MS 31, p. 106)..

God, to his will, in a complete abandonment of any will on the part of the subject, of any desire, any strategy, any initiative.

The Church perceived all the risks – both theological and devotional – of a Virtue of this kind, and immediately drew a distinction between 'true Surrender' and 'false Surrender'. 'False Surrender' (as the reader can easily imagine) is termed such because of its element of dismeasure.

› False surrender is the *exaggeration of the correctly understood surrender* of the soul to God. True spirituality *always finds the golden mean* [...].False surrender [...] is the distortion of one of the finest virtues of the Christian religion, that is to say of the trust in God [...]. Its various forms are nothing but the different ways – *but taken to the extreme* – in which the soul can leave God to take care of everything that concerns it [...].
(*Dictionnaire de Spiritualité, s.v.* 'Abandon', cols. 25-26)

Ultimately the dismeasure of the Surrendered ends up turning into expressions that the Church cannot accept. For example, it can find expression through renunciation, on the part of the Surrendered, of asking for anything through prayer, if he/she feels that to ask in any way is a manifestation of desire; or through limiting oneself, when faced with temptation, to a negative resistance, without taking active steps to banish them. It can even result in indifference to one's own eternal salvation.

What is the remedy?

› It is necessary for the surrender *not to be exclusive*. It is not a substitute for the other virtues: *it must accompany them*, not take their place [...].
(*op.cit.*, col. 15)

More explicitly still, it is better for surrender to be practised in a 'low-key' fashion:

› [...] I will also go so far as to say that, while the virtue of surrender, when all the elements that make it up are good in themselves, is always recommendable in theory, psychologically speaking and in practice *it will be good at times to downplay it*, for it is not always the first virtue to recommend [...].
(*op.cit.*, col. 16)

Subject to control of this kind, Surrender is no longer a Specialisation, but a mere supplementary Virtue, perhaps to be counselled as a simple antidote to assuage the anxiety of hyperactive religious people, or to reassure those who are worried that (in their Judgement) they live their own mystical experiences in too passive a way.[15]

It should also be pointed out, before taking our leave of the model, that the dismeasure of Specialisations was not a problem only for Society. It 'caused problems' even earlier, in that pre-Societal milieu inhabited solely by other Specialists.

In fact, the immoderate exercise of a Specialisation is at odds with the spheres of action of everyone else (and their Dismeasure).

As the legend has it, concerning men of the origins, "as often as they were banded together they did wrong to one another through the lack of civic *techne* [...]."[16]

An experience as powerfully self-centred as the *techne*, in which the expression of one's deep identity was realised, required a stage as free as possible from constraints.

It is true that certain *technai* need beneficiaries before they can be practised, e.g. the 'Physician', the 'Politician', the 'Ferryman' and the 'Host'; however, these other parties are not present as bearers of other *technai*, but as mere beneficiaries. The simultaneous presence of two different 'technical' experiences, both self-centred, would in fact entail limitation and disturbance for both.

Incapable of practising his own *techne* at a lower level of intensity, the Specialist practises it in isolation.

The association between *technai* and Isolation – an association that persists throughout the historical era – is mentioned innumerable times in ancient

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[15] Abandon', *cit.*, col. 17. Another indicator of how great is the Church's concern over the question of Surrender is the fact that the *Dictionnaire* devotes 23 columns to 'true surrender' and 25 to 'false surrender'.

[16] Plato, *Protagoras*, 322 b

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literature, always with deprecatory connotations.[17] In the ideology of Society, in fact, the model of the human being is not that of the isolated and secluded practitioner of a *techne*, but of the citizen who Participates. Isolation, however, is the necessary condition for someone to be able to exercise his own Specialisation fully (i.e. without measure).

› *Conclusions*

It is now possible to go back, with more material on which to base our analysis, to one of the questions we started out with, and to look at the differences between Dismeasure on one hand, and Lack of Restraint, or Intemperance, on the other.

Dismeasure, as we have seen, always has a 'technical' content, since it pertains to a Specialisation (this content, of course, varies with the Specialisation behind it).

Dismeasure is, so to speak, indifferent to any audience it may have, and even to the presence of possible beneficiaries.

These characteristics do not, however, appear to be present in Lack of Restraint and Intemperance. They too, obviously, have content, but this cannot be traced back to a *techne* of the subject.

In such content, one always sees a certain 'fortuitousness', almost an indifference to the Action that characterises the subject, in the sense that the real target of these modes of conduct seems to be some norm of society.

So Lack of Restraint and Intemperance have a strong social character, albeit one 'in opposition' to the prevailing norm.

t should be added that these characteristics are often exercised in the company of other people, something which it would not be easy to find in any reference to *techne*.

To put it another way, Lack of Restraint and Intemperance, from the perspective of the aforementioned model, do not have an archaic character;

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[17] For this point, on which we are unable to dwell here, see *Origini*, op. cit., chap. IX ('L'isolamento').

they do not evoke the Origins. So the question arises: what do they mean? What place do they have? This question is all the more important in that these two conditions are, in today's society, infinitely more common and evident than 'technical' Dismeasure.

It is not within the purview of this work to answer such questions, which require a different type of analysis from the one carried out for Dismeasure. However, in a wholly provisional manner, we might try to indicate a direction in which to look for an answer.

For this we will ask the reader to go back for a moment to one section of the model of the Origins: to the moment in which individual identity and self-presentation were forced to reckon with the advent of Society.

When this happened, as we have shown, identity became dual in a sense, having to accommodate both the original Virtue (the diverse Specialisation of each individual) and the political and participatory virtue (the same for everyone) imposed by nascent Society.

› Undergoing this obligatory process, the individual experience went from being 'transparent' to being 'opaque': *an outer surface was born, intended to be seen/looked at by others*, which contrasted with an inner nature. This outer surface, governed not by specialisation but by equality, not by optionality but by normativeness, no longer just by the needs of self-presentation but by those of relationship, had to be presented to a much wider public: Everyone.

It is this outer surface that allows/requires relations between people. It is not necessary for everyone to show each other the same surface (an objective that is not 'technically' attainable even for complex modern societies), but all should at least have a surface that – above and beyond the existence of mutually elusive inner natures (= diversity) – allows/requires all to make contact.

It is precisely a surface of this kind, relationally oriented, that the original *technai* do not possess: for this reason, notwithstanding their 'transparency', they appear, to the men of Society, incomprehensible and untrustworthy (deceptive *techne*), and with anxiety and hostility the bearer of *techne* is asked to make clear his identity [...].

(Gilli, *Origins*, op. cit., pp. 378-9)

So with the advent of Society, identity ceased to be an *internal* function limited to self-presentation and became a complex function that was also *external,* in the sense that it had to take account of the situation in which the person found himself. It had to reckon with the gaze of the Other, and meet the requirements of relationality.

Our suggestion is that, while Dismeasure, as we have tried to show, concerns the inner core of identity, it is on this 'outer' level that the genesis inherent in the individual strategies of Lack of Restraint and Intemperance – and the ensuing modes of conduct – could be placed.

Still on the level of suggestion, we might point out that these strategies, having to take the outside world into account, are inevitably subjected to strict control by the culture of Society. The deviant or variant subcultures from which the Unrestrained and Intemperate seem to draw inspiration are in fact part of this general culture.

It is possible, of course, that some of these people channel inner drives of 'content' into strategies of Lack of Restraint or Intemperance, but it is probably the subcultures of reference that suggest *what* and *how* to strike. Perhaps it would be opportune to refer first of all to these subcultures, and to the choices they make of the conventions and practices of society to be targeted.

Gian Antonio Gilli

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› Fabio Turato, *La crisi della città e l'ideologia del selvaggio nell'Atene del V secolo a.C.*, Edizioni dell'Ateno & Bizzarri, Rome 1979.

Biography

› Gian Antonio Gilli (Sanremo, 1938) has carried out sociological research in three areas: business (chiefly at Olivetti's Sociological Research Centre), psychiatric hospitals (Gorizia, Limbiate and Parabiago) and schools (crèches and nursery schools), investigating both changes in organizational structures and the adaptation of individuals to those structures. These interests have gradually come to focus on 'imperfect adaptations', which reflect a conflict between the individual and the structure of society. From this perspective he has developed a nativist model, aimed at understanding original individual endowments. His current field of interest is behaviours with a predominantly corporeal basis (rhythmic actions, stereotypies, self-harm, etc.), analysed as possible indicators of primitive specialisa-

tions not sanctioned by society. The material of this research has consisted of, in addition to analysis of ancient sources on the bodily experiences of ascetics and mystics, protocols for systematic observation in crèches and institutions for patients with grave psychophysical disabilities. A professor of Sociology, he has taught in several Italian universities. Among his works of greatest interest to the reader of this book, it is worth mentioning *Origini dell'eguaglianza – Ricerche sociologiche sull'antica Grecia* (Turin: Einaudi, 1988); *L'individuazione – Teste date per molti* (Turin: Scriptorium, 1994); *Arti del corpo - Sei casi di stilitismo* (Cavallermaggiore: Gribaudo, 1999) and *Genesi dell'universalismo – Sociologia della società arcaica* (Florence: Nicomp, 2005).

Michele Ernandes

The triune brain and the neurobiological bases of thought and behaviour

1. Introduction

Animals interact with the environment, composed as it is of inanimate matter, energy or other living beings, through a particular cellular arrangement of specialized cells, neurons and glial cells that, as a whole, form the nervous system. This system is wired to respond to stimuli both external and internal.

The author quotes his bibliographical sources directly within the text, using the system 'Author, date and page', thus footnotes are superfluous. The sources of well-known quotes from established writers (e.g. Leibniz) are not given.

Its activity can provide stimuli for other behaviour: effectively, the activity of the nervous system is a continuum, varying according to the stimuli it receives, and involving smaller or larger segments of its organization.

With particular reference to the brain, neurologists have pointed out that while consciousness and all other activities require the presence of a brain, the opposite is not always true. The brain continues to function even when we are not conscious, even when we are not perceiving, reasoning or feeling pleasure or pain. This difference in behaviour with respect to other organs prompts the conclusion that all ongoing mental activities originate in the brain. The brain is an organ that carries out its activity incessantly, even when there are no external stimuli.

This continuous activity of the nervous system forms the physiological basis of 'thought'. 'Thinking' is an activity (i.e. "something animals do"), and therefore – in the broader sense – it is a behaviour. To assess how much of human behaviour can be attributed to genetic make-up as opposed to learning (or, in other words, how much is nature and how much nurture, or history) is a problem that has interested a great many scholars and produced lively debate between advocates of the opposing theses over the last quarter of the 20th century. Today the most extreme positions have been abandoned, and we are moving towards greater comprehension of the inborn and learned components of behaviour. We might state that genetically programmed behaviour such as neonatal reflexes (ex. sucking, grip) do exist in human beings, while other types of behaviour require a process of learning. In the latter case, what is preset is a system capable of learning: the 'container', not the 'content'. On this subject, Lorenz writes, "We do not learn to think, but we learn, a bit like a vocabulary, the symbols of things and the relationships between them, and what we have learned is inserted in an existing framework, without which we would not be capable of thinking, and without which we would not be part of humankind."

This clearly evokes a famous phrase by Leibniz: *Nihil est in intellectu quod non fuerit prius in sensu, nisi intellectus ipse.* (Nothing is in the mind without being first in the senses, except for the mind itself.)

The nervous system is subdivided into the Autonomic Nervous System, i.e. vegetative life, regulating the internal or visceral activities of the organism;

and the Sensory-Somatic Nervous System, i.e. our relationships with the outside world. The Autonomic Nervous System, which is divided into sympathetic and parasympathetic, is programmed to perform a specific though modulated range of actions that are not controlled by the will; on its own, it is incapable of learning, though its activity can be modified as a result of learning acquired from the Sensory-Somatic Nervous System (the classic example of this is Pavlovian conditioning); in short, its action is coordinated by different encephalic structures (e.g.. the hypothalamus) that operate in an unconscious way. The Sensory-Somatic Nervous System, however, even in the framework of a structural uniformity pertaining to each species, to a greater or lesser extent among its components, has the capacity to 'learn' things from the external environment, and therefore to modify its activity and the resulting behaviour of the organism.

The genetic and environmental components vary in the different types of behaviour, because the cerebral structures that control them are equipped with greater or lesser plasticity, and therefore may be influenced differently by the environment: at one extreme, we have entirely programmed behaviour (described as 'innate', to use a term seldom heard nowadays); but generally we have behaviour based on interaction between the nerve structures and the external environment, in other words from learning (acquired behaviour). This is a particular type of behaviour that cannot be observed from the outside, except with the aid of particular tools that provide images of the brain, revealing the activities of its parts in different situations.

The nerve structures on which physiological abilities, and therefore behaviour, depend, are the product of a long evolutionary process during which they have been selected to provide the best adaptations to the external environment (in relation to environmental needs and existing conditions).

›   2. A Triune Model of Brain and Behaviour (MacLean 1973)

P. D. MacLean (1970-1990) elaborated a model of *mammal* (and particularly *ape* or *human*) brain structure and evolution. He described it as a *Triune brain*, because he located in it three principal phylogenetic struc-

tures which, even though already present to various degrees in the brains of anamni, developed and characterized their functions in amniotic vertebrates (with special reference to primates), and became integrated during evolution. He termed these three basic types *reptilian* (protoreptilian, R-complex), *old mammalian* (paleomammalian, limbic system) and *new mammalian* (neo-mammalian).

The R-complex. In primate (and human) brains we may distinguish a group of nervous centres made up of the upper spinal cord, parts of the midbrain and the diencephalon, and some nervous centres called basal ganglia: this set is termed R-complex by MacLean. The basal ganglia consist of the striatum and pallidum as main components, and of the substantia nigra, ventral tegmental area and subthalamic nucleus as smaller components. MacLean wrote (1973: 8) that the protoreptilian brain in mammals is fundamental for genetically constituted forms of behaviour such as selecting home sites, establishing territory, engaging in various types of display, hunting, homing, mating, breeding, imprinting, forming social hierarchies, and selecting leaders According to Isaacson (1982: 246) in mammals, the R-complex "is necessary for ritualistic displays and the averbal communication associated with them. At the human level … certain behavioural tendencies are due to an inheritance of dispositions mediated by this same, primal brain region. These include certain violent reactions, the preference for routine or 'ritualistic' actions, and some forms of displacement activities."

Rita Levi Montalcini (1999) summed up the behaviour caused by reptilian cerebral structures as follows: "In the infinitely varied and complex range of the activities of human beings, some stand out for their universal character and their lack of flexibility or of possibility to be modified by capacities of reason and cognition. Attachment to the land where one was born, the sense of nostalgia that lures us back there, liturgical and ritual ceremonies common to all religions and mythologies, blind obedience to a chosen leader, all reveal a legacy of needs indelibly set in our genetic heritage."

The Limbic System. From fish to reptiles, the basal parts of the telencephalon are more abounding in neurons than the dorsal parts, which appear

as a thin mantle, the pallium, or cortex, that covers the lateral vesicles. In 1909 Ariëns Kappers termed the lateral cortex (whose main derived region is called piriform cortex) as *paleopallium*, and the medial cortex (whose main structure is the hippocampus) as *archipallium*. In these nouns the paleo- and archi- prefixes no longer have the temporal or evolutionary significance that early 20th-century authors intended give them. Their significance, in relation to pallium, is now only spatial. Paleo- and archi-pallium neurons are set out in three layers, a disposition termed the allocortex. In the phylogenetically subsequent neocortex, derived from the dorsal pallium, neurons are disposed in six layers to form the isocortex. Paleo- and archi-pallium form the largest regions of the Limbic System, which also includes the olfactory bulb, septum, fornix, amygdala, and cingulate gyrus.

MacLean (1990) identifies three main limbic subdivisions located respectively in the amygdala, septum and thalamus that are a source of afferents to the limbic cortex.

a) The amygdalar division comprises the amygdala together with the frontotemporal limbic cortex; the amygdala is also connected with the hippocampus. This division is primarily concerned with fear, aggression, and mimic judgment.

b) The septal division projects to the entire hippocampal formation and also includes the entorhinal cortex (*gyrus hippocampi*). This division is mainly connected with sexual activities. The amygdala and septum serve as telencephalic internodes for neural circuits relating the rostrally located olfactory apparatus: all together they form the rhinencephalon.

c) The thalamocingulate division is comprised of the mesocortical cingulated areas receiving afferents from the anterior and other thalamic nuclei. It also comprises mammillary bodies of the hypothalamus. Unlike other parts of the limbic system, the thalamocingulate division seems to have no representation in the reptilian brain (MacLean 1990: 247) or, more precisely, in the lizard-like brain. Nursing and audio-vocal communication between offspring and parents evolved also in some sauropsids, especially archosaurs, as extant birds and crocodilians show. The thalamocingulate division is concerned with three cardinal behavioural developments that,

in addition to endothermy, characterize the evolutionary transition from ancient reptiles to mammals. These are:

a) *nursing*, in conjunction with maternal care;

b) *audio-vocal communication* for maintaining maternal-offspring contact; and

c) *play* (MacLean 1990: 380).

Nursing is due to the action of oxytocin, the mammalian hypothalamic hormone that derives from the reptilian hormone mesotocin. This change may be considered the biochemical border marking the transition from the *primordial* limbic system of ancient lizard-like reptiles to the *regular* limbic system of mammals.

A central role in the limbic system is played by the amygdala which, being very developed in mammals, finds its precursor or homologous nuclei in all vertebrates. Another important modification affected the *vagus* nerve. Only mammals have a myelinated, and therefore faster, vagus, which means that heart activity may be quickly linked to the limbic system's emotions. According to the *polyvagal theory* (Porges 2001), in mammals both neocortical and reptilian structures (primarily limbic ones) control the activity of the vagus and the other cranial nerves that govern facial expressions and vocalizations in social interactions: such non-verbal communications of unconscious emotions and conscious intentions constitute the basis of primates' social life.

The neocortex is, on the human level, the seat of language and, in general, it is the seat of that behaviour that allows a person to tackle new and unexpected situations. The ability to foresee the future resides there. We owe conscious thought to the neocortex: it is the main seat of such mental capabilities as self-consciousness or the connections of causality (as we shall see in §.3).

The whole brain. As MacLean (1973a: 7; 1973b: 114) makes clear, the three basal brain types show differences both in structure (1) and chemistry (2), and so are capable of functioning somewhat independently; however, they are in no sense separate, autonomous entities: they must intermesh and

function together as a triune brain (3).

(1) As far as structure is concerned, in the R-complex neurons form masses (nuclei or ganglia); in the limbic system besides nuclei there are pallial (or cortical) structures, in which neurons are disposed in three (allocortex) or more layers (mesocortex). The neocortex has neurons laid out in six layers (isocortex).

(2) As regards the chemistry, researchers have found less marked differences: while, for example, acetylcholine is typical, but not exclusive, of the R-complex (MacLean 1990: 38-43), dopamine and serotonin are well allocated in all three brain types.

Dopamine is synthesized by hydroxylation and subsequent decarboxylation of the amino acid tyrosine (which may also derive from phenylalanine). In mammals there are four main dopaminergic pathways: (a) the nigro-striatal, (b) the infundibular, (c) the mesolimbic and (d) the mesocortical. Their main functions are, respectively: (a) tuning of sensorimotor programmes, (b) regulation of hormone release in the pituitary gland, (c) modulation of sensory perception, maintaining reward values from life experiences and thus, motivation up to addiction or aversion, and (d) regulation of frontal cortex activity.

Serotonin (or 5-Hydroxytryptamine or 5-HT) is a compound produced in some nervous centres starting from the amino acid tryptophan, and it exerts its effects by acting as a classic neurotransmitter or as a neuromodulator (these effects are due to postsynaptic receptors: there are many 5-HT receptors which diversify serotonin's effects in the various encephalic regions). Serotoninergic neurons are present in all animals that possess nervous systems, both Protostoma and Deuterostoma. In vertebrates, nervous centres in which 5-HT is produced are called raphe nuclei.

According to ten Donkelaar (1998: 1417) "In reptiles, only two raphe nuclei can be distinguished: i.e. the rostral, mainly small-celled nucleus raphes superior and the large caudal nucleus raphes inferior containing medium-sized to very large cells." The caudal part of the inferior raphes nucleus may correspond to the raphes pallidus of mammals, the rostral part to the

mammalian nucleus raphes magnus. In the reptilian nucleus raphes superior may be hidden a primordium of the mammalian nucleus raphes dorsalis. It seems that the mammalian raphes obscurus has no homologue in the reptilian brain.

Hence, the evolution of the mammalian serotonergic system is an example of the evolution of the brain, according to MacLean's model. In fact, we may distinguish in it a reptilian part (which is a regulator system inherent to the R-complex itself and to the spinal cord), and a limbic part (which greatly increases control over the R-complex and moreover has connections with the neocortex), and in particular the prefrontal cortex which, according to MacLean (1978), helps us to see deeply into other people's feelings, while damage increases egoistic behaviour (Cory, 2002).

Similar considerations must be borne in mind with regard to the evolution of the mammalian dopaminergic system. The two monoaminergic systems have opposite functions in many brain regions (the serotonergic being mostly inhibitory, the dopaminergic is mostly exciting), and their evolutions must have occurred in parallel (and of course diversely in relation to the different evolutionary pressures faced by the various species of vertebrates). In primates, and even more so in humans, their balance is very important, behavioural problems being caused by the hypotonia of one or the other. We shall return to this issue in § 4:

(3) We must note that the three brain types do not intermesh and function together in a sort of idyllic harmony, but each one mutually influences the others, in a dynamic equilibrium that may not produce (particularly in humans) the best ethical result, or rational thought. In other words, having regard to environmental situations, conflicts may arise among the tendencies of the three brain types: it may be that one prevails over the other two, or that one acts as a mediator in the conflict between the other two.

›   3. Brain and Mind

3.1 *Behavioural, emotional, and cognitive operators.*
As d'Aquili & Newberg wrote (1999: 21), "It is important to state that it is difficult to define accurately what the mind is and what the brain is. For that matter, it is equally difficult to distinguish precisely how the mind and brain are related – where one ends and the other begins. Certainly, the mind/brain question has been considered by philosophers, scientists, and theologians throughout history. Here we would like to use the following definitions for the brain and the mind. The brain is the substantive underlying part of human thought, experience, and emotions. In other words, it is the bodily organ that allows us to think, feel, and receive input from the external world. The mind is generally considered to be the thoughts and feelings themselves. Thus, the mind is the product of the functioning of the brain."
So we might say that the brain is matter, and the mind is energy, but not energy that can be defined and quantified only in terms of physical magnitude; rather, it is organized to carry 'information'. This particularity may constitute a starting point for the scientific study of the mind: it is not much, but it is more or less the sum of what we know.
According to evolutionary psychologists, the human mind "...is organized into modules or mental organs, each with a specialized design that makes it an expert in one arena of interaction with the world. The modules' basic logic is specified by our genetic program. Their operation was shaped by natural selection to solve the problems of the hunting and gathering life led by our ancestors in most of our evolutionary history" (Pinker 1997: 21). We obviously agree with the main lines of evolutionary psychology, drawing on our hunter-gatherer ancestors' past: in the evolutionary landscape we depict, we search for the biological bases of human ideas and behaviours in steps; first in reptiles, then in ancient mammals and finally in primates.

However, the module concept is under debate; instead of being described in terms of modules, the mind may be described by means of the operator concept, as proposed by d'Aquili & Newberg. Examining the *global functioning of the brain* (i.e. the *mind*), d'Aquili & Newberg (1999) consider its primary functional components, referred to as *cognitive operators*, as having specific functions localized in specific regions of the brain and performing activi-

ties that underlie the capacities of the mind. Newberg and d'Aquili (2001) describe eight cognitive operators: the *holistic*, the *reductionist*, the *causal*, the *abstractive*, the *binary*, the *quantitative*, the *emotional*, and the *existential*.

As these authors note (2001: 187), the cognitive *operator* concept is clearly "similar to the concept of cognitive *modules* in that both are functions and are localizable to one or more specific areas of the brain." However, cognitive operators differ from cognitive modules, because cognitive modules represent more specific functions, localized to particular brain structures, whereas cognitive operators refer to more generalized functions of many areas of the brain: *modules* are concerned more with the anatomy of the brain, while *operators* more with the physiology of the brain (or of the encephalon).

However, brain functions also produce behaviour and unconscious knowledge. Let us extend the operator concept from cognitive to encephalic. *Encephalic operators* may be defined as behavioural, emotive or cognitive operators controlling specific functions performed by specific parts of the encephalon.

The brains of our distant lizard-like reptile ancestors and of the subsequent mammal-like reptiles, our immediate ancestors,, produced behavioural, emotional and cognitive functions by means of behavioural, emotional and cognitive operators.

Some of the functions of the brain of these ancestors may be located in the R-complex of mammals. So in the mammalian R-complex, we may define such *behavioural operators* as:

a) the *nutrition/homeostatic* operator, for food and water needs, and for the endocrinal regulation of life activities. It is mainly a hypothalamic operator and for many activities acts by means of the pituitary gland.

b) the *specific* operator, which allows for the acquisition of a species' identity by imprinting (a fast form of learning that occurs only during a critical period in the development of an organism);

c) the *sexual* operator (for distinct male or female behaviour): its primary

component may be located in the hypothalamic medial preoptic nucleus, which produces gonadotropine-releasing factors, differs in size between male and female individuals, and is "crucially involved in the consummatory phase of masculine copulatory behaviour" and "plays a prominent role in feminine sexual behaviour" (Voogd et al. 1998: 1871). Another important behavioural component of this operator lies in the accumbens nucleus.

d) the *isopraxic* (or mimetic) operator: this allows animals within a species to act in the same way as each other and is "implicated in conspecific recognition and in most forms of communication involved in self-preservation and in the procreation of the species" (MacLean 1990: 144); conversely, it serves to promote species isolation; it is evident when conspecific animals behave in the same way at the same time (group or mass isopraxis);

e) the *territorial* operator: animals mark their territory with smells or other signals of boundaries, warning other (conspecific) animals not to intrude;

f) the *hierarchic* operator, whose primary component most likely lies in the *pallidum*; it is fundamental for engaging in various types of display.

The brains of our reptile ancestors and subsequent mammal-like reptiles were endowed with some cognitive functions, such as those of the following operators:

I) the *space* operator, which allows an animal to know its territory;

II) the *time* operator, which permits a sense of the chronology of events;

III) the *sequence* operator: from the interaction of the former operators, an animal can know that after an event a specific one follows or may follow;

IV) the *display meaning* (semiotic) operator: this allows the right understanding, often species-specific, of behaviour and non-verbal communication between individuals within the same species (and to some extent, interaction with different species). It moreover permits a symbolic codification of some behaviour (for example, in primates, the penis display made by a male towards another male is not a sexual presentation, but a challenge display), and lets the animal receiving the message, decode and correctly interpret the behaviour it sees (e.g., the male to whom penis display is directed must understand it as a challenge display and not as a sexual presentation). In short, the semiotic operator allows for the correct comprehension of the behaviour operators' actions as listed above.

In mammals, some of these functions could be developed in parts of the limbic system (i.e. space and time operators); other functions seem to be retained by R-complex (i.e. sequence and display meaning operators). The main site of R-complex cognitive operators seems to be the dorsal striatum; i.e. the caudate nucleus and the rostral part of the putamen.

The mammalian limbic system may be considered the main site of several *emotional operators*, as follows:

a) The *fear* operator. This allows graded behavioural output with regard to safe, unsafe and life- threatening environments. Its main nervous centre is the amygdala, which acts in connection with the cortex, the hypothalamus, the parasympathetic system (mainly the vagus nerve) and the sympathetic system.

b) The *aggression* operator: we may distinguish between various aggression operators, such aspredatory/interspecific aggression and intraspecific aggression. The last is linked to the hierarchic operator of the R-complex and has its limbic component mainly in the amygdala.

c) The *mimic judgment* operator, which likewise has its focus in the amygdalar complex,is very important for those mammals (mainly primates) able to change their facial expression. .

d) The '*falling in love*' operator, which allows the establishment of coupling bonds.

e) The *call* operator activity, which is triggered when a pup feels neglected by its parents; and which in turn is triggered in them too.

f) The *nursing* operator activity, which, as stated above, depends on the release of oxytocin. The call and nursing operators are not active only in or around infancy: in some emotional circumstances they are active even among adults (this happens in *homo sapiens* more than in other species because it is a *neothenic* species, meaning infancy features and behaviour persist or may reappear throughout life).

g) The *attachment* operator allows for the establishment of a peculiar bond between pups and parents. It does not operate from birth in all species, and this makes possible the adoption of a forsaken (orphan) pup by other adults. The action of this operator becomes evident when the pup is able to distinguish between its neighbours, preferring some and fearing others.

The *play* operator is both behavioural and cognitive,, and allows pups to learn specific behaviour according to given circumstances. Thus the behaviour of mammals is less fixed and stereotyped than that of most reptiles and birds. Acquired behaviour and knowledge are, as a rule, proportional to the playing age period, which varies both among species and within a species: among humans, experimental scientists may be considered as boys with toys, despite their adult features).

The limbic system may be considered (especially at human level) the primary seat of a *cognitive operator*: the existential one.
The *existential* (or *ontological*) operator assigns a sense of existence or nonexistence to the sensory information processed by the brain. It probably gives also the sense of existence to the thoughts elaborated by other parts of the encephalon, such as the R-complex or the Neocortex. In other words, this operator gives a sense of reality to beliefs, regardless of whether they are non-contradictory or contradictory, or counterintuitive, according to neocortical operators.

Emotional and existential operators may generally be assumed as mammal functions. In humans, the existential operator, which is cognitive but not necessarily rational, is linked to limbic emotional operators. Concerning the feelings associated with knowledge of fundamental truths, MacLean stated (1973: 123): "It seems that the ancient limbic system provides the ingredients for the strong affective feeling or conviction that we attach to our beliefs, regardless of whether they are true or false!"

The human neocortex is the main site of most *cognitive operators*. The following list summarizes data from d'Aquili & Newberg (1999) and d'Aquili & Newberg (2001) for human mind operators, from the holistic to the quantitative. To these we might also add the *linguistic*, *eureka* and *metacognitive* operators.

a) The *holistic* operator enables the organism to view reality as a whole (*gestalt*). It probably rises from the activity of the parietal lobe in the non-dominant hemisphere (in most humans, the right one).

b) The *reductionist* operator allows the mind to see the whole broken down

into its component parts; it functions in the opposite manner to that of the holistic operator, and resides primarily in the dominant parietal lobe (in most humans, the left one), involved in reductionist and analytical processes, while the non-dominant parietal lobe is involved in holistic and synthetic ones. The corpus callosum allows for connection between the two parietal lobes, permitting the mind to combine the holistic and reductionist approaches.

c) The *causal* operator enables the mind to interpret all reality as a sequence of specific causes and effects. It is believed to result from the connections between the left frontal lobe and the left orientation association area; it spontaneously and actively tends to impart a sense of causality on all the events. This function of the mind is genetically hardwired in all humans, and may be called *the causal imperative*, or, according to Levy-Bruhl, *the need of explanation.*

d) The *abstractive* operator is the *mind's taxonomist*; it permits the organism to form general concepts. These abstract concepts are constructed from the perception of individual facts and various individual objects, derived from inductive functions. These operators probably reside in the inferior portion of the parietal lobe. V. Ramachandran offers experimental evidence that the angular gyrus, belonging to the inferior parietal lobule, plays a major role in metaphoric understanding.

e) The *binary* operator organizes reality by reducing the most complicated relationships to simple pairs of opposites. According to d'Aquili & Newberg, it resides in the left parietal lobe. However, its deep-set, stereotyped and ultimately irrational activity suggest that its unconscious origin of this operator (which may then be manifested on a neocortical conscious level) is the R-complex, especially in the caudate nucleus. The activity of the caudate nucleus may be found on the cerebral surface on the parietal lobule level; indeed, as we shall see shortly, the associative cortical areas have various relationships with the base ganglia.

f) The *quantitative* operator permits the abstraction of quantity from the perception of various elements, and allows mathematical operations such as the estimation of time and distance, and also an awareness of quantities (food or enemies) approaching, and the need to order objects or sequences of events by some numerical system. It probably resides in the general area

of the inferior parietal lobe.

g) The *linguistic* operator has two neocortical components: Broca's area in the frontal lobe and Wernicke's area in the superior temporal gyrus, near the inferior parietal lobule. The former area permits correct speech, while the latter allows for the understanding of the meanings of words or sentences heard. We may note that this area is contiguous with the abstractive (and metaphoric) area. The linguistic operator may be considered the cortical correspondent and extension of the reptilian semiotic operator.

h) The *eureka* operator lets us succeed in problem-solving rapidly, by unconscious elaboration rather than by trial and error: the solution reaches the consciousness suddenly, often while the subject is thinking of or doing something else. Mindful of Archimedes' exclamation uttered when the solution of a problem suddenly rose to his consciousness while in the bath, this operator may be termed the *'eureka'* ("I have found it!") operator.

i) The *metacognitive* operator permits the awareness of one's own mental states and relates behaviour to social or environmental circumstances; it allows the development of a 'theory of the mind'; i.e. an awareness of what is in other people's minds. It probably resides in frontal lobes, mostly in the right hemisphere, and 'mirror neurons' may contribute to this operator. In primates, including humans, mirror neurons facilitate isopraxic behaviour. 'Theory of mind', 'metarepresentation', 'meta-cognition', 'mind-reading' and 'mental state attribution' are terms that refer to the "awareness of one's own mental states, beliefs, attitude and experiences, the relationship between these and external events, and also of the mental states of others and the implications for their motives and intentions," as summarized by Stuss *et al.* (2001: 279). They note that only humans and a few species of great apes are capable of attributing mental states to others; that is of possessing levels of intentionality of the first or second order. As illustrated by Dunbar (2004), the term 'intentionality' refers to mental activities expressed by verbs such as to know, to believe, to think, to want, to desire, to hope, and so on. To be aware of a belief means possessing intentionality of the first order (or level), while to have a belief regarding the beliefs of others constitutes intentionality of the second order. If the first subject has an idea of what a third subject is thinking about the intentions of the second, he reaches a third-order intentionality. This capacity makes it possible for

human beings to understand the plot of a theatre play, a film or a story in which the events are related to the intentions of the various characters, and the viewer or reader is capable of understanding, for example, who is being deceived, by whom and why, and what happens when a given subject shifts from a false belief to a true one. Dunbar believes that human beings can normally reach fourth- or fifth-order intentionality, encountering difficulties only at the sixth level, beyond which he thinks it is practically impossible for a human to go.

We may assume that some of these cognitive operators function in mammals, because of their neocortical development and the complexity of connections among cortical centres. The holistic, reductionist, abstractive, quantitative, eureka and metacognitive operators may be assumed to work differently in the various orders of *mammalia*, presumably more in *proboscidea* (elephants), *cetacea* (dolphins) and *primates* (apes). The binary operator, however, seems to be typically human, as well as the quantitative and other operators (e.g. the linguistic and abstractive) which allow for the development of symbolic mathematics.

3.2 *Complex interactions among operators (especially, or peculiarly, in humans)*

A) The Hyperactive Agent-Detection Device

The causal operator, endowed as it is with a high abstractive ability, is produced due to human neocortical complexity. As far as is known, it seems to result from the inclusion and development of a mammalian neocortical operator (with more or fewer abilities according to the species), and may be termed an 'agency-detection operator': it attributes intentionality as a concrete cause of phenomena.

Agency operators evolved in mammals by means of natural selection, not only for intruder detection, but also for predator detection. Barrett (2000) terms this brain function an *agent-detection device.* As suggested by Boyer for humans (2001: 145): "Our evolutionary heritage is that of organisms that must deal with both predators and prey. In either situation, it is far more advantageous to overdetect agency than to underdetect it. The expense of false positive (seeing agents where there are none) is minimal, if we can abandon

these misguided intuitions quickly. In contrast, the cost of not detecting agents when they are actually around (either predator or prey) could be very high." Thanks to this over-developed neocortex, *homo sapiens* may be said to possess a developed agency-detection operator, termed by J. Barrett (2000) a *Hyperactive/Hypersensitive Agent-Detection Device* (HADD), (2004), with a rationalistic component due to the neocortex (the causal operator), but also may be influenced by reptilian and limbic components (operators) that are not rational.

In reptiles and birds, R-complex has the ability to record temporal event sequences. Such sequences in order of time perform the function of sequences in order of cause: this leads to routine activities, in conformity with previous situations, ritualistic behaviour or associations between events and behaviour that may involve both the central and autonomous nervous systems. Pavlov's conditioning experiments show that an animal may unconsciously and automatically create connection stimuli and answers that normally have no link.

Natural selection has favoured the survival and reproduction of those animals – provided with a rudimentary forebrain – that succeed in linking and recording events that happen in a temporal sequence. An individual endowed with such an ability is fitter because s/he may anticipate favourable events, repeat positive and avoid negative experiences. Indeed, while it is true that not all events that happen in a temporal order are also linked by a causal order, it is nonetheless true that all events that have a causal connection have also a temporal sequence: temporal relations are redundant in comparison to causal ones, but for animal survival it is better to have too much than too little. This 'pseudo-causal' association made by the R-complex is the fundamental, and virtually the only, link among events that reptiles and birds may 'think'. It is fundamental also for mammals, but they can elaborate sensorial or recorded data by means of the neocortex. Compared to a reptile, a mammal more easily forgets a connection if it does not reoccur: this ability is linked to brain complexity.

In mammals, the R-complex is connected with the neocortex in a more complicated way than in reptiles and birds. In primates, input from the frontal lobe (motor cortex) terminates mostly in the lateral putamen to

constitute the sensorimotor striatal region. Inputs from the hippocampal and para-hippocampal gyri, the cingulated cortex and the amygdala terminate in the nucleus accumbens and part of the olfactory tubercle to constitute the limbic striatal region. Inputs from the prefrontal cortex as well as from associative areas of the parietal and temporal lobes terminate in the head of the caudate nucleus and the rostral part of the putamen to constitute the associative striatal region. So in primates' R-complex we may locate at least four components:

1) a sensorimotor component (which shows its strength in Parkinson's disease);

2) a limbic component;

3) an associative one, as described above;

4) a behavioural one, made up by globus pallidus and nucleus accumbens, the main seats of behavioural operators such as the specific, sexual, territorial, isopraxic, and hierarchic ones.

B)   'Free Association' Device and Magical vs. Rational Thinking in Humans.
In mammals, the R-complex maintains the ability to establish pseudo-causal connections among phenomena (*post hoc, propter hoc*). In the associative component of the mammal, the R-complex may occur both in the link between real events and the association, mostly unconscious, of ideas, memories or emotions that originate in other brain areas, such as the limbic system or the neocortex.

Particularly in humans, the associative striatum may link not only real events, but also events 'imagined' by the neocortex. Moreover, the pseudo-causal sequence may be reversed: not only from the 'cause' to the 'effect', but 'given an event' then 'connect it with a cause'. These 'free associations', unconscious and reasonless, made by humans in ways that are similar in structure but whose contents vary between beings, had been discovered by psychoanalysis long before their cerebral origin was located.

By means of cortical and reptilian cognitive operators, the reverberating circuit *neocortex – caudate nucleus – neocortex – etc.* constitutes a '*free association' device*, the result of which is the basis for *magical thought*, which may then be expressed by language. Magical thoughts, such as *events which*

have been observed to occur simultaneously or to follow a particular sequence, will continue to follow the same pattern, or *like produces like*, may initiate the development of ritualistic actions, as far up the scale as obsessive and compulsive behaviour. The central role played by the caudate nucleus in this kind of behaviour has been shown in many studies.

The limbic system, particularly its serotonergic component, aims to inhibit the magical and ritualized activity that the associative striatum spontaneously tends to generate. If it fails to do so, the limbic system then adds an emotional component to ritualistic or compulsive behaviour, producing a released condition when they are completed, and an anxious condition when they are brusquely interrupted or changed.

The neocortex, as we have seen, has 'induction' and 'causal' operators, so that from the particular observation that different phenomena are the effects of certain causes, it infers that "every phenomenon is the effect of a cause." The abstractive operator lies in the inferior portion of the parietal lobe, and the causal operator results from the connection of the left association area in the parietal lobe with the frontal lobe: the parietal part of the causal operator is close to the abstractive operator, and it seems that, for its activity, the causal operator utilizes previous or almost contemporary investigations done by the abstractive operator.

Therefore, the neocortex, by means of its cognitive operators, provides humans with some rational way of interpreting, or explaining, reality: it is able to do this to a greater or lesser extent, according to its knowledge.

Summarizing, the link between phenomena elaborated by the whole brain may be:

I) a rational and verifiable one, if the neocortex can find the cause-effect nexus;

II) a magical one, not verifiable, characterized by more or less high levels of fancy, and which is held by faith. Magical thought has its unconscious origin in the R-complex, and is made conscious by the neocortex, which tries to give it a semblance of rationality.

C)   The Hyperactive Understanding of Intentionality Device (HUID).

This has been defined as "the tendency to postulate mentality and see events as intentionally caused even in the absence of a visible agent" (Pyysiainen 2009: 13).

D)   The Hyperactive Teleofunctional Reasoning Device (HTRD), or "the tendency to see objects as existing for a purpose" (Pyysiainen 2009: 13). Pyysiainen (2009) bases his study of the biological bases of religion on the HADD, HUI and HTR devices.

›   4. Serotonin, Dopamine, and Behaviour.

4.1 *Serotonin and behaviour*
Neuronal synthesis of serotonin depends on the plasma 'trp/Large Neutral Amino Acids' ratio, because of competition among LNAAs for neuron access (LNAAs are: tryptophan, tyrosine, phenylalanine, isoleucine, leucine, valine, histidine and methionine). The value ratio of 'Trp/LNAAs' tends in turn to be correlated with the amino acid composition of the diet: thus a low 'trp/LNAAs' ratio diet lowers brain serotonin synthesis.

Serotonin deficiency involves several behavioural consequences such as a tendency towards aggressive behaviour, increase of intraspecific competition, increase of magical thought or religious fanaticism. Among those cereals used for human feeding, maize has a very low 'trp/LNAAs' value. Maize was first utilized on a large scale by Native American peoples: This is particularly interesting in the study of the Aztec human sacrifice/cannibalism complex. Historical data reveal that cannibalism occurred in the period of the year when maize dependence was greater, supporting the hypothesis proposed by Ernandes et. al. (2002; see also Ernandes 2008) that serotonin deficiency among the Aztecs might have on the one hand accentuated their religious and aggressive behaviour patterns,, while on the other, it might have unconsciously led them towards anthropophagy in order to attenuate it (raising 'trp/LNAAs' values through the introduction of human proteins) when it became too strong.

Behavioural consequences of serotonin deficiency (see Ernandes et al. 2002 for references):

a) *Aggressive behaviour*: in rats, serotonin deficiency may be caused by maize-based alimentation, and it induces the animals, mostly males, to kill a mouse when added to its cage.

b) *Increase of intraspecific competition or intraspecific aggression*: several researchers have shown that an increase in intraspecific competition is positively correlated with a decrease in serotonergic tone, as previous researches had shown in non-human primates, and in man: "countries above the median in corn consumption have significantly higher homicide rates than countries below the median in corn consumption" (Mawson & Jacobs 1978: 227).

c) *Magical thought and accentuated religious fanaticism.* Mandell (1980) observed that there is a positive correlation between mystic feelings and serotonin deficiency, and Rapoport (1989) reported that obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD, having many similarities to religious fanaticism) is attributable to disturbances in serotonergic transmission. Dulaney and Fiske [1994] suggest that psycho-physiological mechanisms similar to those affecting OCD patients underlie cultural rituals. Serotonin deficiency, after all, promotes magical thought and mythopoiesis. Substances like LSD, which interferes with serotonin, can provoke hallucinations very similar to the states of ecstasy described by mystics.

d) *Temporal lobe epilepsy.* This is linked to the reduction of serotonergic tone (Mandell 1980), and causes such feelings as déjà-vu, cosmic visions, and dreaming states. According to Gazzaniga (1985), in its basic form it causes an intensification of religious beliefs and eccentric sexual behaviour, although not necessarily together. In some clinical cases in which such 'temporal lobe syndrome' assumes the proportions of a chronic disease, religious conviction increases and assumes an erratic form: the affected subject passes from one belief to another, rapidly and without obvious reason.

e) *Cruelty.* As serotonin is one of the principal neurotransmitters of the limbic system, connected to the prefrontal cortex (and which, according to MacLean's triune concept of the brain, helps us to empathize with other people's feelings), its deficiency damages the functioning of the prefrontal cortex and thereby reduces scope for identification with other people's suf-

fering.

f) *Cult of or attraction to fire.* Low serotonergic tone has been observed in arsonists; fire is present in a large number of religions where it assumes the magical and symbolic value of purification or of a punitive agent, or as a symbol of life: for example, Roman vestals attended Vesta's temple so as to continually keep the flame alight; at the present time, fire is often used in fanatical and/or political demonstrations.

It may be opportune to specify that serotonin deficiency does not cause mental deficiency *per se.* For example, the famous doctor Johnson was an OCD sufferer (Rapoport 1989), and judging from symptoms and habits described in biographies, so was Kant. Serotonin deficiency may be hypothesized for philosophers such as Pascal or men of letters such as Manzoni, Gogol and Dostoevsky. Indeed, serotonin deficiency seems to promote mental associative processes among ideas or concepts: this often leads towards magical or mythopoietic thought, allowing some people to achieve great artistic or narrative heights, often with a strong persuasive capability.

Clearly the serotonergic system's activity is not steady, but fluctuates physiologically in the various brain regions in relation to environmental stimuli and to the action of other neuromodulators or neurotransmitters such as dopamine or noradrenaline. A steady lowering in the serotonergic tone in one or more brain regions may be due to genetic imperfections affecting 5-HT receptors, the reabsorption system, or enzymes for the synthesis of serotonin; another kind of serotonin deficiency may derive from particular foods, as has been shown in the case of maize (Ernandes et al. 2002). Moreover, food can change serotonergic tone indirectly if, because of its composition, it affects the activities of dopaminergic or noradrenergic systems. Like serotonin synthesis, the neuronal synthesis of catecholamines (dopamine and noradrenaline) depends on the plasma vs. 'tyrosine/Large Neutral Amino Acids' ratio; in this case because of competition between LNAAs and tyrosine.

4.2 *Dopamine*

But precursor dependency of dopamine and noradrenaline in the brain

is also coupled to the firing rate of the tyrosine hydroxylase containing neurons. So, foods rich in their precursor (tyr, which in liver can be also obtained from phe) in stressful situations may provoke excessive catecholaminergic tone. This, in turn, lowers serotonergic activity, particularly if serotonergic tone is barely sufficient. Vegetable proteins often are rich in phe or tyr and poor in trp, so vegetable-based diets, in stressful situations, may give rise to the insurgence of behaviour typical of serotonin deficiency. This problem has not yet been studied at population level. However, a phenomenon observed by Winkelman is of interest here: "the absence of all sacrifice in hunter-gatherer societies, in contrast to its widespread use in more complex societies" (1998: 293). This is in agreement with what we have shown: hunter-gatherer societies have foods with a high R value, agricultural ones have foods with a low R value or with high tyrosine or phenylalanine content. These are dietary situations that, directly or indirectly, continuously or discontinuously, may lead to serotonin deficiency or, as previously stated, excessive catecholaminergic tone. (Excessive catecholaminergic tone, due to a high tyr/LNAAs ratio, may offer a new answer to the question posed by Dohan et. al. in 1984: "Is schizophrenia rare if grain is rare?")

In the ancient Near East, like in ancient Greece and Rome, extreme stress led to human sacrifices. Continual wars and magical thought were common both among Greek city-states and the Roman Republic. In these countries the diet was mostly vegetarian (the meat of herbivores was available only on set occasions, or came following sacrifices). As reported by Dalby (2003: 213): "In the real world, those Greeks and Romans whose diet is known to us ate meat sparingly [...]. It is therefore misleading to suggest that Greeks only ate meat immediately after a sacrifice. In Rome there was no unbreakable link between slaughter and sacrifice and fresh meat was perhaps more prominent in the average weekly diet. Both Greeks and Romans will have eaten beef very seldom. In both cultures large game will have contributed insignificantly to most people's diet; smaller birds were probably easier to get."

Of course, some differences are remarkable: Athenians, like other coast inhabitants, might have benefitted from fishing, including the capture of

tuna fish. Fish may have high trp/LNAAs values and/or polyunsaturated fatty acids that support cerebral growth and functions.

To us, it does not seem a mere coincidence that the Athenians' main divine being was Athena, at the same time both a warrior and a thinker (i.e. neocortical): perhaps Athenians unconsciously realized this as, according to myth, Athena was born from Zeus' head (and therefore mainly from Zeus's neocortex, even though Athenians did not know what a neocortex was).

Spartans were more dependent on vegetables. Their society was rigorous, strongly ritualized and very aggressive (soldiering was the only activity for free Spartan men, or Spartiates; they undertook nocturnal expeditions, called 'krypteia', to kill Helots, unarmed inhabitants living near Sparta: these expeditions might be considered rites of passage or drills).

Republican Rome was characterized by expansionist wars undertaken largely by citizens; on the other hand, in Imperial Rome, citizens were forbidden from having weapons, and people liked bloody arena games. The Emperor, as was said, offered people '*panem et circenses*', i. e. 'bread and circuses'. This combination is intriguing, as we have noted that bread, owing to its amino acid composition, might reduce serotonergic tone and/or increase dopaminergic tone: conditions which could in turn enhance aggression and intraspecific competition. We may add that, thanks to the activity of mirror neurons, spectators had the sensation that they were participating in the games; at the same time, they enjoyed bloody and grievous sights because serotonin deficiency "reduces the capacity of identification with other people's suffering." In other words, serotonin deficiency enhances the capacity of identification with other people's aggression and reduces this capacity regarding other people's suffering.

As regards religious fanaticism or fervour, the wide diffusion of mystery cults and gnostic doctrines, with their high content of magical thought, mirrors the presence of widespread serotonin deficiency (or dopaminergic hypertonia).

In his book, Previc (2009: 79–100) examines nine disorders involving primary dopamine dysfunction: 1) Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder; 2) Autism; 3) Huntington's disease; 4) Mania (bipolar disorder); 5) Obsessive-compulsive disorder; 6) Parkinson's disease; 7) Phenylketonuria; 8)

Schizophrenia; 9) Tourette's syndrome. Except for Huntington's and Parkinson's diseases and Phenylketonuria these can also be related to serotonin dysfunction.

›   5. Dopamine and Distant Space and Time

Quoting largely from Previc (2009: 38-49) there are four major realms of 3-D (three-dimensional) space in which humans interact, namely the *peripersonal*, the *ambient-extrapersonal*, the *focal-extrapersonal*, and the *action-extrapersonal*. Likewise, there are four brain systems that handle behavioural interaction in these spaces. 1) The *peripersonal* system, which is mainly used to execute visually guided manipulations, especially in the lower visual field. 2) The *ambient extrapersonal* system, which is involved in postural control and locomotion in earth-fixed space, also tending more toward the lower field. Both these systems rely on neurotransmitters such as norepinephrine and serotonin, while dopamine appears to have very little involvement.. By contrast, dopamine is the primary neurotransmitter for the other two systems: 3) The *focal-extrapersonal* system, which is involved in searching and scanning the environment and recognition of objects within it. 4) The *action-extrapersonal* system, which gives a sense of 'presence' in the environment and aids in the exploration, navigation, and observation of salient stimuli and landmarks.

›   "One consequence of dopamine's association with distant space is that it is important in 'exteroceptive' senses such as sight (far vision), hearing, and smell, whereas its counterpart norepinephrine is more associated with 'interoceptive' (tactile and bodily) signals. [...] Another consequence of the dopaminergic association with distant space is that, because the upper field comprises the most distant part of our visual world [...], the focal and action-extrapersonal systems are biased toward the upper field, as is dopamine itself. A third correlate of dopamine's involvement with distant space is its involvement with distant (especially future) time" (p. 40).

›   "Other examples of dopamine's involvement with distant space [and distant time] are the upward movement and attentional biases produced by

dopaminergic activation . [...] Upward head and eye movements [...] have consistently been shown to accompany higher mental activity in humans, and [they] presumably emanate from the dopamine-rich lateral prefrontal cortex" (p.42).

› According to Previc (2009: 49), "One interesting manifestation of the role of dopamine in mediating both upward and distant space and time is its involvement in altered states such as dreaming and hallucinations and in religious experiences in humans. [...] All of these activities involve:
1. a preponderance of extrapersonal (distant) sensory inputs (e.g. auditory and visual);
2. a dearth of peripersonal ones (e.g. tactile and kinesthetic);
3. an emphasis on extrapersonal themes (e.g. flying or moving outside of one's body);
4. the presence of upward eye movements and other upper-field biases.
Dopaminergic activation, caused either by altered physiological states (e.g. hypoxia/near-death, sensory deprivation/isolation, extreme stress) or other neurochemical factors (reduced glutamatergic, cholinergic, and serotonergic activation to varying degrees), appears to be the common denominator in all of these experiences."

› Moreover (p.51), "In both dreams and hallucinations, serotonergic neurons in the raphe nuclei shut down, helping to unleash dopaminergic activity in normally inhibited medial frontal pathways. [...] It is interesting to note that during the dopaminergic activation in dreams, anaesthesia, hypoxia, hypnosis, meditation, and mystical and delusional states in which out-of-body experiences are common, the eyes tend to roll upward. Moreover, out-of-body illusions and hallucinations like flying are more likely to occur in the upper field and beyond arm's reach, and religious beliefs and experiences in humans are generally biased toward upward, distant space [...]. Religious practices such as meditation require a focus on upper space."

› 6. Comparison with the triadic systems of Freud and Kant.

One might consider correlating MacLean's three cerebral structures with Freud's Id, Ego and Superego. However, we should also bear in mind that at the start of the 20th century, Freud abandoned the project of a neurophysiological model of the mind and turned to the development of a psychological model, because the neurophysiology of his time was not up to the task (Boag & Campbell, preface to MacLean, 1973).
But the activity of the limbic system is to a great extent unconscious: to attempt this correlation, we would have to make the Id correspond not only to the R-complex but also to part of the limbic system; the Ego matches the neocortex reasonably well, but the position of the Superego would be hard to determine. In fact, as Sagan points out (1977), the Superego is the place of interiorizing those social and parental limitations that, in MacLean's model, would happen with the hierarchical operator in the R-complex, through the attachment operator in the limbic system, and also – as products of the cultural environment, and therefore of learning – in the neocortex.
On the other hand, the correspondence of the Id to the R-complex and the Limbic System would explain why the Id was described by Freud as 'chaotic': in fact, the rigid and stereotyped components determined by the R-complex would be joined by the emotional and 'irrational' components of the limbic system.

And yet of even greater interest is the comparison between Maclean's model and the triadic system propounded by Kant in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, in the late 18th century. Several aspects of Kant's habits, such as the strict repetition of the same activities in the same order during the day, lead us to us think he could have been affected by obsessive-compulsive disorder, which, as we have seen, may be correlated with serotonin deficiency and/or high levels of dopamine, and which in turn may be connected to magical thinking.
In this short survey of some aspects of Kant's thinking we make no direct reference to his work, as we consider adequate the exposition presented by Abbagnasco and Fornero in their manual of history of philosophy.
The triadic schemas occur repeatedly in Kant's thinking, but not necessarily as a consequence of a pre-constituted schema. There is no need to demonstrate that when he was working on the *Critique of Pure Reason*,

Kant was also planning a *Critique of Practical Reason* and a *Critique of Judgement*; the point is that, ultimately, he produced a triad of Critiques. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* (*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*) the triad schema is evident: the work aims to analyse the human cognitive faculties, or sensibility, understanding and reason, even though this tri-partite concept is not well-delineated from the outset. Like Abbagnano & Fornero remark: "as Kant sometimes unites understanding and reason as the sole source of 'thinking', characterized by *activity* and *spontaneity* (in contrast with the *passiveness* or *receptiveness* of the source represented by the sensibility), his tri-partition is reduced to the form of a *bi-partition*. In other words, he went to the triadic structure more in course of construction than as a consequence of a clear project." (Obviously the triadic structure of the work, which may be related to a form of magical thinking, does not invalidate the rational value of the treated arguments.)

As we have said, in the work are examined the cognitive faculties (or sources of knowledge):
a) Sensibility (*Sinnlichkeit*) which operates through the forms of perceivable knowledge, space and time *a priori*;
b) Understanding (*Verstand*) which operates by means of the forms composed of categories *a priori*, of which Kant identifies 12 types, organized in a table including four groups of three categories each, as represented below;
c) Reason (*Vernunft*): the third source of knowledge, called the 'faculty of principles', or of the synthetic knowledge that goes beyond every possible experience. It operates through ideas, in particular those of the soul, world and God.

The triad plan appears evident in the three parts that form the work.
1. The Transcendental Aesthetic, which analyzes the Sensibility and its forms *a priori*.
2. The Transcendental Analytic, which analyzes the Understanding and its *a priori* forms, the categories.
3. Transcendental Dialectic or *Logic of Illusion*, which dissects the ideas of soul, world and God without obtaining certain knowledge, as it is impossible to decide between the antinomies applied to each of these three ideas:

mortality or immortality of the soul; finiteness or infiniteness of the world, or of the Universe; existence or non-existence of God.

We now report some brief considerations:
a) As regards the *a priori* forms (space and time, and the categories), Abbagnano & Fornero report that in Positivism (in particular Spencer) they are reinterpreted evolutionarily through their assimilation to innate schemas of perception and behaviour that, despite being *a priori* for the individual, are *a posteriori* for the species. In other words, as clarified by Lorenz in *Behind the mirror: A Search for a Natural History of Human Knowledge*, the *a priori* forms are the result of cerebral evolution. Formed by means of gene mutation in the ancestors (therefore at the moment of formation they were *a posteriori*) and therefore biologically inherited, they become *a priori* faculties for those who inherit them.
The triadic Kantian schema can be compared with the Triune Brain of MacLean.

b) Sensibility (with the *a priori* forms of space and time) might correspond to a part of the *R-complex*, and it's the *a priori* forms with the spatial and temporal operators that we locate in the R-complex.

c) Understanding (with the *a priori* forms of the categories) corresponds to the neomammalian brain, the *neocortex*, and we may note correspondences between cognitive neocortical operators and the Kantian categories. According to many reviewers, the Kantian table of categories is a little artificial (in other words, there is some influence from magical thinking in order to produce a symmetrical configuration). We do not have an established number of cognitive operators, whereas regarding the Kantian category of existence/inexistence, we may affirm that it could result from the action of the cognitive operators that allow for rational thinking, though it cannot correspond to the ontological operator (of the limbic system), for the following reason.

d) Reason may in fact correspond to the *limbic system*. Indeed, in its Kantian meaning, we should consider Reason emotional rather than rational, and

based on the existential (or ontological) operator of the limbic system. This operator, as said above, attributes the characteristics of existence or non-existence to the information received by the senses and elaborated by the brain; or, rather, it confers a sense of reality or unreality on the thoughts and activities elaborated by the other parts of the brain, such as the R-complex and the neocortex. In other words, it may attribute validity to different beliefs, despite the fact that they are considered contradictory by the neocortex or, as Maclean states, it "provides the ingredients for the strong affective feeling or conviction that we attach to our beliefs, regardless of whether they are true or false!" All of this may be related to Kant's definition of the *Logic of Illusion*: "Sophisticated art to give to our own ignorance, or better to our desired illusions, the aspect of truth, counterfeiting the method of the grounded thinking."

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Biography

› Michele Ernandes (Trapani, 1951) took a degree in Life Sciences at Palermo, defending the thesis *Function of Brain Monoamines*, after following a personalised plan of studies with a specialisation in anthropology. He went on to study, first as a scholarship fellow of the postgraduate school of Food Science and then as a specialist, at the Institute of Physiology of the Faculty of Pharmacy of Palermo University, becoming a researcher in General Physiology in the same faculty in 1993. He has taught Animal and Plant Biology at the Faculty of Pharmacy and Anthropology and the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy, and headed groups carrying out research into *Evolution and Functions of the Serotoninergic System*, *Serotonin and Behaviour (the Neurophysiological Bases of Magical Thinking and Beliefs)* and *Neurobiology and History in Human Cultures*, whose results have been published in scientific reviews or communiqués to national or international conferences.
In 2004, at the invitation of M. Winkelman, he took part in the annual

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Luciano Manicardi
monk of Bose

Envy

Envy, an Optical Passion

Envy, etymologically speaking, has something to do with seeing. The Latin *in-videre* means "to look askance" at something "with an oblique, malicious, and glowering gaze." The envious gaze does not want to be seen. It hides, remaining in the shadows: the envious person likes to look without being noticed.[1] But it is also a seeing played out purely in the inner being of the envious, a one-way looking that splits off from seeing and ultimately does not emerge from the self; it is a looking that starts at, and never moves from, an observation point wholly within the envious, one unable to grasp reality

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[1] It suffices to think of the envious Claggart's 'unobserved glance' at Billy Budd. H. Melville, *Billy Budd and Other Stories.* Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1998, p. 264.

in its totality and complexity, in its difference and otherness. This envious gaze, this "evil eye" (the Gospel According to Matthew, 20:15) is a looking that in many cultures and folk traditions is cloaked in witchcraft, regarded as capable of enchantment and of exercising a frightful negative, even fatal, influence. [2] In reality, however, it is spellbound rather than spell-casting, a gaze bewitched and fascinated by the object of its looking and desiring. The incantation that the envious look exercises and undergoes at the same time shows us the power and the impotence of envy; it speaks to us of its irrational obstinacy in the way it channels all its vital energies toward a single external centre of attraction. In this fascination there is no room for listening: the envious gaze looks but doesn't see, and doesn't see because it doesn't listen.

The eye that envies is a wounded eye that deforms and alters reality in the dual sense that, on one hand, it needs at least one other, for envy is a social passion that feeds on comparison; and, on the other, it distorts reality by viewing him or her one-sidedly on the basis of the suffering the other causes. But what is it that distresses the envious? The Western philosophical and theological tradition speaks of envy as the sadness of "a lost good,"[3] as a "disturbing pain excited by the prosperity of others." But in fact it is excited not by the prosperity of the undeserving but by that of people "who are like us or equal with us;"[4] this is a frame of mind that leads to "hatred, in so far as it is regarded as disposing a man to rejoice in another's hurt, and to grieve at another's advantage."[5] Thus man is a "subject [...] of the eye,"[6] and the envious

man a prisoner of his own gaze. A gaze that "seeing, can never avoid suffering too, cannot help but agonise in its own solitude."[7]

Numbered in the Christian tradition, at least since Gregory the Great, among the deadly sins, envy has the peculiarity of being the only vice without pleasure:[8] it brings no delight, no gratification, no enjoyment, but only suffering, tribulation and bitterness. The envious, in fact, sees in the success of the other a diminution of himself; thus envy stems from a sensation of *deprivation* and *impotence* whose consequence is *anger* and *rage*. Anger, which is often repressed, silent and unvoiced, leads to *disparagement and denigration* of the envied object, which therefore no longer provides gratification. And thus envy returns to its starting point: *frustration*, the *sense of deprivation*, *impotence*. It is a vicious circle that aggravates the envious person's sense of inferiority and shuts him up even more in his cage of suffering.

This suffering cannot be alleviated. It is *implacable*, since it can in no way be allayed by possession of what the envied person has: the envious person is not a banal thief or robber who wants to get hold of what the other has. Nor is he an emulator who in what the other has or is, sees something he *does not yet have, or has not yet become*, but which he can obtain by improving himself. If the logic of envy is caught in the dilemma "why him and not me?", deep down it can be summed up in the tragic terms with which Max Scheler defines *existential envy*:

> "The most powerless envy is also the most terrible envy. Therefore *existential envy*, which is directed against the other person's very *nature*, is the strongest source of *ressentiment*. It is as if it whispers continually: 'I can forgive you everything, but not that you *are* – that you are *what* you are – that I am not what you are – indeed that I am not *you*.'"[9]

Co., 1851, p. 64.

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[2] 'The *malocchio* or evil eye is the malign influence that comes from the envious gaze (so that the *evil eye* is also called *envy*), with various nuances that range from the more or less intentional influence to the spell deliberately cast with a well-defined ritual, and that can be – and is then particularly fearsome – a *deadly spell*'. E. de Martino, *Sud e magia*. Milan: Feltrinelli 1995,[5] p. 15.

[3] John Damascene, *An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, II, 14; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, IIa IIae, q. 36, art. 1 (see *New English Translation of St. Thomas Aquinas's Summa Theologiae* by Alfred J. Freddoso, at www3.nd.edu/~afreddos/summa-translation/Part%201-2/st1-2-ques36.pdf).

[4] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, II, 9, 1386b (see Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, transl. by W. Rhys Roberts, Bk II, Ch. 9. New York-Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954).

[5] Spinoza, *Ethics*, III, Prop. XXIV, note (see *The Chief Works of Benedict de Spinoza*, transl. by R.H.M. Elwes. London: G. Bell and Sons, 1883-84. 2 vols).

[6] F. Bacon, 'Of Love', in id., *The Essays or Counsels Civil and Moral*. London: Whittaker and

[7] S. Petrosino, *Visione e desiderio. Sull'essenza dell'invidia*. Milan: Jaca Book, 2010[2], p. 114, note 25.

[8] C. Casagrande and S. Vecchio, *I sette vizi capitali. Storia dei peccati nel Medioevo*. Turin: Einaudi, 2000, pp. 36-53.

[9] M. Scheler, 'Negative Feelings and the Destruction of Values: *Ressentiment*', in id., *On Feeling, Knowing, and Valuing: Selected Writings*, ed. by H.J. Bershady. Chicago-London: University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 122.

For the envious, the real problem is not so much what the envied does or possesses, but his very existence.

Envy is a levelling passion, "a passion of the low;" the sufferer feels his own inferiority and longs to bring down the envied. The envious person sees in the envied a possibility from which he is now precluded: while emulation lives on the *not yet*, envy feeds on the *no longer*. It sees a fullness it will never have, and says: "While remaining myself, I want to have what you have and be what you are: what you have and are by virtue of the fact that you are you and not me." Thus the *impotence from which envy stems becomes the impossibility of its goal*. At the origin of envy there is *impotence*, at its end there is *impossibility*; the journey from one to the other can only be an *unspeakable suffering*.

> *Inexpressible and Invisible Passion*

A full part of this suffering is the fact that *envy lives on its own negation*. It lives, we might say, on its own death. Envy cannot be confessed or expressed,[10] and is thus deprived of the healing and liberating qualities of the word. It tends to disguise itself, to hide itself, to deny itself:[11] admitting to being envious would

mean acknowledging that inferiority from which the envious suffer, and from which springs the flame or bite of envy itself.[12] As Plutarch observed:

> "Good evidence of this is the circumstance that while some confess that they hate a good many people, there is no one that they will say they envy. [...] But men deny that they envy as well; and if you show that they do, they allege any number of excuses and say they are angry with the fellow or hate him, cloaking and concealing their envy with whatever other name occurs to them for their passion, implying that among the disorders of the soul it is alone unmentionable."[13]

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[10] See L. Manicardi, 'L'invidia', in *Il Ruolo Terapeutico*, 112 (2009), pp. 9-32.

[11] In one of the literary texts that contains some of the most penetrating analyses of and insights into envy Hermann Melville writes: "Is Envy then such a monster? Well, though many an arraigned mortal has in hopes of mitigated penalty pleaded guilty to horrible actions, did ever anybody seriously confess to envy? Something there is in it universally felt to be more shameful than even felonious crime. And not only does everybody disown it, but the better sort are inclined to incredulity when it is in earnest imputed to an intelligent man. But since its lodgement is in the heart not the brain, no degree of intellect supplies a guarantee against it" (Melville, op. cit., p. 257). Helmut Schoeck writes: "What has struck me, not just in the literature but also in conversations with various people in which I tried to understand what they meant by envy, is the tendency to replace the word 'envy', considered a humiliating state of mind, with the word 'jealousy'; and this is certainly because the latter is tolerable for those who acknowledge feeling it. The jealous person is in a position of inferiority when it is a question of the struggle to share power or when he has to face a rival; but, in contrast to the envious person, he is not inferior a priori with regard to the value that is implicated" H. Schoeck, *Der Neid. Eine Theorie der Gesellschaft* (1966). Published in English as *Envy. A Theory of Social Behaviour* (1969). The passage cited has been translated from the Italian edition, *L'invidia e la società*. Macerata: Liberilibri, 2005, pp. 22-3).

[12] Flame, and thus fire, and bite, therefore viper and poison, are images normally associated with the representation of envy. Poison, like envy, acts secretly, it works invisibly within the body. Giotto's fresco *Envy* (1303-05), in the Scrovegni Chapel in Padua, represents envy as an old woman with grasping hands: the right hand reaching out as if to snatch something and the left hand clasped tightly around a bag of coins, tied to her belt with string, to underline the link between envy and greed. In addition she is enveloped in flames that rise from the ground, covering her feet and part of her lower limbs: a depiction of the evil that burns her, the passion by which she is consumed. The *masochism of the envious* is revealed: they do harm to themselves, as is also shown by the viper that emerges from the woman's mouth and twists round to attack her eyes, blinding her. "Envy is blind" we read in the part of the inscription that is still legible (*Patet hic Invidiae cecae*). Envy produces calumny, slander, but everything turns back against the envious because envy is its own scourge. The envious sin with their eyes, and with the word too. They have venomous tongues and not only like to utter slander, but also to hear it, as the long animal-like ears of this old woman demonstrate. They are wholly disproportionate ass's ears that yearn bulimically to hear slander and gossip about others. It is the pitiful condition of someone who does not live his or her own life, but that of others, and is dependent on them.

[13] Plutarch, *De invidia et odio*, 5. In this brief moral treatise, Plutarch argues that the unavowable character of envy is linked to the fact that it is always unjust (arising as it does solely from observing the happiness and success of others and being directed at the most virtuous and praiseworthy people), whereas hatred can even be commendable when it is directed against the wicked and cruel.

So it is that which makes the envied hated, often remains unrecognised, above all, by the envied. Billy Budd does not in any way notice Claggart's envy towards him;[14] the protagonists of Balzac's novel, *Cousin Bette*, are not in the slightest aware of the ugly and dull spinster Bette's envy of her beautiful and good-natured cousin Adeline, who has made a good match in her marriage;[15] Uriah Heep hides his envy under servile and flattering manners and is unmasked only with difficulty;[16] Iago's envy in Shakespeare's *Othello* is well-disguised and dissembled to the end.[17]

Unspeakable, envy is itself silent, stifled, mute. Envy "is a silent, secretive process and not usually verifiable."[18] And thus, frequently, unbelievable. Nietzsche distinguishes between 'commonplace envy' and 'silent envy',[19] more deep-seated and with far greater destructive power. The word brings things out of concealment, brings them to light and shows them for what they are, while envy needs darkness, obscurity. It lives and grows in the *krypton*, the hidden, invisible place. Unable to say its name, it has to shun the word, fleeing from it into muteness, or pervert it with the lie, or manipulate it with adulation. While at times the envious will go so far as to actually kill the envied, they normally kill the word instead, thereby betraying their own and others' humanity (which is expressed in words). If it has to speak, in fact, envy distorts words and disguises feelings: by distorting the expressive and communicative functions of the word, the envious person brings about the betrayal of both himself and the other.

Nietzsche's declaration that "envy and jealousy are the privy parts of the hu-

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[14] Melville, op. cit.

[15] H. de Balzac, *Cousin Bette*. London: Penguin Books, 2004.

[16] C. Dickens, *David Copperfield*. London: Penguin Books, 1994.

[17] W. Shakespeare, *Othello*, in *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*. Garden City (NY): Garden City Publishing, 1936, pp. 935-80.

[18] Schoeck, op. cit., p. 68.

[19] "Commonplace envy is accustomed to cackle as soon as the envied hen has laid an egg: it thereby relieves itself and grows gentler. But there exists a yet deeper envy: in such a case it becomes deathly silent and, wishing that every mouth would now become sealed, grows ever angrier that precisely this is what is not happening. Silent envy grows in silence." F. Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human. A Book for Free Spirits*, transl. by R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996², II, I, § 53, pp. 226-7.

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man soul"[20] makes clear that the concealment of envy is due above all to the fact that envy is ashamed of itself.[21] Thus the self-destructive dimension of envy is augmented by the feeling of shame which, in this case, expresses the embarrassment of being caught in unavowable envy and the longing to vanish from the world. The English word shame and the German *Skam* derive etymologically from the Germanic root *skam/skem*, which in turn comes from the Indo-European *kam/kem*, signifying 'to cover, to veil, to hide'. The prefix *s-* makes it reflexive: to hide oneself, cover oneself, disappear. Just as envy does not want to show itself, shame wants to hide itself. And yet, compared to shame, envy is better able to conceal itself and remain out of sight. In fact, as Darwin points out, "blushing is not only involuntary; but the wish to restrain it, by leading to self-attention actually increases the tendency."[22] Nevertheless, however well-masked, envy shows through and can be read in the book of the body.

›   *The Colour of Envy*

Envy, "which is a corruption of life,"[23] is described in one of the Sapiential Books of the Bible as "rottenness of the bones" (Proverbs 14:30):

"A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones." These words linking "sound heart" and "life of the flesh" are reminiscent of the Latin formula *mens sana in corpore sano*. From the mind (from the 'heart', according to biblical anthropology) wellbeing spreads throughout the body; envy, on the contrary, corrodes from within and breaks up the solid structure of the body; i.e. the bones, the skeleton, the framework that keeps the human being erect. 'Bone', in Hebrew *'ezem'*, symbolises strength and solidity, but also indicates "what is one's own," or "personal," and this denotes the autonomy

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[20] Nietzsche, op. cit., I, § 503, p. 181.

[21] "Perhaps the most important source of shame is *envy*" C.L. Cazzullo & C. Peccarisi, *Le ferite dell'anima. I meandri della vergogna*. Milan: Frassinelli, 2003, p. 63.

[22] C. Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. Minneapolis: Filiquarian Publishing, LLC., 2007, pp. 311-12.

[23] Basil of Caesarea, *Homilies*, XI, 2.

and independence of the individual, his identity and subjectivity. Envy in the envious is a *principle of self-destruction*: it rots, turns into gangrene, putrefies. Envy gives off a bad smell. The depiction of Envy as personified in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* contains many elements that will recur in descriptions of the physiognomy of the envious:

›   "Pallor spreads over her face, and all her body shrivels. Her sight is skewed, her teeth are livid with decay, her breast is green with bile, and her tongue is suffused with venom. She only smiles at the sight of suffering. She never sleeps, excited by watchful cares. She finds men's successes disagreeable, and pines away at the sight. She gnaws and being gnawed is also her own punishment."[24]

According to Cyprian of Carthage envy acts like an incurable disease:

›   "The wounds of jealousy are hidden and secret, nor do they admit the remedy of a healing cure, since they have shut themselves in blind suffering within the lurking-places of the conscience."[25]

Cyprian continues:

›   "Whoever you are that are envious and malignant, observe how crafty, mischievous, and hateful you are to those whom you hate. Yet you are the enemy of no one's well-being more than your own. Whoever he is whom you persecute with jealousy, can evade and escape you. You cannot escape yourself. Wherever you may be, your adversary is with you; your enemy is always in your own breast [...]."[26]

Above and beyond the caricatural and picturesque elements present in these and similar descriptions, what emerges is that the wholly inner suffering of envy is manifested on the outside in *weak signs*. "Envy acts on the body of the envious by subtraction: cold limbs, pale face, restrained gestures. Envy shows through, but does not find expression externally. It remains an inner suffering that can be discerned through signs that give away its presence but do not constitute a relief. On the contrary, in their weakness, they end up further increasing the intensity of a continual and devastating inner torment."[27] These "movements of envy [...] when they break out [...] constitute [...] a sullen passion that tortures oneself,"[28] he envious are revealed to be masochists, enslaved by the self-destructive passion that rules them. For the envious person suffering is the price of his envy, and he cannot get out of it even with the 'dark joy' (*Schadenfreude*) of which Kant,[29] Nietzsche,[30] and Kierkegaard[31] speak in regard to envy;[32] i.e. the pleasure taken in the misfortunes and failures of the person envied. Even this joy is faint, restrained, internal and has to be dissimulated and masked so as not to fall foul of the social sanction of shame imposed on those who exult over the troubles of others. If joy at others' misfortune makes us think of *sadism*, in reality we are a long way from the strong colours of the marquis's philosophy of evil. In envy there is no external release, while de Sade's system is pervaded by the concept of *décharge*, 'discharge', the significance of which is not merely trivial, but implies the idea of 'release', or 'liberation'.[33] And yet, as Descartes notes, even delight in other people's troubles does not change the livid colouring of the envious, the chro-

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[24]   Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, II, 760-96 (see *Ovid: Metamorphoses*, transl. by A. S. Kline, 2000, at www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/Latin/Ovhome.htm).

[25]   Cyprian of Carthage, Treatise 10, *On Jealousy and Envy*, transl. by R.E. Wallis. From *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, ed. by A. Roberts, J. Donaldson and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1886.) Available at www.newadvent.org/fathers/050710.htm.

[26]   *Ibidem*.

[27]   C. Casagrande and S. Vecchio, op. cit., p. 39.

[28]   I. Kant, *The Metaphysics of Morals*, transl. by M. Gregory. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 206.

[29]   *Ibidem*, pp. 206 *et sqq.*.

[30]   Nietzsche, op. cit., II, II, § 27, p. 314).

[31]   S. Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, transl. by G. Pattison. New York: HarperCollins, 1962, p. 172.

[32]   See also Hanna Arendt: H. Arendt, 'Some Questions of Moral Philosophy', in *Responsibility and Judgment*. New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2005.

[33]   G. Nicoletti, 'La macchina sadista', in D.-A.-F. de Sade, *Justine ovvero le disgrazie della virtù*, ed. by C. Rendina. Rome: Newton, 1993, p. 25.

matic and somatic mark of a *life without happiness*. "No other vice damages human happiness as much as envy does. It's not just that those tainted with envy make themselves unhappy; they also do all they can to spoil the pleasure of others. And they usually have a leaden complexion – that is, one that is pale, a mixture of yellow and black, as though bruised."[34]

Of course, rather than the pallor, rather than the greenish-yellow colouring of the envious that makes them look more like corpses than living people, what interests us is the drastic reduction in their perceptual capacities. The envious person's view of reality is tragically monotonous and partial: the envious gaze "sees nothing but." The object and mode of vision, of the contact with reality, are strictly determined in advance. There is nothing new for the envious, but only the confirmation of what they already know and the renewal of the cause of their suffering in the presence of the envied. *Seriality and repetitiveness* express the impoverishment of the envious person's perceptual capacities and relationship with the real, with the result (in his eyes) that reality increasingly detaches itself from him, so that he feels less and less loved by things and the world. The suffering that is renewed by continual comparison with the envied – the detestable target that fatally attracts him – exhausts and weakens him and reinforces his idea of living in his own body as an exile.

Melanie Klein argues that envy impoverishes the human capacities of the envious, making them *incapable of gratitude and love*.[35] *Thankfulness* is impossible for them because they are unable to see and, therefore, *recognise* otherness for what it is. And the relation of *proximity*, so decisive in envy, which always finds expression between people of similar standing or condition (work colleagues, neighbours, relatives, members of the same association...),[36] is completely drawn into the sphere of unspeakable and invincible pain. Thus the fellow creature is no longer seen as an avenue for love and solidarity,[37] but as

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[34] R. Descartes, *The Passions of the Soul*, art. 184. Available online at www.earlymoderntexts. com/pdf/descpass.pdf, p. 51.

[35] M. Klein, *Envy and Gratitude. A Study of Unconscious Sources*. New York: Basic Books, 1957.

[36] 'We envy those who are near us in time, place, age, or reputation': Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, II, 10, 1388a (op. cit.).

[37] Envy is at the opposite pole of *compassion*, which is suffering because of the suffering of the other; indeed, at the root, it is *perceiving the other in his precious and precarious*

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an implied comparison, a touchstone that always reminds the envious person of his inferiority.

› *Envy, or the Destructive Power of Impotence*

Comparison is the unceasing activity of the envious, an exhausting activity in which they measure, weigh and consider the words and actions of the envied and of the world, perceiving them as evidence of a wrong and an injustice. The envious person looks at reality from his injured, wounded point of view, and of the real and the other sees only what heightens and endlessly renews his distress, in a reduction of the whole to a part that seems almost suggestive of fetishism. Paradoxically, this perspective makes the envied person unique, in his eyes, as the repository of an intimate and untransmittable knowledge, and thereby renders his experience incommunicable: "In that stubborn gaze of his at that single point in the immense reality of life, which in his view is the cause of an unbearable and incurable wound, there is something intransitive, not susceptible to mediation, not comprehensible by others."[38].

If the experience of wonder (another mode of seeing) is associated with contemplation and leads to a sense of gratitude, that of envy is associated with resentment and leads to vengeance. Behind them lies a different perception of time: the present, which in relation to wonder is a friend, becomes the tragic *'now'* – *'never'* in envy. The distressing condition of the envious is that they feel the present has been taken away from them, which drives them to take refuge in the past, the only place in which the possible, *now* impossible, would still be possible (in reality, *would have been* possible). The *despair* of the envious, an awareness that time is up, a gaze with no projection into the future, finds drastic expression in the spirit of revenge. Revenge, as Nietzsche effectively shows, is the rebellion of the will, which cannot go back in time

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uniqueness: the uniqueness of the other in the experience of the envious person is completely removed by his being the cause of that person's unhappiness. The other is a rival.

[38] A. Matteo, *Come nessun altro. Invidia infelice e vita benedetta*. Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2012, p. 17.

and has no power over the past,[39] nor over the passing of time. Revenge is rebellion against the passing of time and a twisting of the order of time. It does not accept that the past is what it is, and thus fossilises the will in the past. Thus revenge establishes a new order of time, displaying its divine allure, but its results are merely pernicious.

And here is where the highly destructive (not just self-destructive) potential of envy is made manifest. Envy can kill. An article that takes a news report about murderous envy as its starting point describes it as the 'silent killer'.[40] In one section of his book on envy, Helmut Schoeck has collected accounts of numerous crimes motivated by envy committed in the 1950s and '60s in America and Western Europe.[41] The destructive character of envy is all the more surprising the greater is the dismeasure, the lack of proportion, between the devastating effects of violence and the 'nothing' from which they seem to spring. But they only 'seem' so to the eyes of someone who is a stranger to the envious gaze, someone who has not been involved in the long (and wholly invisible and inner) gestation of the violent act spawned at the end, someone who has remained extraneous to the slow and corrosive working of the suffering going on in the envious. The dismeasure that sometimes emerges in spectacular fashion between motivation and act (when "envy moves on to action"[42]) is true not solely at the level of interpersonal relations, but also on that of social and political events, and thus of history on the grand scale. But it is essential to remember that the destructive potential of envy, just like the unspeakable pain that lies behind it, is not present only when it emerges in action, in its passage to the deed, but is already always there in the evaluation, in the judgement, in the very gaze that the envious turn on reality and on the

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[39] "'That which was' – thus the stone is called, which [the will] cannot roll aside." Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, II. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 111. "'It was': thus is called the will's gnashing of teeth and loneliest misery. Impotent against that which has been – it is an angry spectator of everything past." *ibid*.

[40] D. Okholm, 'Envy: the Silent Killer', in *The American Benedictine Review*, 59/2 (2008), pp. 121-40.

[41] Schoeck, op. cit., pp. 75-9.

[42] E. Pulcini, *Invidia. La passione triste*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011, pp. 29-32, where are also given some examples of *strategies of disparagement* that constitute the most controlled expression of envy in everyday relations.

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other, always approaching him/her with measurement, calculation, comparison. As Silvano Petrosino writes:

› "The *excess of zeal* that always accompanies envy concerns in the end this extreme desire for measurement, this true *passion for calculation*, a *calculating passion* that is also a form – perhaps the original form, the one that acts, even before judgement, in *perception* itself – of presumption. The 'pre' of the presuming here is the calculating gaze that sees only what it foresees and takes only in accordance with the *scale of its own power*; that is to say, from the beginning to the end, of its impotence. This presumptuous and impotent gaze, this vision dominated by emasculation, is not something to which the envious person is condemned from the outside, but develops right from the start – hell to the hundredfold right here in this world – within its very exercise. As has been pointed out several times, this is the distinctive feature of envy, its innermost nature: no blindness or darkness in the future, but an *immediate* suffering and pain in the *experience* of seeing itself. Hell (of vision) inside (vision). Thus the excess of calculating zeal, the passion for entitlement, drags the eye into an inexorable *crookedness of gaze*, in this experience of skewed vision: an oppressive, painful, distressed and in the end unbearable vision. Envy is the self-condemnation of the gaze."[43]

The destructive force of envy is the devastating power of impotence. The experience of envy can turn the human being into a person who stubbornly and consciously chooses to pursue evil as a way of living. Shakespeare's *Richard III* opens with a monologue by Richard, Duke of Gloucester, who decides deliberately to do evil, to delve into the deepest recesses of evil in order to revenge himself on life, to obtain redress for what nature has not given him, i.e. beauty, a desirable rather than deformed body. After lamenting the impossibility of giving himself up to the sport of love or looking at himself with pleasure in a mirror, his ill-made and graceless form that leads him to envy what he will never be able to have, he exclaims: "I am determined to prove a villain."[44]

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[43] Petrosino, op. cit., p. 201.

[44] Shakespeare, *Richard III*, act I, scene I (see Shakespeare, *Richard III*. Mineola, NY: Dover, Florence, 1995, p. 2). Cf. the discussion of Shakespeare's text in S. Freud, 'Some Character-types Met with in Psycho-analytic Work', in id., *Writings on Art and Literature*.

Thus envy shows Plato's claim that "nobody desires evil"[45]. to have no basis in fact. The envious person can even be extremely rational and intelligent, but still capable of acts of great folly: "But since [envy's] lodgement is in the heart, not the brain, no degree of intellect supplies a guarantee against it."[46] Petty officer John Claggart who, consumed with envy for the handsome, well-mannered, mild, simple and inoffensive sailor Billy Budd, falsely accuses him of mutiny, a crime punishable by death, is driven to do this, argues Melville, not by abuse received during his life or by bad education, but by "a depravity according to nature." The explanation for Claggart's envy (and often, we might add, for that of others too) should not be sought in sociological factors, but in a dimension of *mystery*: "For what can more partake of the mysterious than an antipathy spontaneous and profound, such as is evoked in certain exceptional mortals by the mere aspect of some other mortal, however harmless he may be, if not called forth by this very harmlessness itself?"[47] In Claggart, writes Melville, there was "the mania of an evil nature, not engendered by vicious training or corrupting books or licentious living, but born with him and innate, in short 'a depravity according to nature.'"[48] The problem arises of how to understand a nature like that of the envious Claggart: for such a nature resists rational explanation. Melville, with the genius and profundity that characterise his acute insight into the human condition, writes: "To pass from a normal nature to him one must cross 'the deadly space between'. And this is best done by indirection."[49] The envious Claggart represents absolute evil with respect to the goodness, beauty and innocence represented by Billy. And the deadly space that separates the two dimensions is so great that their collision can have lethal consequences, as indeed happens when Billy strikes the slanderer Claggart in the face with his fist, killing him and thereby provoking his own inevitable death sentence. What was needed, Melville sug-

Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1997, pp. 154-6.

[45]   See Plato, *Meno* 77a-78b, in *The Dialogues of Plato*. London: Clarendon Press, 1875: pp. 276-8.

[46]   Melville, op. cit., p. 257.

[47]   *Ibidem*, pp. 253-4.

[48]   *Ibidem*, p. 255.

[49]   *Ibidem*, p. 259.

gests, was to tackle evil in the indirect manner represented by justice and the law, personified in the novel by Captain Vere.

›   *Envy: Hidden Admiration*

The case of Claggart and Billy Budd shows how envy goes along with attraction.

›   "When Claggart's unobserved glance happened to light on belted Billy [...] that glance would follow the cheerful sea-Hyperion with a settled meditative and melancholy expression, his eyes strangely suffused with incipient feverish tears. Then would Claggart look like the man of sorrows. Yes, and sometimes the melancholy expression would have in it a touch of soft yearning, as if Claggart could even have loved Billy but for fate and ban. But this was an evanescence, and quickly repented of, as it were, by an immitigable look, pinching and shrivelling the visage into the momentary semblance of a wrinkled walnut."[50]

So envy is a hidden admiration. Certainly, at the root of envy lies the power of desire: "only a being capable of desire, moved by desire, can envy."[51] The dynamics present in the desire for mimicry that, according to René Girard, is at the heart of culture and social relations, act by leading a man to desire what others desire and struggle to obtain: thus "the other becomes at once the model to imitate and the rival to vie with."[52]

So the mechanism of envy leads the human being to project his own pain outside himself, to cast it out by dumping it onto another who is seen as the cause, just as happens in the use of the device known as scapegoating.

[50]   Melville, op. cit., pp. 264-5.

[51]   Petrosino, op. cit., p. 183.

[52]   Pulcini, op. cit., pp. 70-71.

Luciano Manicardi

› *The Triumph of Defeat*

The dismeasure of suffering and destructiveness (towards oneself and others) associated with envy, in short the tragedy of envy, stems from the encounter between the feeling of impotence, which is at the root of envy, and the extraordinary opening up of the field of the possible brought about by desire. The 'dismeasure' of desire, very distant from the measure of the need that is satisfied in possession, is translated, in the experience of the envious person, into a despairing sense of his own measureless impotence with regard to the other, the world, life and the possibilities that they present and represent. Envy becomes the triumph of defeat; the sad triumph of defeat.

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Biography

› Luciano Manicardi (Campagnola Emilia, 1957) graduated in Classical Studies. Since 1981 he has been part of the monastic community of Bose (Biella). A member of the editorial staff of the magazine *Parola, Spirito e Vita* (Bologna: Dehoniane), he contributes to several magazines on biblical and spiritual subjects, gives lectures and preaches sermons. His publications include: *Il corpo. Via di Dio verso l'uomo, via dell'uomo verso Dio* (Bose: Qiqajon, 2005); *L'umano soffrire. Evangelizzare le parole sulla sofferenza* (Bose: Qiqajon, 2006); *Guida alla conoscenza della Bibbia* (Bose: Qiqajon, 2009); *La fatica della carità* (Bose: Qiqajon, 2010); *Memoria del limite. La condizione umana nella società postmortale* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 2011); *La vita religiosa: radici e futuro* (Bologna: Dehoniane, 2012); *Per una fede matura*, (Turin: Elledici, 2012); *Raccontami una storia. Narrazione come luogo educativo* (Padua: Messaggero, 2012). With a training in the classics and philology, his interests lie in the direction of reinterpreting the Bible and Christian faith in the light of the behavioural sciences, in particular psychology and anthropology.
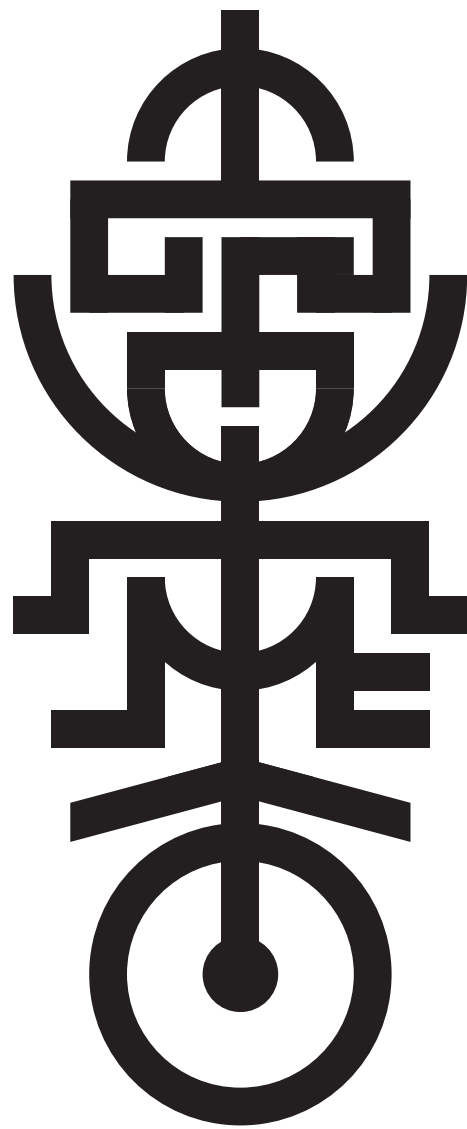
Massimo Carboni

Excess and the limit.
A philosophic horizon

1.

In various forms – and in all likelihood in an organic way, however paradoxical this may seem – excess/dismeasure characterises many of the dimensions and modes of social conduct, the languages and symbolic attitudes in which the modern and contemporary appear 'destined' to express themselves. From advertising to aesthetic and artistic communication, from the flood of mass media through hypertechnologies to lifestyles, examples are obvious and affect much of our everyday experience.

All this has a great deal to do with that Archimedean point at which ethics – understood not as a set of rules but as exposure to finiteness and the contingent – meets aesthetics – understood not so much as philosophy of art but, etymologically, as *aisthesis*, sensitivity, 'pathic' disposition for *feeling*. It is no coincidence that it is precisely in the notion of *limit* (which cannot fail to emerge *by contrast* in a reflection on excess from a de-angulated perspective) that the ethical – i.e. the regaining of the awareness of living in a wholly limited world – and the aesthetic – as capacity to *feel* the finite, to 'exercise' the pathos of the boundary – come together asymptotically.

2.

The Latin *excedere* (from which the word *excess* is derived) has an etymological connection with the outside (*ex-*), with what goes out and ventures beyond the limit. And thus with the unknown exterior; with otherness: with the alien. But excess is intrinsic to existence. We are already in contact with the outside as regards our most intimate feelings. A subject that exists, ex-ists because it is in relationship with the outside, because it is an *outgoing* subject. *Existence* means living externally, dwelling (on the) outside, existing while being subjected to and at the same time provoking the unknown. The body – perishable, vulnerable, transient – finds itself constitutively *exposed*. Rather than being 'in relationship' with the outside, the body *is* itself the primary and elementary relationship with exteriority; it is that from which there may be a distinction and a mutual intersection, a chiasmus, between interior and exterior.

The question of excess, of the *more-than-the-whole*, however, appears on a *modal* horizon rather than on a 'substantial' horizon. Excess is not, simply, the quantum of additional 'content', but, pre-eminently, the *way* in which the whole happens. If the whole is truly everything, then we can add nothing to it: strictly speaking, *more-than-the-whole* cannot be. So excess should be understood not so much as an increase but *above all* as an *exudation*, a *transpiration* of the whole. So excess is one of the phenomenal modalities with which the totality presents itself. It is not something added – other-

wise it would not be a totality – but a paradoxical, aporetic surplus through which it is made manifest: the intrinsic but at the same time supererogatory and supplementary dimension that takes it beyond itself.
It is precisely for this reason that it would be a gross mistake to identify excess solely with a bulimic urge, with a movement of quantitative increase, with something, in short, that grows in a linear fashion, going beyond the agreed safety limit. Instead it is important to bear in mind both the dialectic that is triggered between accumulation and subtraction, between more and *too much less*, and, consequently, the point of reversion and reversal of the terms involved. In short, it is essential to grasp the relations internal to the notion of excess in all their complexity and delicacy.

Two examples, which are simple but have paradigmatic value, may be given. If anorexia does not mean eating much less than necessary, but eating *too* little, then evidently even *diminutio*, even reduction, can refer to a supererogatory dimension. And then there is the obsessive quest for perfection in sound reproduction technology which actually obliterates musical expression, because it abolishes that distance between the listener and the thing listened to which *also* signifies opacity of sound; because it destroys and cancels that interval of space which is *also* receptive misunderstanding: distance and space in which historically music has always existed and on which it has always fed. It is certainly no coincidence that for some time now we have been witnessing a substantial return among true music lovers to the 'dirty' sound of vinyl records, leaving hyper-technological perfection to listeners of a fetishistic nature. In these two examples, literally, less is more: excess relates to the dimension of reduction, to something not added but subtracted.

3.

Old aporiae echo around early principles. If by definition nothing is missing from the whole, how is it possible to predicate something that exceeds it, that is *more-than-the-whole*? Would this 'more' be the principle and, as such, not part of it? Would it place itself on the other side, or on this side,

of the whole? Would the very excess that decentralises it be the *arche*, the principle, the non-original origin of the whole? Would an excess therefore be inscribed *ab ovo* in being, which in this way would *occur*, would always 'unfold' in supererogatory form, *more* than itself? Would *arche* be an-archic?

› *4.*

From the Kantian perspective, the sublime is the excess of ideas compared to the forms with which we try to represent them. The language itself, therefore, is established in the excess that goes beyond it. Only from this viewpoint does the extent to which the modern and contemporary arts are dominated by the motif of the sublime and to which they find their proper purpose in it become evident. Obviously we are speaking – to limit ourselves to the aesthetic and artistic dimension – of a 'back-to-front' sublime compared to the version steeped in imagery and visual effects that was provided by the literature and painting of the 18ᵗʰ and 19ᵗʰ centuries in contrast to the notion of the beautiful and the picturesque. The idea has finally 'abandoned' the work: only in this way can it take shape as sublime. The modern-contemporary work is uncompromising in its radical and definitive criticism of any supposed sovereignty of the self, and counts solely on the basis of its concrete, individual precision; it is no longer guaranteed or legitimised by the idea of which it was presumed to be the incarnation. If the sublime has something to do with limits and limitlessness, then it does not at all indicate the 'death' or the superseding-*Aufhebung* of art and the approach of its Hegelian 'realness' in absolute knowledge. Instead it indicates that art remains *in abeyance*. The boundaries of the arts and of every specific artistic practice are shaken (is not this the 'essence' and at the same time the most evident phenomenal aspect of the contemporary, i.e. the questioning of its very identification as such?) because we no longer know where to place their limits: they literally become *unlocalisable*. Hence the sublime has to do not with the 'end' or the 'waning', but with a certain *suspension* of art: with its persistence or permanence at, in and on the edge of itself. And this means that it is directed towards its own *unachievability.*

Exactly. And this may be no coincidence – like, in the realm of ethics, the indefatigable work of freedom: i.e. of the excess over the real.

› *5.*

We might propose a distinction between *catastrophic* and *homoeopathic* forms of excess.

It there is a dismeasure that is as it were 'intrinsic' to measure, if there is an excess that in many ways we may consider functional to normality, to the standard, to the physiological phenomenon, then paradoxically it is precisely catastrophic excess, the kind that most violently shatters the status quo, that de-structures, damages, disrupts the normal course of things and events. In fact it seems undeniable that this sort of excess shows every capacity to induce or compel those involved to retrieve or reinforce the social fabric, the community bonds, sometimes even the political and institutional ties. Just think of earthquakes, major terrorist attacks and wars. The catastrophic ruptures represented by natural disasters that break down physical continuities can in effect constitute a sort of laboratory in which to gauge in actual reality rather than, *in vitro,* the degree of integration, the solidarity and above all the capacity for recovery of their own points of reference on the part of groups and social systems. As if to say that this dismeasure is so visible that it is no longer possible to return quickly to what is considered measure. Natural calamities immediately trigger the selfish instinct for survival; they make human relations ruthless. But they also prompt individuals to form a common front against the threat of annihilation, of death, of mass extinction. The de-structuring event ends by having a re-structuring effect on the arrangements that have been put at risk. As for acts of terrorism, have we not seen clearly how the Bush administration was able to use Islamist terrorism, at the beginning of the 21ˢᵗ century, as a means of government through that organic and systematic restriction of fundamental liberties (including the admissibility of torture and illegal detention) that was the Patriot Act? The intensification of government and state control over populations has reached – partly through the widespread use of hyper-technological devices – exponentially higher levels in relation to terrorist attacks.

Then there is *homoeopathic excess*. This is so much less visible than catastrophic excess that it may even not be regarded as excess; it does not spark off any grand confrontation between good and evil, and has no trouble in fitting itself into the habitual parameters of our experience. For this very reason, it prevents us from perceiving – half-hidden in the infinite recesses of immanence – that something has changed, that a borderline has been crossed; thus, it does not even allow us to sense the need to go back to measure. Finding an excess, therefore, does not at all mean always knowing what is the measure surpassed (this is the consolatory side of the question), and thus does not signify being able to surmise/know *by how much* it has been pushed beyond the 'norm'.

This kind of excess is the authentically, profoundly subversive one, because it inoculates dismeasure into reality in homoeopathic and almost imperceptible doses, rendering reality itself excessive and therefore making it no longer possible to distinguish between a homoeostatic condition and a supererogatory one. In the dialectic between limit and excess, I may judge – naturally always in transitory and conventional terms – what the 'right' measure is only with hindsight, only on the basis of the surplus that appears and that puts it under strain: we 'feel' our body only when it hurts. It is the *too much* that makes us realise we have crossed a limit – but only when it is all over. In the case of homoeopathic excess, covered up in the dispersion of circumstances, the wound is inflicted along with the anaesthetic, exception is not distinguished from inurement. So the dialectic between limit and excess remains, but it is diluted and blunts the perception of its own peaks. It is masked in the continuous and uniform fabric of experience. And we find ourselves completely transformed without realising it.

Continual and inexorable technological innovation can constitute an excellent example of homoeopathic excess. Here, habituation advances in a dialectical – and somewhat diabolical – interplay between bringing forward and drawing back. Although we are now accustomed to a constant succession of technological innovations, each of them although we don't think about them, precisely because we are numbed by habit) represents in its own right (however apparently minimal, innocuous and of little significance this might appear to be) a supererogatory form with respect to the preceding order, a surplus to which experience must adapt and realign

itself each time. However, the most notable and significant effect is that we are irresistibly led to be *surprised* by the amount of inconvenience we were obliged to put up with in the past when we didn't have that device. How were we able to get things done, to do our work *without* the computer? How did we communicate *without* a mobile phone? It seems almost impossible. Of course that is not the way things are. And we are well aware of it. And yet the reality of history, even that of only a year ago, can do little or nothing in the face of the counterfactual effect stemming from relentless, continual technological innovation.

So it is precisely this form of excess – the homoeopathic – which enters into circulation and eventually but irreversibly brings about change. It is not in the future – as the cliché would have it – but *in the past* that the surprise effect of the umpteenth new high-tech device launched on the market is focused. This effect is closely bound up with the incredulity and sometimes idiotic wonder – itself by definition always renewed – at the fact that there was a time when we managed to do without what we 'at last' possess today: past generations are perceived as lacking an *extra*, are defined as the ones who didn't have, e.g. the iPod.

› 6.

In 1992, in Barcelona, a set of twins were given pacemakers at the moment of their birth. Maria and Teresa came into the world in excess of themselves because they were not organically sufficient unto themselves: their hearts were not up to the job. And yet there was never, strictly speaking, an actual time, however limited, in which the twins were dying on account of their being physiologically ill-equipped to live: never did they go through a phase, however fleeting, in which they really suffered from their pathology. Who knows how many hundreds of thousands of times such an operation has been carried out in hospitals all over the world since then? The immediate implant of a prosthesis in the new-born body is nothing but a confirmation of that archaic grounding principle in which technogenesis and anthropogenesis, technics and life, are inextricably connected. The former corrects and modifies the latter *from the outset.* And this means that

there is no longer, if there ever has been, the 'purity' of a Beginning that can be identified as such; it means, in turn, that even excess does not have a specific, identifiable and isolatable starting point with regard to the 'rule' because it is bound up with the very life to which it ought to be 'applied'. If the correction is made at the very first instant of life, then the true excess we are confronted with is one that has always happened already and that in any case models the horizon and the course of that very happening; one homoeopathically woven into our daily experience to the point of being so well concealed that it cannot be recognised as such. In view of the growing possibility of transplanting any organ, a paradoxical prospect (also mythological, as in the story of Theseus' ship) has opened up for the human race: that of dying with a body whose parts have been gradually replaced during his lifetime, and thus of dying in an anatomically *other body* from the one he was born in. How and with what torment would the psyche follow the successive, radical transformations of the soma, once the sense of their relationship has been pushed to the very limit? Would it still mean anything to speak of *personality*, or of the persona's integrity and non-disposable uniqueness, in order to defend its anthropological status and ethical value? It is known that in the realm of medical technology, science and genetic engineering, the human body is progressively turning into a deposit for the storage, grafting and removal not just of organs but also of information, codes and cells. Thus it is being reduced to a pure and simple biological matrix to be isolated, replicated and manipulated indefinitely. If that is how things are or will be, it can be deduced that psychosomatic subjective unity, the rational ego that has grown together with and come into being in the anatomical body, as well as the non-delegable singularity of the persona in which we have recognised ourselves hitherto, will assume the excessive, supplementary, *ornamental* figure of the more-than-the-whole. This whole that is considered sufficient unto itself in the new but increasingly assimilated condition is moving onto a different level. It is playing another game. Governed from beginning to end by technology and science, this is the movement or drift on the basis of which we are to be born: in excess.

This discontinuity, radical but inoculated in minimal, socially-acceptable doses so that the catastrophic and the homoeopathic are interwoven, brings into question something to do with a totality, something that chal-

lenges the whole of our existence. And if we are already able to foresee the possibility, it means that in a sense we are now experiencing – in advance but nonetheless with perfect timing – the projecting *plus* of this totality put at risk, its supererogatory dimension. As if, therefore, we were, in some strange way, already outside, external, expelled. As if we were *next to ourselves*. Because if we are preparing to attain the working capacity to get to the bottom of ourselves by bringing about the end of the way and the world with which we have identified anthropologically up to now, then it means that we are living the supplement ahead of time. It signifies that we are already outside that whole which has been put on the line and which may turn into a catastrophe, not because we are unscathed but because we have already survived; we are already living the aftermath. We are *in excess* to the exact extent to which we have become essentially, constitutively definable *on the basis of* our *lacking* what we are to become. From now on we are remains in excess of ourselves.

Rimbaud said: *Je suis un autre.* The fact that in the '*je*' lives the other has been interpreted by technology and science in the only way they knew how: by realising it in concrete terms. This is rather like what Marx expected from the communist movement: that it should no longer try to interpret the world, but change it.

› *7.*

Those who control the media make the logic of the excess of spectacle serve their own interests, aiming at endless self-reproduction. Thus they have understood perfectly that *showing everything* is the best way of hiding on the surface of the image what they don't wish to show. In porn films, there are no more secrets, no more mystery (traditional, conservative, reactionary values?), no more shadows: everything is overexposed, solarised. It is as if we had arrived finally as well as obscenely at fulfilment not just of the secular, enlightened, scientistic promise of a total and totally human knowledge, but also – having abolished sacrilegiously ahead of schedule the mirror and enigma that veiled our eyes – of Paul's prophecy to the Romans that that which is hidden will be revealed at the end of time.

Contemporary spectacle protects its *arcana* (whether frivolous or awe-inspiring) not through prohibition but through the promotion and guarantee of theoretically unlimited 'democratic' access. If this is true, then pornography is at the heart of the problem; not in the trivial and obvious sense that it is subject to moral openings and censorship, legislative limitations and legal regulation (which in actual fact do nothing but establish it as such: it is the norm that selects and dispenses its own transgression). The reason is different, and , more refined: the parts need to be reversed. It is *prostitution,* referring back to the Greek noun *porne*, which has become the principle (secret and yet evident, like every principle), the coded but intelligible model of the contemporary power of the spectacle. It is the point of suction and attraction, never attained but incessantly bordered on with the cheap trick of the nod of complicity and the vulgar wink (pornography is *never* vulgar: it doesn't need to be) which have nothing – notwithstanding pretensions – of the 'seductive' about them.

It is in the pornographic image that the reality show and the talk show, posters and advertisements find their occult/hidden truth.

The anchorwoman is the *Madame* of the television brothel, and just as the porno is condemned to show the same thing in variations and repetitions *ad infinitum*, those programmes doom us to the eternal return of our everyday horror in the triumph of mediocrity and hypocrisy.

8.

At times, as we know all too well, it is hard to *see* what is right before our eyes. Proximity often takes on the forms of the most extreme distance. For decades now, television programming has been on a continuous cycle, right around the clock: an excess of the *homoeopathic* type, practised through slow, continuous and prolonged inoculation and now so deeply ingrained in our habits, in the physiology of our communication, that we can't even remember or imagine the previous situation, except in the form – itself promoted by the television – of one of the *memorabilia* of mass culture (such as the 'test card') that have now fallen prey to the media's mania for the vintage.

Through 24-hour programming, the power of the media and show business has taken another step towards the metamorphosis of history into nature and freedom into destiny. Not only has the capacity for production been expropriated and turned into merchandise, but also the unshakably biological part of being human, the one directly linked to reproducibility of the living, has been taken up and at the same time made incidental and optional. The natural cycle that alternates sleep and waking has been overthrown; day and night are distinguished from each other solely by the level of advertising on the TV channels, and the result is – contrary to all appearances – a substantially linear, undifferentiated time, devoid of any qualitative specificity, abstracted from any relational and emotional component outside the medium itself. Thus emptied, it is ready to let itself be saturated and governed by the alluring, captivating and technically irresponsible supremacy of the uninterrupted flow of spectacle. Through excess and surfeit, i.e. precisely through the physical impossibility of following *all* the programming, this form of biopower is related in an implicit but functional manner to the non-human figure of a model viewer who never sleeps.

But there is more. Just as someone could make an effort and stay awake for 24 hours in front of the television (for example for a bet), in the same way the situation could arise (the probability may be close to zero: but this is a question of possibility, not fact) in which *no one*, in a given segment of time, is watching the programmes. Well, it needs to be pointed out that in precisely this circumstance – and in spite of all appearances – the media-entertainment machinery would achieve, under a secret pressure that comes only from itself, its metaphysical apotheosis as pure transmitter, with no need of any entity receiving it in order to justify its existence. In this case, the inherent excess of continuous programming is transformed into that absolute horizon against the backdrop of which every human action may at last stand out and take on significance, bestowing meaning on itself on every occasion, however transient and ephemeral; the living may be *inserted* as if into a structure that came before it: a sort of spatio-temporal *a priori* by which the spectacle is there *anyway*. And it is in this *anyway* that it finds its truth.

› *9.*

In the mature democracies that have given political and institutional form to the totalitarianism of the media and entertainment, it finds expression in forms of *inclusive imposition* that require participation and complicity: from radio programmes and TV contests to the 'dialogism' of the information systems of which we are simply the human interface: an interface that always has to be present, enthusiastic, elated and synergistic.

It may be that we can see here the legacy of post-1968 participatory ideology and social pedagogy. There can be no doubt that the protagonistic involvement of the masses is one of the founding myths and rituals of the modern era, one of those most deeply embedded in its political ideologies and social practices. In his *Letter to D'Alembert on the Theatre* (1758) Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote: "Erect a stake crowned with flowers in the middle of a square; gather the people together there, and you will have a festival. Do better yet; let the spectators become an entertainment to themselves; make them actors themselves." The ideology of the 'democratic' performance, from the Futurist avant-gardes to *The Truman Show*, can to a great extent already be found here. Yet of course, only a caricature of this 'active' participation is dished out.

Today, social censorship does not so much consist in banning and cutting, but in artificially producing the *doxa*, the stereotype, the cliché of 'public opinion', where true and false can no longer be opposed. It is not only where it is forbidden to speak, to 'intervene', that we find censorship. On the contrary it is most evident where – according to the predetermined rhetoric of conventional languages – speaking is required of us. On pain of ostracism and social exclusion accompanied by public derision, the entertainment industry – using tactics that mix allure with intimidation, seduction with command – incites me, obliges me to buy, to travel, to compete. Above all, it compels me to enjoy myself. It is now absolutely taken for granted that the user-viewer-consumer will deny that he is such and wants instead to become, to all intents and purposes, an interlocutor; that he expects to be involved in and associated with the processes of information set in motion; that he aspires to participate in and become integrated with the dialogic dynamics of computerised communication; that this intentionality, this

resolve to be involved in agonistic activism subsists and persists in the face of what is effectively a *coercion of liberty*. We are faced with a situation in which the harmonious accord that should be aimed for is passed off as already in existence and operation. It is at once a hypothesis and an assumption, a presupposition and a slogan, albeit one shared by the apparatus of the media and (swept along by this) significantly also by the relational aesthetics and interactive practices of contemporary art. It is precisely here that hyper-technological interactivity presents itself as a powerful and seductive machine for extending participation, a grand, 'democratic' techno-mythological construction (interaction is quick to degenerate into iteration) in which everyone plays their part (the allusion to 'play' is crucial here), and for which everyone is *responsible*, in the literal sense that they can be called on to *answer* for it. But does not this forced and at the same time self-satisfied democratic-unanimous activism, this euphoric and obligatory participation in the management of the global spectacle, constitute further proof of the will-to-power of technology, which – given the passive character of every human pleasure – also deprives us of the pleasure of pleasure, of the *pleasure of passivity*?

Unlike the traditional mass media with their linear one-way communication, the purpose and effect of the digital electronic media which, through various means of interaction and synergy in data processing, provide for our active participation, is not to reduce us to the state of passive, inert, mute recipients and keep us there. On the contrary, they oblige us to take on the role of knowing collaborators. But given that to exist means to *be exposed* (first of all to pain and pleasure), the basic problem is that those hyper-technologies take away our ability to receive, channel and process the perceptions, stimuli and impulses that come to us from this primary *pathic* exposure. From this perspective the participatory mechanism not only prompts us to ponder the fact that the hardest thing has actually become to take a step back, to refrain from intervening but, more profoundly, it strips us of our passive faculty, it takes away from us that *experience of passivity* of which, for example, Emmanuel Lévinas and Maurice Blanchot both spoke at great length and with much intensity. That is to say, we have been deprived of our sensitivity, of our *aisthesis*. And furthermore, since the question of pleasure here is not marginal but constitutive, for what rea-

son is it assumed (as if it were obvious) that replacing 'aesthetic distance' with a total and largely irreversible immersion, with interactive participation in the flow of sound and vision, should actually produce *more pleasure*? Would not the genuinely aesthetic and in the long run political task that we ought to be taking on (for example on behalf of the arts) be that of regaining possession of our right to pathos, in the etymological sense of the word, to our entire and unaltered *receptive experience* (an only apparently paradoxical act, but one that certainly goes against the grain)? Because it is on *this* front – and not at all, despite first appearances, on that of a 'creative' collaboration commercially redefined and given a time limit in accordance with product innovations in the sector – that we may recognise a much more coherent and radical potentiality for transformation in the work assimilated through our sensibility. We might find that listening and the open encounter could really be translated into a paradoxical but fruitfully *productive receptivity*; that when the dynamic interaction that stems from openness and a readiness to accept a work unmediated is turned into practice, this becomes an action that tends to transform the world and *not* the work, yet to transform it *by virtue* of the work. If the heart of Technology is not technical, art cannot limit itself to making it beat. It has to induce fibrillation. It is likely therefore that the task of the arts today and in the future is to challenge, to *exceed*, precisely by assigning it a *limit*, the totalitarian character of the Mega-machine. The artistic experience could become the only one in which the power of technology is returned to its critical threshold. It is here that art can perhaps once again become a threat to those in power. It certainly is not when 'you can do anything' with it, precisely because 'anything' has become innocuous; neither is it when, titillating our petty narcissism, it makes us ridiculously feel that we are 'all artists'; nor is it when, like the Nature Theatre of Oklahoma in Kafka's satire *Amerika*, it makes us believe that we will very soon, with very little effort, all become one.

Regaining and making the most of the better-considered yet revolutionary sense of passivity, and of the condition of receptivity with regard to a work of art, is anything but solipsistic absorption in its hallucinatory enchantment. Rather it signifies letting oneself be impregnated, letting oneself be charged like a battery so that this magnetic force can be used *in output*:

to transform existence by setting it free. Apollo's archaic torso, in Rilke's poem of the same name, far from embellishing or replicating it, urges us to *change* our lives: *Du mußt dein leben ändern.*

› *10.*

But in order to be able to do this, to be able to work towards it or at least give ourselves the possibility to do so, we must learn to *live the limit*, to recover and nourish its very sense: an ethic of finitude signifies this literally, etymologically. An ethic is never something abstract, but calls us to practice by definition. It demands transformative action and the concrete, actual, responsible decision-making through which we simultaneously *expose* ourselves as we *respond* to the event, to what transcends any horizon of expectations. An ethic of this sort has to be grafted onto the question of the forms and modes of survival of the human species on earth (hence the importance of our relations with non-human living creatures), in order to try to stem the unlimited lust for possession, or rather the irresistible and 'plutocratic' desire to establish a proprietary tie with the beings and things of the world; we evidently think that this is the only possible relationship we can enter into: turning them into merchandise, into 'commodities', just as we have done with our own history, which instead ought to sustain us. Critical awareness of the limits of the human, of its transience and mortality, is the condition for understanding what we already know perfectly well: that we represent just a moment, a part, a phase (due for the most part to a genetic accident) of evolution and natural history. The world had no need of humanity to begin, and will have no need of it to end either.

So it is an integral part of a strong, *epoch-making* revival of an ethics, and thus of a *practice* of the limit and the boundary, of a radical and irreversible realisation of our vulnerable finiteness, that we should now realise and accept that it would be lethal for us to go on regarding nature as an object that is there simply for us to make use of, a given that can be manipulated *ad libitum*. Rather, it is an environment-world of which we are an organic part as beings rooted in nature. That is to say: in perfect gratuitousness. If we were not radically finite, if we did not all too easily fall prey to transience,

we would not even have consciousness or a representative-symbolic faculty. For it is not just our *sensorium* that is intimately connected to the finite nature of intuition (how could I sense the infinite?). The very understanding of being, the intellect itself, our very capacity to know would not be possible except on the foundation of contingence: we know and understand because we are vulnerable. We know and understand because we die.

Yet we have to interpret, or rather *live* the limited and situated nature of our existence and identity not as a defective condition to be corrected and overcome (which is in any case impossible, beyond the grasp of any utopia of immortality acquired by hyper-technology), but as a task to be taken on and carried out to the end. Only in this way will we be able to develop the capacity to orient ourselves towards the possible, towards transcendence of the self, and thus turn it into an event and occasion of freedom, of aspiration and reaching towards the beyond. Only the existence of a limit can express meaning; and what has meaning has it to the extent to which it has *institutively* to do with that existence. Beyond the Cartesian thinking and self-reflecting subject, beyond the Kantian ethical-transcendental subject (and while defending the advances these two cardinal ideas of the modern era have permitted in the legal, political and social spheres), it is necessary to reaffirm the *situated* (*in situ*, localised) and contingent character of our concrete existence. This has its immemorial roots in the originality – indeterminable because it has already been determined, though not by us 'subjects' – of the insurmountable exposure of the body to the world. Thus of the autonomy and the excess of the sensible with regard to the concept. What escapes the latter since it is de-founded, placed beyond any rational justification, is the pure and simple fact that things happen; that is, that they irrevocably *occur*. This is the reason why the 'inexpressible' is not what surpasses and transcends the world, but on the contrary it is the world itself that I have here now, in this circumstantial and limited space-time, immanent and imminent before me. And this is why, consequently, it is not the 'infinite' that is transcendental but the *finite*, the *proximate* that we assign ourselves as a task each time.

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Massimo Carboni

Biography

›   Massimo Carboni (Livorno, 1954) is professor of Aesthetics at Tuscia
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eighties and nineties he was active as an art critic. He contributed to the
Venice Biennale as co-curator and author of texts in the catalogue in 1993,
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He has published: *L'Impossibile Critico. Paradosso della critica d'arte*
(Rome: Kappa, 1985); *Cesare Brandi. Teoria e esperienza dell'arte* (Rome;
Editori Riuniti, 1992; Milan: Jaca Book, 2004); *Il Sublime è Ora. Saggio
sulle estetiche contemporanee* (Rome: Castelvecchi, 1993, 2003); *Non vedi
niente lì? Sentieri tra arti e filosofie del Novecento* (Rome: Castelvecchi,
1999, 2005); *L'ornamentale. Tra arte e decorazione* (Milan: Jaca Book,
2001); *L'occhio e la pagina. Tra parola e immagine* (Milan: Jaca Book, 2002);
Lo stato dell'arte. L'esperienza estetica nell'era della tecnica (with Pietro
Montani) (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2005); *La mosca di Dreyer. L'opera della
contingenza nelle arti* (Milan: Jaca Book, 2007); *Di più di tutto. Figure
dell'eccesso* (Rome: Castelvecchi, 2009); *Analfabeatles. Filosofia di una pas-
sione elementare* (Rome: Castelvecchi, 2012). He edited the second edition
of Cesare Brandi's *Teoria generale della critica* (Rome: Editori Riuniti,
1998) and the third Italian edition of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's
Mille plateaux (*Mille piani. Capitalismo e schizophrenia*; Rome: Castelvec-
chi, 2010). He has also written: 'L'angelo del fare. Fausto Melotti e la ce-
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Italiana Treccani, 2010). He is editing a new edition of the works of Gillo
Dorfles.

Pier Paolo Tamburelli

Ohio, Iowa

In *Warum gibt es in den Vereinigten Staten keinen Sozialismus?* Werner Sombart clearly came up with the wrong answer, given that he predicted (in 1906) the imminent and inevitable appearence of socialism in the United States And yet the question remains an extraordinary one.
There is no socialism in the United States. Why not? And the landscape, why is there no lanscape?

In March 1976, Saul Steinberg made what is perhaps his most famous drawing for the cover of *The New Yorker*. The drawing is a map of the United States viewed from Manhattan. The map is drawn in perspective. Beyond 9th Avenue we can see one last piece of the city in the foreground, then the Hudson, followed by a large rectangle of flat ground, with a few rocks and names written on it, a band of blue ('Pacific Ocean') and finally, in the background, from right to left, three flattened lumps labelled 'China', 'Japan' and 'Russia'. The rectangle is bordered to right and left by two lines that converge on the centre of the perspective view; next to these lines are written the words 'Mexico' and 'Canada'. On the first strip of the rectangle, which is very thin and in a slightly different colour, is written 'Jersey', then 'Washington D.C.' and then, on three roughly parallel lines: 'Kansas City', and 'Chicago', 'Texas', 'Utah', 'Las Vegas' and 'Nebraska' and finally 'Los Angeles'. Scattered amongst these names are four rocks. Nothing else.

The primary objective of the drawing may have been solely to lampoon the mutual estrangement between New York and the rest of the country; nevertheless, what Steinberg drew was the *absence of landscape* in the United States, a flat territory in which there is nothing but names and a few bizarre rocks.
The illustrator tried on several occasions to capture the boundless extent of the American territory, often utilising maps. Perhaps this was because maps are the most direct way of showing the scale of things; or perhaps because maps, by uniting a name and a place, cannot fail to reveal the contrived nature of this coupling. Thus Steinberg sought to expose the surreal character of American toponyms; e.g, the inappropriate re-use of Indian names, and the numerous places with European names such as Rome, Athens, Paris, Toledo and Moscow.
These words dumped on the territory of the USA sound inauthentic, a bit ridiculous, frankly out of their element. It is as if the labels lacked things, as if just nametags had been attached to these places, without corresponding objects, without any real transformation; as if the sense of emptiness remained even after the conquest.

The large rectangle of land seems devoid of any real geography. The words and icons scattered around for no apparent reason demonstrate its complete

availability: the rectangle can be split up and taken over with relative ease. The land puts up no resistance, the gaze roams over it without encountering obstacles. The rectangle has a single unalterable characteristic: its size.

And indeed there is nothing inside that rectangle of land, just fields of maize or prairies or desert. There are no obstructions embedded into the territory, no habits translated into places: there is no *landscape*.
And yet that absence of landscape is a project; that nothing is a project, *a project of civilization*.
Obviously, that nothing is all too optimistic a project.

Steinberg sees the United States with the eyes of a European. He perceives the immeasurable space, the absence of restrictions, a completely different solitude.
Steinberg does not fill up this space with a bit of nature. As a worldly wise European, he sees the harsh emptiness concealed behind nature, distrusting this abstract and cruel pretence.
He certainly does not believe in Emerson or Thoreau, since for him, without landscape, there is no nature either. Not only are the rocks scattered over this stretch of (unnatural) land; they don't even look particularly benign.

Steinberg adopts a central perspective that describes a rectangle peopled solely by names and icons. This territory is viewed from one of its extremities and appears flat and ready for conquest. It is the perspective of the quarterback in an American football team when he begins his advance towards the rival goal area. Even the buildings and objects that appear in the drawing occupy the territory of the United States in the way that the defence occupies an American football field: in front a large number of players in a line (the defensive linemen and linebackers), behind them a scanty rear guard (the defensive backs) presiding over a huge area of the field. Beyond a tightly packed but thin line of opponents, the quarterback sees the nothing he has been promised.

Unlike Association football, in which the dimensions of the pitch can vary, *American* football is played on a field exactly 100 yards long. This length is

essential to the game, which can only be played if constantly measured (the attacking team has four consecutive chances to advance at least 10 yards, otherwise they forfeit possession of the ball). The field reflects this subdivision precisely: every five yards a line runs right across it; between these lines, four graduated scales marked along the two longer sides and in the central zone measure every single yard. Each interval of ten yards is also identified by a number (a progression from 10 to 50 in each half of the field).

When it is not clear whether the attacking team has advanced far enough to retain possession of the ball, the officials put the ball down at the point where the advance was halted and measure its distance from the point at which the game started with a bizarre, archaic,instrument made of two poles with a 10-yard-long chain strung between them. If it becomes necessary to carry out this measurement, a curious ritual is staged: the officials dressed in their black-and-white striped shirts dash in from the edge of the field, mark the ball's position, place the first pole on a spot on the sideline parallel to the location of the ball and then check – with the whole stadium anxiously holding its breath – whether, with the chain stretched to its full extent, the second pole lies behind or in front of the ball.

In American football, when the ball hits a goalpost, the game stops. The field is not a real space. The elements of which it is made up (the sidelines, the posts) are not *real*, unlike their counterparts in Association football, which constitute a *context* whose interactions with the players are fully part of the game. The American football field is not in fact a *place*, but an *instrument* that constantly makes reference to another – limitless – space. The field and the rules of American football (extremely complicated in comparison with those of any other sport) are in fact simply a set of stratagems that make it possible to play a game in a reasonably limited space, the objective of which is to conquest an *immeasurable* territory. Field and rules provide an artificial condition that echoes two characteristics of the American territory: *limitlessness* coupled simultaneously with *measurability.*

In Association football, the players *share* the field. Attack and defence are phases of play that occur without a break: forwards and defenders are part of a single team that stays on the field for the entire duration of the match and

has to tackle every situation in the game with the same line-up.

In American football, defence and offence are two clearly distinct phases. Within a single team (at the professional level, made up of 53 players, although only 11 can be on the field at any one time), the players of the defensive and offensive units are quite separate. When the turn for offence ends, the offensive players leave the field and the defenders come on. The teams do not have to fight for supremacy over a shared field; they must conquer a terrain that is simply available. And the offensive unit attempts to begin its advance not from midfield, but from its own 20-yard line: the *whole* field has to be conquered, the team does not really have a half of its own. There is nothing to lose, for nothing belongs to anybody.

In 1803 Thomas Jefferson bought Louisiana (a set of territories covering an area of about 2,150,000 square km, encompassing all or part of fifteen current states) from France for 15 million dollars. . Jefferson envisioned a scheme for the subdivision of this territory (the *Jefferson grid*) that would split it up into a multitude of properties for an ideal republic of farmers. Even before it had been explored, this territory had already been carved up and planned.

However, the United States had not been conquered by pioneer farmers as Jefferson imagined, but by a horde of pioneer speculators, predominantly small-scale and often very poor, who settled on the new lots not in order to cultivate them permanently, but to construct the minimum of infrastructure that would make it possible to sell them on.

The territory of the United States was all available at one and the same time; and to some extent the parts were interchangeable. The land and its inhabitants were independent variables, which could be infinitely rearranged to meet the needs of the market.

The landscape is missing because everything was done in too much of a hurry: the land was sold on even before it had been tamed; there had been no rituals of foundation, and the technology used to transform the territory was too far advanced, able to digest enormous amounts of land at a time without having to spawn stories about it.

In the United States there is no landscape because there have never been *producers of landscape*. In fact there have never been any peasants, only farmers, who are something else entirely, and in the American sense quite different from what is understood by the word in Europe.

The territory does not include *investments* from the past. There are no constraints on future generations left by previous ones. The social structure needed to domesticate the landscape is lacking, as is a consciousness that is in any way shared among the people or embedded in the land.
 It is as if too little effort has been put into the land.

Steinberg's drawing for *The New Yorker* does not just show the *absence of landscape*; he also drew *islands of landscape*, islands of landscape *in the absence of landscape*.

Four rocks are arranged on the bare rectangle: it's not clear what these rocks are. In any case, they have a wholly artificial appearance. They are not part of nature, and not even ruins. They look more like totems that seem to involve some obscure ritual.
The shadows of the rocks extend over the flat territory, as sun-drenched as one of de Chirico's piazzas. The rocks seem to have a relationship with solitude but, unlike the subdued and weary solitude of de Chirico's provincial Europe, there is something colossal about it.

An unexpected mythology seems to have taken possession of this gigantic and disposable territory. The rocks seem to speak to us from a distance. Their megalomaniac stories echo in the measureless expanse of the conquest. The empty space left by the dearth of legends has been filled with new demons that react to the extreme abstraction by producing a robust mythology that to some extent suits it. The territory has reacted to the need for myth with the same brutal logic that was applied to its colonization and exploitation..Some pieces of nature have been identified as symbols (Yellowstone, Devil's Tower, Monument Valley) and others heavily reworked (Mount Rushmore), while new artificial paradises have been created from scratch (Disneyworld). These clots of myth have been dumped unceremoniously in the space flattened out

by the project of conquest. There are not many of them, but they're gigantic, a reaction to a boundless territory.

This need for myth has something provincial and anachronistic about it, and in its way – moving. In 1927, when Gutzon Borglum started letting off the charges of dynamite that were to turn Mount Rushmore into a colossal bas-relief portraying four US presidents,, work was beginning on the Weissenhof Estate in Stuttgart.

Comunque, tra questi pochi giganteschi segni non c'è niente. Negli intervalli tra questi grumi di mito industrialmente fabbricati resta vuota una steppa smisurata. Qui, nella totale assenza di un inconscio collettivo pazientemente distribuito nel territorio, rimane disponibile un enorme spazio in cui le follie individuali non sono costrette ad alcuna disciplina.

Yet between these few gigantic landmarks there is nothing. In the gaps between these industrially fabricated lumps of myth, a measureless steppe remains empty. Here, in the total absence of a collective unconscious patiently distributed over the territory, an enormous space is left in which individual follies are not subject to any discipline.

On American football fields, between the figures that punctuate them so precisely are the names and images of a similar popular mythology. The names are always the same, like ancient American peoples: Vikings, giants, falcons, eagles, rams, lions, tigers.

On 19th October 2011 in Zanesville (Ohio), Terry Thompson, owner of the Muskingum County Exotic Animal Farm, opened all the cages in which his menagerie was kept, and then took his own life. Before killing himself he freed 56 animals including wolves, brown bears, grizzlies, leopards, 17 lions and 18 fully-grown tigers. The bewildered beasts started to roam the area, terrorizing the local population with their hungry roaring. Schools were closed, people were advised to stay at home and the police set about killing all the animals with assault rifles.

Pier Paolo Tamburelli

This story reminds me of the exotic birds raised by the miller Fochler's brother in Thomas Bernhard's *Gargoyles*. After the death of the miller's brother, the birds start to sing wildly and no one can make them stop. The miller's sons have to kill them all, one by one, without damaging their bodies – otherwise they could not be stuffed.

In Ohio there is a place called Cincinnati. They have a football team there: the Cincinnati Bengals, the Bengal tigers of Cincinnati.

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Ohio, Iowa

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Biography

› Pier Paolo Tamburelli (Tortona, 1976) studied at Genoa University and the Berlage Institute in Rotterdam. In January 2004, together with Paolo Carpi, Silvia Lupi, Vittorio Pizzigoni, Giacomo Summa and Andrea Zanderigo, he founded the baukuh architecture studio. Baukuh has exhibited its designs at the Rotterdam Biennale (2007 and 2012), the Venice Biennale (2008 and 2012) and the Istanbul Biennial (2012). It recently won the Icon Design Award as an up-and-coming studio of architecture (2012).
Tamburelli has taught at the PUSA in Aleppo (Syria) and Munich Polytechnic and currently teaches at Milan Polytechnic and the Berlage Institute, Rotterdam. He edited *James Stirling 1964-1992. A Non-Dogmatic Accumulation of Formal Knowledge* (*OASE* #79) and curated the exhibition *900 Km Nile City* at the 5th International Architecture Biennale Rotterdam (2012) and the Istanbul Design Biennial (2012). Tamburelli is one of the founders and editors of the magazine *San Rocco*.

Luca Scarlini

The city of the hundred gates: Milan and its double

At Milan all things are wonderful; abundant wealth, countless stately houses, men able, eloquent, and cheerfully disposed; besides, there is the grandeur of the streets stretching between its double walls: the Circus, her people's joy, the arched Theatre the temples, the imperial citadels, the wealthy Mint, and the quarter that goes by the name of the Baths of Hercules; her colonnades all adorned with marble statuary, her walls surrounded by a moat forming a rampart around the city's edge: all these things boast a beauty and greatness such that not even the comparisons drawn with Rome may cast a shadow over her.

Not even in the best defended position is there any guarantee that external forces will be unable to make their way in, despite the presence of all imaginable means of protection. However much one may believe that money, luxury and fashion act as a barrier to the arrival of polymorphous messengers from other dimensions, exchanges take place continually, with no way of stopping them. Parini's *The Day*, to which Milan is consecrated in the frenzy of commerce and calculation, gives way to the night of desire, in which the dream spectres lay claim to centrality. Giorgio Manganelli, master of desperately warped infernal visions, speaks in his fundamental work *Hilarotragoedia* (1964) of a Hades-bound place of a specific 'setting' nature. It may be reached through many gates, hidden in the most obvious and conspicuous of locations. In this place, in which the wayfarer may only wander down blind tunnels, it is not hard to recognise the traits of Milan, a city that ever since its consecration by St. Ambrose has never stopped trying to blot out extremely complicated and often obscure attempts to subtract events from the annals of history with a dazzling mystical glare. It even hides away ambiguous symbols in the darkness of its churches. Legend has it that the viper on the Visconti coat of arms actually derives from the 'serpent of Moses' (so-called as it is believed to have been cast by none other than the prophet himself), standing out enigmatically among the symbols of St Ambrose. That idol is a presage of more ancient cults venerated by the community of Mediolanum, intertwined with a more recent and baleful authority: that of an age that kneels before economics. The money god rules the underworld, flaunting its dazzling power. This proverbial expression was in use throughout the 20th century, uttered in a slightly deprecatory tone, but ultimately marked by great respect. What is celebrated in the underworld of Milan is the cult of a chthonic deity, in which gold (a substance that for many cultures is interchangeable with faeces) establishes the fragile equilibrium of symbols. The Bible (in particular the mediaeval interpretations of the Old Testament) uses the name Mammon for the mysterious creature of hell that presides over greed and cupidity. Saint Frances of Rome, in her mystical visions, names him as one the most dangerous creatures of Lucifer, along with his lieutenants Asmodeus and Beelzebub. In Collin de Plancy's celebrated *Dictionnaire Infernal*, he is presented as an extreme version of Molière's *Miser*, at the peak of his malign lust for gold when he longs for the stolen casket. The bowels of the city are the Stock

Exchange, where everything has to be orderly and remunerative, by decree of the authorities; they echo with the endless counting of silver and gold coins that the Dark Lord holds in his hand. Boundless is the yearning to reach his realm, endless the queue of those who struggle to arrive at his cavern, where everything turns tragically into income, revenue and dividends. At times the pungent stench he gives off in his eternal counting rises to the surface, and we hear the deafening trumpets of the angels of the plague, glimpsed in the furious pages of Giovanni Testori, who conceived his entire work on the theme of the 'Secrets of Milan'.

When the rain drums on the paving, or the mist spreads, making the city's architecture look its best, the bony heart of St. Bernardine beats. The church is like Edgar Allan Poe's purloined letter: too obvious (right in the centre) and thus very little visited or considered. The baroque cross of human remains, with its three arms of skulls, is in apparent contrast with the fresco on the ceiling: A *Triumph of Souls amid Flying Angels*, flowing from the brush of Sebastiano Ricci, with the charms of the late baroque. Here, it is Bernardine of Siena, titular saint of the church and revered by the order of the Disciples, to which it long belonged, who emerges triumphant. And yet the images speak to one another, just as a slick window display at *La Rinascente* or a fight among Latinos in a suburban discotheque does: they converse with each other covertly, one illuminating the other.

Little noticed in the city, that architecture of bones had the value of a model for some. King John V of Portugal, on a visit to Milan in 1695, was dazzled by such eburnean splendour. His august sensibility persuaded him to have the scheme of that ossuary replicated in the famous *Capela dos Ossos* in Évora, founded by a Franciscan at the end of the 16th century in homage to the strictest dictates of the Counter-Reformation.

From Ausonius, quoted at the beginning as an outstanding model of the Milanese vision, to the famous 19th-century writings of Stendhal, there have been a galaxy of celebrations of a busy city, one that finds its main *raison d'être* in work. In short: an excess of measure and order, a machinery of actions calculated to reflect a shared philosophy: optimisation. And yet all this bright-

ness of vision has always been counterbalanced by unexpected epiphanies in black. At this point, measure breaks down and gives rise to its double: the dismeasure that acts in the destructive dissemination of signs.

Among the writers who have painted pictures of Milan, Dino Buzzati is one of the most sensitive to this cold wind, with an acrid, pungent odour that rises from the bowels of the earth. In 1964, fittingly, Buzzati investigated a rumour that had spread rapidly among the excavators of the underground system: that there was a decidedly sinister passage leading to the hereafter, somewhere around Cadorna station. The writer, a correspondent for *Il Corriere della Sera*, declared that on making his way into the narrow opening, he had discovered a bureaucratic Avernus, identical in all respects to the city in which the living had made their abode.

This was a grey, contemporary vision of Hades, similar to the one that appears in Buzzati's magnificent graphic novel *Poema a fumetti* (a retelling of the Orpheus story) published in 1969. (Poema is even more vivid than the same author's celebrated *Il deserto dei Tartari/The Tartar Steppes*.) The public was immediately seduced by the *Poema*, while many critics described it as confused, finding in it no immediate points of reference. Buzzati mixes different visual influences (from Arthur Rackham to *Der Struwwelpeter*), which he lists meticulously. Again, the story is infernal: it concerns the classical Orpheus and Eurydice, with their names shortened in the language of the sixties to Orfi and Eura. The former is a beat singer, who lets his hair down in a fashionable nightclub singing the irresistible song of the *Witches*. He speaks of a sexy mirage, before which everyone should bow: provocative naked creatures flying around the Pirelli Tower. This effective synthesis symbolises the tension, from that statement in concrete and glass thrown up by Milan the boomtown, to those sensual yet threatening presences. "It's no use hiding/down in the cellars/It's no use barring/the doors and gates." The witches are in action and their teeth will sink deeply into the lustful body of the city. On Via Saterna (a name in which we may even note a fusion between Satan and Inferno), a tiny non-existent street connecting Via Solferino and Largo La Foppa, there is a gap that gives onto other dimensions. Through it passes the singer's sweetheart, emerging from a taxi at night only to vanish into the wall.

The next day, despite being in flourishing health, the girl suddenly dies and is then mourned by the despairing minstrel, who soon embarks on a frantic search. That little street, which at the time would have been located in a maze of balcony houses, also appears in Buzzati's *Un amore* (*A Love Affair*, 1963), an autobiographical novel which sees the triumph of the beautiful starlet Laide, with her equivocal name [1] and a double profile.

Strange winds even blow through the city's old palaces, ruffling the fantasies of their titled inhabitants. Lodovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso, one of the four brilliant partners of BBPR, the studio that founded rationalist architecture, had descended from two illustrious families (on his mother's side he was a Confalonieri), though perennially torn between an impulse to support the *Risorgimento* and innate conservative tendencies. In his memoirs, *Frammenti di una vita* (2004), he imagines his family's mixed heritage transposed into a visionary fresco. In it would be: "the whale that swallows and then vomits Jonah; Federico Confalonieri in chains *à la* Spielberg with Silvio Pellico; the Maccabee brothers under torture; the Israelites crossing the Red Sea,; King Desiderius of the Lombards, the father of Eberhard, count of Cuneo, legendary founder of our family; a Corrado Confalonieri in battle at the Crusades who, while carrying the gonfalon, had had his right arm cut off, so then picked up the banner with his left arm, had that too severed by a Saracen, and in the end carried the gonfalon pole in his teeth until his head was cut off [...]; Cristina di Belgiojoso who once rushed to the aid of Mazzini; the garden of Gethsemane; Hansel and Gretel; our ambassador forebears; Little Red Riding Hood; the coachman who was dying of pneumonia; Elena, the blonde girl at nursery school who I fell in love with." In short, a frenzied cinema of memories in which ancestors fight to the death with the perception of the present, in order to make their voice heard, as in the vintage experiments of the Latvian scientist and writer Konstantīns Raudive, who tried to discover how to capture the voices of the dead from the ether.

The sixties were years of triumphant design, of the professed delight in industry of the Lombards, pioneers of the 'little factory system'. Mammon found

[1] Laide is short for Adelaide and is pronounced like the English word lady, while *laido* is Italian for filthy or obscene *(translator's note)*.

a simple way to dominate, in the definitive transformation of nature into money, while in the shadows the metamorphoses of pollution were being prepared. The newspapers spoke of children sprouting breasts owing to an excess of hormones in the cereals fed to the chickens served in school canteens. Mammon sent the freak foetuses of Seveso for high-level posthumous study in Lübeck, following the explosion of dioxin into the Brianza sky in the hot July of 1976. The pungent smell of chlorine covered all, burning the skin, while in the bowels of the industrial district the profits of the ICMESA increased in spite of everything. As one might expect, it was in that decade and the next that images of various 'exits from the world', often as unpredictable as they were unwanted, were engraved in the memory. The capitalist city of Milan offered Pier Paolo Pasolini a gateway to the desert in *Teorema* (1968). In the crucial scene of the film, Paolo (Massimo Girotti) strips himself of all his clothes without anybody taking notice, after causing a huge scandal by handing his factory over to its workers. Like a second St Francis, he wants to attain perfect nakedness, as he passes from the railway tracks to the land. In a farmhouse on the outskirts, the maid girl Emilia (Laura Betti), after sex with the sacred guest, gives herself up to a mystical ecstasy of annihilation, levitating before the astonished eyes of the faithful, who are moved to tears at her display. Finally she asks her mother to bury her on a plot of land already sullied with pollution, where she weeps over her own fate and that of the human race.

Liliana Cavani develops and takes to an extreme certain impressions of the city as a theatre of apparitions in her most radical work: *I cannibali* (*The Cannibals*, 1969). The film tells the story of a modern Antigone, who wants to bury her brother at all costs, killed during an uprising. The first scene is set in Franco Albini's brand new Metro, the red line joining up places in the city centre. The platform, like the carriage, is filled with the corpses of terrorists, which must – by decree of the authorities – be left untouched on pain of death. The daughter of a powerful man, with the same name as the classical heroine (played by Britt Ekland), refuses to accept this rule, and aided by a messianic companion with a long beard (the prophetic and controversial Pierre Clementi) openly challenges the authorities. The body thieves determine to bury the corpses, at their own risk, in mother earth, when they un-

cover the absurdities and aberrations of a police state that wants to eliminate any possibility of freedom. Among the sequences that remain in one's mind are a horrific series of castrations of the young men who decide to go along with the regime, and a camp priest who blesses the bodies scattered on the ground while a street-cleaner's vehicle sprays Creolin to disinfect them. In some ways, an even more extreme vision is presented in *Milarepa*, another – apparently less dramatic work – by the Emilian director (1974). In this case a student of Oriental languages, of working-class origins, is involved in a serious car crash. In the ensuing delirium, he finds himself living the life, which he has long been studying, of the Buddhist ascetic Milarepa, who meditated on the peaks of Tibet.

In Giulio Questi's ill-fated gem *Arcana* (1972), the doors of perception open in the run-down suburban high-rises. In one grim tower block lives a clairvoyant of Southern origins, at the head of a dysfunctional family. Signora Tarantino (a splendid, incredible Lucia Bosè) has an incestuous relationship with her son, who takes pleasure in raping her clients: people enslaved by her occult powers (wielded by means of musical suggestion) until, in a scene of intense horror, she gives birth from her mouth to an endless stream of small frogs. The implication is that the South, defeated and forced into emigration, brings to the city a new repertoire of possessions and rituals, which hybridise with the still deeply-ensconced local witchcraft.

At Baggio, Don Giuseppe Gervasini (1866-1941) carried out his esoteric practices for many years, earning wide fame as a healer and holy man. The number 34 tram that ran from Milan to the outlying district where he lived had a stop dedicated to him because of the large number of people from the city who used to take that uncomfortable means of transport in search of some certitude or prompt remedy for the infirmity afflicting them or their loved ones. The *pret de Ratanà* (as he was known, after Retenate, where he had been the parish priest) is honoured by a sumptuous tomb in the *Cimitero Monumentale*, erected by his devotees. Mercurial, surly and sometimes free with his hands, he exercised his skills in a decidedly misogynist way. He singled out women for attack, along the lines made notorious by Padre Pio, for whom violence could lead to a salutary repentance, seeing that every af-

fliction is in the first place a failing of the soul and therefore surely derived from sin. In his little suburban house the priest exercised his skills in healing, receiving the poor and destitute, but certainly not above helping Benito Mussolini's daughter as well. The Duce's consort Rachele personally took it upon herself to accompany Anna Maria, who suffered from paralysis, to the priest – with an adequate police escort, of course. After three months of salutary immersion in the icy stream running through the garden, Anna Maria was cured. Legend has it that a knight's cross (something that never does anyone any harm) was soon ready for Don Giuseppe.

No less intrusive are the ghosts that continue to torment the more orthodox certainties of the inhabitants of the city of bank vaults. In 1960 Buzzati staged a ballet-*divertissement* at the *Scala*, for which he had written the libretto, with music by Luciano Chailly; it was entitled *Fantasmi al Grand Hotel* ('Ghosts at the Grand Hotel'). An urban myth held that anyone who tied the knot in the cathedral would have behind them the spectre of an unhappily-married woman who would mournfully celebrate her own failure, gazing with envy at the bride.

Milan is a city renowned for the splendour of its tombs. Bonvesin de la Riva declared this categorically in his *On the Marvels of Milan* (1288), cheerfully proclaiming that: "our fellow citizens keep very high their decorum and have themselves buried with the highest decorum. A clear sign of this is the fact that in the city alone, in its churches and in their cemeteries, there are more than 2,000 tombstones [...] The marvels of such a great city are evident when considered in relation to its position, its dwellings and its inhabitants." A metropolis that even today ultimately reveals itself as the double of a necropolis, in the mazes of the *Cimitero Monumentale*, commencing with the little Pantheon of the Famedio, dedicated to the illustrious dead. This is all done in the eclectic style of Carlo Maciachini and celebrated in Filippo Venosta's pompous publication of 1867. A miniature Milanese Pantheon, in essence, to rival Florence's *Santa Croce*, laying out the mortal remains of an eclectic group of artistic celebrities: from Francesco Hayez to Alfredo Catalani. Outside, the shrines – in their composite choices of style, mixing the most varied references – provide a potted history of artistic tendencies over the last two centu-

ries. On Toscanini's tomb, Leonardo Bistolfi monumentally commemorates the death of the maestro's son, at the age of four. Giacomo Manzù lines up his figures on Motta's tomb. Adolfo Wildt sets out a disconcerting array of crosses for Giuseppe Chierichetti. So many snapshots from the museum of death, one which – by exorcism – the city has dedicated the power that is *par excellence* the enemy of that selfsame industrial progress that it will admit to being devoted to.

In the background hovers the phantom of a tomb that is a necropolis in miniature: that of the bodies of the Three Magi, sensationally looted from their magnificent sarcophagus in St. Eustorgius by the wicked Frederick Barbarossa in 1164. That enormous sepulchre shines a mysterious light on the symbolic machinery of the city, a light that comes to rest on the ghosts of the three witnesses of the faith, of whom all that remains are a fibula and a few ragged fragments of bone, obtained with difficulty from Cologne Cathedral by the cardinal of Milan, after lengthy negotiations, at the beginning of the 20th century. So it is no surprise that revenants wander at their will through the streets of the city, where they call the tune, giving no quarter to those who strive to defeat them.

Especially over the last few decades, those who wield political power have shown a fondness for rituals, sorcery and ostentatious ceremonies to maintain their contact with the netherworld of the bank vaults. Formigoni and the all-powerful *Compagnia delle Opere* are great fans of the post-Tridentine articles and exhausting devotions. The Northern League has faked every possible fragment of an imaginary ancient Celtic past, going further than even the worst episode of *Martin Mystère*. Even Berlusconi has not skimped on fortune-tellers, in particular by giving a special role to the now famous, although mysterious, Gwenda, ridiculed by Michele Serra. As everybody knows, the powerful are closer than others to the gates that lead to the dark abodes of Mammon, and for this reason surround themselves with 'specialists' to act as their guides. This was true of one of the earliest rulers of the city in the modern era, Filippo Maria Visconti (1392-1447), when he was shut up in his castle at *Porta Giovia*. He, like the Sforza after him in their own castle, was intent on creating mythological underground escape routes, and

frequenting murky tunnels. At other times he devoted himself to innovative strategies of totalitarian control that aroused the interest of Elias Canetti, revealing a crack in his system of domination. The story is told in Latin by the Humanist Pier Candido Decembrio in his celebrated *Life*, a prototype of the courtier's account of the successful tyrant on Italian soil. As section LXVII sums up, drastically: "perhaps someone not acquainted with the life and habits of the emperor Augustus might also describe him, and not inaptly, as a more superstitious prince than others." And then comes a catalogue worthy of an unrestrained anthropological essay in the style of Ernesto De Martino. "He ordered the extermination of all crows, fixing a payment for each specimen brought before his eyes. [...] He ordered the protection of medlars, in memory of the fruit borne. [...] But he feared nothing so much as flashes of lightning. [...] This is the reason why he had his bedroom fortified with a double arch of masonry against sudden, unexpected thunderbolts. And it must also be said that, as soon as he heard the sound of thunder, he went to hide in a corner of the room, with his men all around to defend him."

The final dismeasure of the metropolis of Milan lies in the division of the city in two. There's a diurnal aspect, in which the money god holds sway, and a nocturnal one, in which the certainties of the Stock Exchange dissolve into damp mists and sickly glows, which no shop window, however brightly lit, is able to conceal. This was caught precisely by Enrico Baj in an extremely interesting interview of 1976: "When evening falls I find it very, very distressing, although not without its character. Let's say that it reflects anxiety, fear, uncertainty. If I were to represent Milan in a picture, I would give it a somewhat dramatic aspect, in dark colours." In his mercurial story *Il club delle ombre*, Carlo Emilio Gadda imagines a female teacher of art history lured by her students to a secret place: a room in a tumbledown tower, where she hears the voice of a lost child, asking for help. On the eve of his suicide, Mario Mieli pictured the magnificent coprophiliac-family symphony of *Il risveglio dei Faraoni* (1983), left as a draft version at the Einaudi publishing house at the moment of his death. (The book, eventually brought up by the *Colibri* co-operative, was later withdrawn at the behest of his family.) In it, the author of *Homosexuality and Liberation: elements of a gay critique*, imagining an existence for himself as a member of an ancient Egyptian dynasty, creates a

wonderful mosaic out of the unstable alchemy between an account of the gay movement and a highly personal form of clairvoyance.

In conclusion: despite all the shiny new buildings – symbol of an economic situation that ceased to exist some time ago – which riddle the zone of Porta Garibaldi pending the messianic Expo, there remains a house at no. 40 Via San Gregorio, vivid in the memory of elderly taxi drivers. There Rina Fort, the angel of death, killed the wife and three children (one a new-born baby) of her lover, Giuseppe Ricciardi. According to the urban myth, that flat – which has never since been rented or sold – marks an entrance, a threshold, as seductive as it is happily menacing.

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Biography

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His most recent books include: *Lustrini per il regno dei cieli* (Turin: Bollati
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