

Distinct Ways of Thinking and Distinct Experiences of Truth

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Abstract

This article aims to bring into discussion three issues that are not necessarily new but that have received little consideration in current philosophical discussions. First, one can notice that the space of freedom that thinking has is much larger than the one described by Kant in his first critical work. This new space of freedom is no longer strictly delimited by the classical principle of non-contradiction, on the one hand, and by sensitive intuition, on the other. Second, one can distinguish different modes of thinking without believing that we would be situating ourselves outside reasonable and meaningful thinking. Such are, for instance, the thinking that strictly observes the logic of non-contradiction and the thinking that exceeds this logic. Last but not least, we consider the fact that the thinking that exceeds the logic of non-contradiction induces another image of the world in which we are situated and can describe other experiences of truth (to use Gadamer's expression), such as symbolic and religious experience. Consequently, we have reasons to believe that one can talk about alternative in another, stronger and more radical sense of the word as well, as can be seen with authors and ages that had a disposition for genuinely alternative visions.

1. A modern distinction: to think and to know

As already known, Kant wrote extensively about the question of the very way of thinking. His reasons, however, were different from those of Johann M. Chladenius who, more than a century before Kant, asked how it is possible to understand the people who lived in another age and

thought totally differently from us¹. Kant does not necessary raise the question of historical difference, a difference that may become, to a certain extent, abyssal. He rather prefers to consider a distinction that could ultimately uncover that which is within the powers of the human mind. This is the distinction between thinking, on the one hand, and intuiting originally, on the other hand. As he understood it, thinking is essentially a logical and conceptual exercise. With the help of some concepts, various representations are bound in one same conscience. Or, to use his terms, thinking binds the diversity of a sensitive intuition by subjecting it to the shape of a concept.

But let us return to one of his examples and consider the situation of the one who, pondering upon his own will, would first say that it is subject to natural causes and laws. One can indeed notice, under certain circumstances, that what he wishes depends on certain causes of nature. By making such a judgment, the individual relates what he has sensitively intuited to the concept of causality. In this case, "Thought is the act which relates given intuition to an object"². Yet one does not always deal with intuitions given in a sensitive experience. For instance, when the same individual thinks differently, telling himself that his will is free and not subject to external causes, what he thinks cannot be given in the situation of a sensitive experience. He cannot empirically verify such a situation where his will would appear unconditionally free. Nevertheless, one accepts this idea in many cases. One does it, for instance, whenever one has reasons to consider that one's soul is not subjected to time or death as such. The soul, of course, seen in its power to defeat death, is not the object of a sensitive experience. And thought does not entail certain knowledge but rather a form of self-understanding.

In a footnote, Kant returns to this bifurcated path of thinking and insists on a distinction that he deems essential for what he will discuss next. "To *know* an object I must be able to

¹ Cf. *Einleitung zur richtigen Auslegung vernünftiger Reden und Schriften*, Leipzig, 1742.

² *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1929, Palgrave, p. 263.

prove its possibility, either from its actuality as attested by experience, or *a priori* by means of reason. But I can *think* whatever I please, provided only that I do not contradict myself, that is, provided my concept is a possible thought. This suffices for the possibility of the concept, even though I may not be able to guarantee that, in the sum of all possibilities there exist indeed, an object corresponding to it. But something more is required before I can ascribe to such a concept objective validity, that is, real possibility; for the former possibility is merely logical. This something more need not, however, be sought in the theoretical sources of knowledge; it may lie in those that are practical"³. The distinction is not at all random here. On the contrary, it doubles the radical difference between phenomenon and the thing in itself. It is what Kant mentions in the text: "Although we cannot *know* these objects as things in themselves, we must be in position at least to *think* them as things in themselves; otherwise we should reach the absurd conclusion that a phenomenon can exist without anything that appears."⁴ Therefore, there is a serious difference between thinking and knowing. The scope of the former is much larger: "I can think whatever I please, provided only that I do not contradict myself". This scope seems unlimited: "*for thought* the categories are not limited by the conditions of our sensible intuition, but have an unlimited field. It is only the *knowledge* of that which we think, the determining of the object, that requires intuition."⁵ When I do not contradict myself "my concept is a possible idea". However, this is a risky, uncertain idea. As Kant argues, one cannot guarantee that there is an object that corresponds or not to a certain concept. When there is no real object that corresponds to thought, the exercise of the latter is purely logical and the possibility it explores is just logical. Kant illustrates this distinction in the

³ *Ibidem*, p. 27 *infra*; § 21-22.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 27.

⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 175 *infra*.

case of one of the three ideas of pure reason, namely the idea of freedom.

Let us follow his idea for a while in this last issue, since in this case, everything seems to take the shape of philosophical belief personally assumed.

If we consider human will as a thing in itself or as simple phenomenon only, we will definitely reach absurd conclusions about what we think. Yet, if we consider it in two ways, on the one hand as phenomenon and on the other hand as thing in itself, then we will avoid such absurd consequences and we will better understand the assertion of those persons who, pondering on their will, think that it is either perfectly free or subject to natural laws. In what way will we better understand it? Only when it is seen as phenomenon does human will appear "according to the laws of nature and, so, as non free". But as a thing in itself, the will appears to be totally free. As these two judgements deal with different points of view, they no longer contradict each other. The slightly strange conclusion that Kant reaches via this bifurcated path is, nevertheless, different: namely, human beings cannot know their free soul – neither analytically, nor by empirical observation. They can contemplate it, ponder upon it in many ways, but not know it because it cannot be determined the way other things subject to observation are⁶. When I can know something, I use a sensitive representation. When I only think that something, I deal with a non-sensitive, intellectual representation. If the latter is non-contradictory, thinking is possible. I can think what ignores the conditions of intuition, but not what would ignore the principle of non-contradiction. If "non-

⁶ I do not know if Kant resumes here, even in a free, secularised interpretation, the meaning of old verses, such as those in *Luke 16, 27 sq.* We know that this passage in the New Testament assures us that such an experience concerning the condition of the soul after death is not only impossible via one's own effort, nor would it be convincing for the non-believer. The last answer given by Abraham to the one who had asked for the most obvious proof concerning man's fate after death is very telling: "If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead" (16, 31).

contradictory” means “possible” (Christian Wolff), it follows that we can think that which is possible. The simple converse sentence of this assertion would say that all that is possible can be thought. We are not talking here, under the umbrella of possibility, about something subjective or simply arbitrary, but about the very logical scope of an object, as Alois Riehl will later comment.

2. Two limits of thinking: self-contradiction and original intuition

Let us reconsider the above question differently, by asking what precisely is not given to the human being to think, from a Kantian perspective. Above all, as we have seen, one cannot think that which is contradictory from a logical point of view, nor can one think that which is totally foreign to concepts, either of the intellect or of reason. Wouldn't it be more appropriate, therefore, to say that in fact, thinking is a categorial approach? To a certain extent, this is how things are because there are original concepts of the intellect, namely the categories, of a really decisive force in the act of thinking. They appear as pure functions because each establishes how a concept relates to objects. In their exercise, prudence must be greater. “The principles of pure understanding can apply only to objects of the senses under the universal conditions of a possible experience, never to things in general without regard to the mode in which we are able to intuit them.”⁷ Moreover, categories do not apply concretely to the thing in itself and cannot transform it in an object of knowledge. It is true that, in their functions, “they go beyond the field of sensitive intuition, because they think objects in general, without considering the particular mode in which they can be given.”⁸ Their significance is not completely limited by sensitive experience.⁹ Yet one cannot

⁷ *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 263. As pure forms of thought, categories contain the merely logical faculty of uniting *a priori* in one consciousness the manifold given in intuition (267).

⁸ Cf. *Ibidem*, p. 263.

⁹ Cf. Peter F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Senses: An Essay on Kant's «Critique of Pure Reason»*, 1966, London: Methuen, Fourth part, 7.

talk about non-conceptual, purely intuitive thinking, as Schelling argued a few years later. Nor can one talk about the thinking that would know itself in an absolute manner (Hegel). Other possible formulas, explored later, would have seemed truly outrageous, such as the idea of non-rational thinking, supported by needs and instincts (Nietzsche) or, even stranger than that, the idea that there would exist pre-reflexive, unconscious thinking (Collingwood), and a certain diffuse thinking, at the level of carnal sensitivity (Merleau-Ponty). Such a thing would have been unacceptable for Kant. Whatever is not subject to the concept in any way cannot be thought. We can think something in itself, but in this case, we do not deal with the absence of any kind of concepts but an orientation of the gaze, as it happens when we think something as an indeterminate object or an endless problem.

Kant will state this in other words as well: one cannot think archetypically, in order to have a full intuition of something only with the help of the intellect. One's intuition is not original (*intuitus originarius*) but receptive only or derived (*intuitus derivativus*), compelled to refer to what one's senses offer. The same hold true in the case of human intellect: it does not act as original intellect (*intellectus archetypicus*). One thinks ectypically and discursively, as if one were working with images or copies (*ectipa*) of that which has been created. If one were to think archetypally, then one would have the truly divine possibility to create the very thing that one thinks. One's intellect would then be genuinely intuitive; it would be the efficient cause of a thing as far as its very existence is concerned. Yet this latter possibility belongs to God only. In fact, one cannot properly say that the intellect thinks, even if it had the power to originally intuit the object as such, namely to proceed *ex nihilo*, "as, for example, a divine understanding"¹⁰. Here lies a truly decisive limit of human thinking. In this latter aspect, there is however a small window of opportunity for human beings, granted to them as a gift and not necessarily as power of subversion.

¹⁰ *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 162. This issue is resumed in *Prolegomena*, §§ 57-58, then in *Critique of Judgment*, § 77.

Namely, human beings can think and achieve that which is grounded in the freedom of their will. This truly noumenal element, the good as such, will be thought as the purpose of their deeds and will have its own reality. In other words, it will have, to invoke Kant, that “something more” than the logical possibility that reason ensures¹¹. What is at stake here is a distinct reality, non-similar to that proper to the natural thing, whose matter can be given in the experience of the senses. This is the reality of *Sollen*, something that must be, possible as an ultimate purpose or as an ideal path to follow.

So, the principle of non-contradiction indicates the lowest possible limit of human thinking is possible. The level where the freest concepts are active, such as those of reason, indicate the upper limit of human thinking. Beyond this level there could be only the intuitive intellect. Yet, as Kant assures us, human beings do not have access to such a thing. Human thinking would be situated precisely between these two limits: total self-contradiction, on the one hand, and the original intuition of a thing, on the other hand.

3. The image of a finite, bivalent and purely actual world

I would like to make a comment here: Aristotle had once intuited the same thing, namely that the principle of non-contradiction is “the most certain of all”, both with respect to our knowledge and with respect to the mode of being of all that exists.¹² However, for him, this principle implies a purely metaphysical meaning as well, and it enables another interpretation, that is different from the logical one. In other words, the idea of an alternative world

¹¹ *Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 27. In this case, the human being will not be considered in his phenomenal data, under the common conditions of space, time or causality, but as a noumenal being; cf. *Critique of Judgment*, § 84.

¹² *Metaphysics*, IV, 1005 b – 1006 a sq.

would not have been foreign to him. When he discusses about contingent or future facts, he accepts exceptions from the rule of non-contradiction. He knows well that each time human deliberation, i.e. an alternative occurs, the principle is exceeded. To paraphrase him, in those things that are not actual, there is the possibility that a thing either exists or does not exist¹³. This holds true for facts that are subject to time, that are uncertain or incidental.

If we distinguish between that which breaks the formal law of non-contradiction and that which exceeds it (the case where it is neither broken nor observed), we could accept another situation than that described by Kant. Yet when exactly could we talk about the excess of the rule of non-contradiction?

We know that this principle asks us to avoid self-contradiction under well-established circumstances. Since we are told that a sentence that contradicts itself cannot be true, one could talk in this case about the principle of formal, absolute non-contradiction (Ștefan Lupașcu). Or, to put it differently, one could talk about the principle of excluded contradiction.¹⁴ Let us recall its old formulation: “the same attribute cannot at the same time belong and not belong to the same subject and in the same respect.”¹⁵ Aristotle resumed this idea immediately with reference to the mode of being of a thing: “obviously it is impossible for the same man at the same time to believe the same thing to be and not to be”. If, however, one could do this, “he would have contrary opinions at the same time”. As we can see, a few validity conditions of this principle are already made explicit: the temporal condition (“at the same time”) and the perspectival condition (“in the same respect”). Another condition is easily perceived: that of self-identity (“the same subject” and “the same attribute”). There is also a certain way of negation that can transform the relation

¹³ *On Interpretation*, 19 a.

¹⁴ Ernst Tugendhat & Ursula Wolf, *Logisch-semantische Propädeutik*, beginning of 4th chapter.

¹⁵ *Metaphysics*, IV, 3, 1005 b.

between propositions into one of contradiction. To resume, there are four conditions: temporal, perspectival, the subject's self-identity and the negation mode. The condition of self-identity becomes also clear from the absurd consequences that its breach would lead to: the disappearance of any essential characteristic feature, the total confusion of different things and the confusion of truth with falsity¹⁶. Hence we will understand that, in fact, this principle operates infallibly when thinking ignores temporality or any other metaphysical accomplice of temporality: contingency, the multiple perspective on the existent, its contradictory dispositions etc. In other words, it operates faultlessly in a situation that Euclidian geometry could perfectly describe. The modification of just one of the conditions mentioned above weakens a lot the force of the principle of non-contradiction. This is what happens, for instance, when the predicate of a sentence does not have a single and exclusive meaning. If we take predication to mean the situation of an object on the one side and not on the other of a classifying demarcation line, to paraphrase Strawson, then we will better know what the principle of non-contradiction says. Its validity area can be more strictly delimited, namely to the relation between two predicates that are mutually incompatible, for instance blue and yellow. Either announces a demarcation line, a border. A contradiction emerges when we situate the object on both sides of the boundary. It is just that things do not easily obey operations of this kind. The boundary is always more or less imprecise. This is the situation which leads to difficulties in those cases when the object is situated exactly on the imprecise strip between the two fields."¹⁷ Indeed, we are less certain about what is contradictory, but the uncertainty is further preserved:

¹⁶ Cf. Petre Botezatu, *Introducere în logică (Introduction to Logic)*, Iași, 1997, pp. 32-35.

¹⁷ Ernst Tugendhat, *op. cit.*, p 53. The author references Peter F. Strawson, *Introduction to Logical Theory*, chap. I, § 1-8.

either the boundary in question has proved to be imprecise, or the object under discussion is situated precisely on this demarcation line. And, in many situations that we encounter in life, this is precisely how things happen.

In fact, the total trust in this principle supposes a certain representation of our world and of the self. The world is seen as ultimately finite, actual and perfectly bivalent, dominated by necessary relations. The states of things that compose such a world can be said to present themselves in one way: they are true *or* false, existent *or* non-existent, real *or* illusory. Thus, in its content, the conjunction *or* has some genuinely huge force. One can no longer talk, in this case, about a possible interval between the two logical variants, nor about a real intermundium, similar to the one in which some Stoics would place the beings that were not subject to binary logic, such as **daimonic** beings, who were neither mortal, nor immortal, neither earthly nor heavenly. In other words, one cannot talk now about a mode of intermundial existence, where strange translations and unsolvable antinomies are present.¹⁸ All this will be left aside, either as simple images of the mind or as simple and pure possibilities in the logic of that which exists.

I do not mean to imply in the above statements that a principle such as the principle of non-contradiction would be valid only *in abstracto*, in a purely formal world or only in a world that is completely foreign from the world we live in. My argument is that this principle, as it has been formulated by classical logic, is active only within certain boundaries of thinking. It is valid when we represent the world in a certain way: bivalent, purely actual, finite or well established. Such a representation – never the only possible one – belongs itself to this world of life and it is only within this world that it has or it could produce

¹⁸ We have pondered on such issues in the article *Eminescu. Memorie și spațiu intermundiar* (*Eminescu. Memory and Intermundial Space*), published in Dumitru Irimia (coord.), *Studii eminesciene*, Iași, 2006, pp. 5-14.

reality. But when it is deeply affected, the rule of non-contradiction is exceeded. The same happens when another representation or another way of being in the world becomes more active. Yet it will not be simply flouted and lead to absurd, scandalous consequences, but simply exceeded. This means that once its requirement is observed, the demarcation lines within which it is valid will also be noticed. This is likely to become visible as soon as the rule of non-contradiction is no longer capable of new forms or modulations. One of these modulations is already well-known: its extension from the relation of contradiction – which is valid only in a bivalent world– to that of contrariety.¹⁹ Another one is its presence, under much relaxed forms, in the world of factual truths and not only in that of the truths of reason, if I were to use Leibniz's differentiation.

4. Three situations in which the non-contradiction rule is exceeded

As we can see, human beings can think that which exceeds the logical rule of non-contradiction. I will invoke here three situations that are quite frequent in our everyday speech and life.

One of them seems to indicate the weakest place of thinking, when we talk lightly about that which we call some thing. What could, in our everyday speech, some thing mean? It can mean, for instance, that which is perceived at first, somehow non-mediated or non-reflected. But it can also signify that which appears to us contingently or by chance, without confusing these two modes of appearance. Consequently, some thing represents the object of a simple opinion or belief, as in the situation when someone says that he or she believes in the unexpected change of weather overnight. Anyone can realise that in these cases we deal with a belief that is totally different from religious belief. Latin, via one of the

¹⁹ Petre Botezatu, *op cit*, pp. 38, 45.

meanings of the word *res*, illustrates well the condition of some thing. This noun, as we know, is related to the verb *reor*, which means both to judge, to carefully consider, as well as to think, to suppose or to believe no matter what. In fact, this verb allows us to give thought meanings that fall within broad boundaries, as long as "thinking" can be the equivalent of "believing" or of "being of an opinion." The extension that these lax meanings ensures tends to become maximal. Yet it is not only the act of thinking that will know such an extension but that thing that is presupposed or believed in one way or another will be equally extended. Consequently, the meaning of the word "thing" comes to have in this case a range compared to which no other larger range could possibly be imagined. After all, anything can appear as a thing of contingent opinion or belief, both that which has minimal evidence and that which pertains to a phantasmatic or even nightmarish world. But one can no longer say that some thing is invariably one and the same, nor that it is real *or* non-real, true *or* false. The logical rule that this *or* expresses becomes utterly optional. Some thing no longer belongs to a world that accepts the logic of bivalence. It does not obey those minimal conditions required by the rule of non-contradiction. Yet, despite all this, it can be a matter for thought, at least in certain aspects. And to the extent that anything can appear to us as a thing, we can say that anything can be thought: the square circle, the images of a nightmare, the phantasms that visit us in our daily life, to say nothing of the monstrous beings described in the old bestiaries or in various stories. Anything can be thought, but not necessarily as a well determined object of an intersubjective experience.

What would be, here, the limit case, metaphysically? It would probably be the case when we would be talking about the thing deprived of any determination, i.e. the pure and simple thing. This is what has been noticed about the non-determined being, as it was understood in a few pages in the *Science of Logic*. The lack of content makes it

identical, ultimately, to nothing itself.²⁰ Cautious, Hegel says, in a previous paragraph, something totally unexpected, namely that the only determination of a pure being is constituted by the lack of any determination. Its only quality is ensured precisely by the lack of any quality, its non-determined mode of being. Although actually non-determined, “the character of indeterminateness attaches to it only in contrast to what is *determinate* or qualitative.”²¹ Or, in this latter case, the rule of non-contradiction proves weak or optional. The contradictory fact – the result of the pure being and the pure nothing meaning one and the same thing – finds its way into what we think and in the act of thinking.

The third situation in which the human being feels that something exceeds the rule of non-contradiction takes us to a rather difficult point of thinking. More precisely, it uncovers the point where thought contradicts itself. The data of thinking that determine, via assertion or negation, that a predicate belongs to a subject, have long been known. This type of thinking has been called apophantic thinking, that which asserts or determines an object. It is the way we think when we say, for instance, that the forest is wild. Such a statement, which does nothing else but declare or determine something, can be true or false. It is not difficult to establish the truth or falsity of the statement that the forest in Valea Seacă is wild. The difficulty increases, however, when we do not deal with simple statements but other modes of stating. This is what happens, for instance, when we consider a question, a plea, a story, an order, a commendation, and especially a prayer addressed in solitude to an unseen power, or when what we think can be neither a subject nor a predicate, in the

²⁰ “Pure being /.../ is pure indeterminateness and emptiness. There is *nothing* to be intuited in it, if one can speak here of intuiting; or, it is only this pure intuiting itself /.../. Being, the indeterminate immediate, is in fact *nothing*, and neither more nor less than *nothing*” (Book Volume 1, Book 1, Section 1, Chapter 1, A).

²¹ *Ibid.*, § 131.

logical meaning of these terms. In other words, it cannot be an object, in the modern understanding of the term. This happens, for instance, when thinking seeks to understand the condition of a living image, the person as such, fully aware that the latter cannot be an object in the proper meaning of the word. The same holds true for what we call a historical event, the life of a human community.

5. Objectifying logic and antinomic logic

To transform something into an object, to institute an object, to operate with all sorts of objects and to follow the criteria of objectivity, fall unquestionably under the umbrella of the faculty of thinking. Yet it does not follow from here that the act of thinking is exhausted in this modality, nor that such a modality would be justified any time and with reference to anything.

Objectifying thinking does not necessarily represent the generic mode of thinking. It rather means a species of thinking, under well-determined circumstances, and with its own justifications and possible fallacies. It is distinct, for instance, from the mainly symbolic thinking, although, to a certain extent, it is not always deprived of symbolic elements. It stands under different presuppositions and under different criteria than symbolic thinking. It indicates, as Heidegger argued, a different experience of the human mind than, for instance, the meditative experience,²² or than the experience proper to creation in general. Under such circumstances, the phenomenon investigated can be original, such as language. No one doubts that thinking is present in any of these experiences, not as diffuse, implicit or vague thinking, as we might be tempted to believe, but as critical thinking, in the proper meaning of the word. In Heidegger's opinion, to think critically means to permanently differentiate (*krínein*) between those things that, in order to be justified, require a demonstration, and those that, in order to be confirmed, require simply to be

²² Cf. Letter from March 1964, written for the debate at Drew-University, Madison, 9-11 April 1964, published later together with the work *Phenomenology and Theology*.

surprised and accepted. One can no longer say in this case that the only critical thinking is theoretical thinking. However, one prefers sometimes to assimilate any mode of thinking to objectifying thinking. The latter proves necessary to a certain extent, even in our everyday and technical space of living. It is just that when it becomes hypertrophied, it can make unrecognisable that fact of living that it approximates and to which itself belongs.

Yet when we consider that which cannot be an object, or when thinking follows another path than that proper to the objectifying attitude, the rule of non-contradiction will be easily exceeded. One encounters then, in certain situations, something that announces a deeply antinomic nature. This is not just a formal antinomy, as in the case of the one noticed in Epimenide's statement on the Cretan, with reference to Cretans themselves²³. We are talking here about the formal character of an antinomy, with no intention to diminish in any way its force to scandalise the human mind. In fact, the Greek philosopher Philetas of Kos is said to have died because of his huge efforts to logically solve Epimenide's antinomy. And since his time, such efforts have never ceased to be made, even though philosophers have not risked their life any more for such a cause. Yet this is not how things stand when we are concerned with the deeply antinomic nature of a reality.

The latter situation is well known to some interpreters, for instance to Rudolf Otto. What appears to thinking as totally other, *ganz Andere*, makes one notice this antinomic mode that the totally other thing has to manifest itself. According to Otto, the most acute form of *mirum*, that

²³ "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons", Epimenides is credited to have uttered, prophetically, according to Apostle Paul in the *Epistle to Titus* 1, 12. And he adds immediately: This testimony is true. Therefore, rebuke them sharply so that they will be sound in the faith..." (1, 13). The Greek philosopher will hand over a much simpler and somehow ludic variant. Just that, as Aristotle had well noticed, "he who says that everything is false makes himself a liar" (*Met.* IV, 8, 1012 b).

which is truly mirable is that which we call antinomy. It is more than a simple paradox. It enables the emergence of sentences that are not only contrary to reason, to its norms and laws, but also of divergences between them, thus stating the *opposita* about the same object and creating antitheses that seem irreconcilable and irreducible. Thus, *mirum* shocks the human will to understand²⁴. This occurs due to several reasons, at least. First, this *mysterium tremendum* is unperceivable and incomprehensible, *akatálepton*, as St. Joan Chrysostomos argued, so that “it cannot be grasped by our categories.” Then, it will make reason see its own limits and ceaselessly upset it via its paradoxical character (to paraphrase Otto, now it is not only above any reason, but it seems to be “against reason”). He thus discovered a *dissimilitas* that was irreducible vis-à-vis that which obeys the rule of non-contradiction. Finally, this *dissimilitas* concerns its very nature (it is made itself out of contrasts, oppositions and contradictions), which means that it is not a simple effect of perception. Thus, apart from the habitual or common logic, one can recognise another one that is much more different. Both the situation called *coincidentia oppositorum* (easily recognised in teachings such as *Mahayana* or, later, in the pages of authors such as Meister Eckhart), and Jobian judgments, are proper to this different logic. We refer here to those judgments that take the shape of irreducible antinomies, frequently met in the scriptures (the Old and the New Testament) and in patristic writings, or even in the thinking of some modern, more eccentric interpreters such as Luther.

The phenomenologist invoked above noticed something else as well, namely that the incomprehensible element is not discovered in a pure and absolutely singular state. Should this happen, the communication between the human being and the divine power would be blocked for good. In the case of Job, for instance, such a *mysterium* could have at the most made him keep quiet but not

²⁴ Rudolf Otto, *Das Heilige – Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen*, 1917, chap. 5.

persuaded him deeply.²⁵ Since it does convince him deeply and brings peace to his soul, it means that the incomprehensible element has, in this case, a rather ineffable positive value. What appears as *mirum* simultaneously becomes "both an *admirandum* and an *adorandum*, as well as a *fascinans*." Such a value is situated on another level than that of regular thinking, "the one of searches for a purpose or an intelligible meaning." It is not exhausted in an act, as if it were to avoid its own mystery. What matters immensely is that it should be perceived as such, as it happens in the episode in the Testament when "Elohim is justified, and Job's soul is at peace". The non-contradiction logic is not simply cast aside but taken beyond itself, in another space of communication and understanding.

So, the presence of the antinomy becomes utterly obvious when a personal and absolute, truly revealed reality is to be perceived. Christian writers noted this fact very well in their work. In fact, they realized that the truth of the Testaments cannot be expressed in the Aristotelian logic of non-contradiction. This does not go too far when it comes to notice something absolutely different, such as that which is uncovered as one and multiple in itself, or that which announces itself as the perfect double nature, neither separate, nor mixed. In such an apophatic experience, antinomy is real and irreducible. According to Lossky, God is nothing of all that pertains to creation or to things manifest; in His nature, He is impossible to be known. He 'is not.' This is where the Christian paradox occurs: He is the God whom I address as 'You,' Who calls me, Who reveals Himself as personal, living²⁶. The

²⁵ *Ibidem*, chap. 13.

²⁶ Cf. Vladimir Lossky, *Orthodox Theology: An Introduction*, 2001. Cf. *In the Image and Likeness of God*, 1974, or Pavel Evdokimov, *La Connaissance de Dieu selon la Tradition Orientale*, 1969. As he mentions at one point, the "blinding darkness" is a mode to express the proximity of the inaccessible: the more God is present, the more he is hidden. (p. 26 in the Romanian translation). An older source of such

antinomy is also real when one hears that one must love those who hate you, do good to the one who wishes for the worst for you, and to pray for the one who persecutes you (*Mathew 5, 44*). It cannot be translated in the terms of a formal contradiction, a situation in which it would be in fact degraded, nor does it have a purely logical, cognitive sense. However, if we were to talk about contradiction, then we should see that in this case, it does nothing but hide a true paradox. "God Himself is a union of contrasts or paradoxes. For He is One, but in three hypostases. And since He has all possibilities, all powers, He doesn't need to move towards anything. Yet, He moves, resting in the love between the three hypostases and with love for all things created"²⁷. Such a paradox cannot be accessible to analytical thinking. The heresy of Arius, who was a great scholar after all, expresses among other things precisely this wish of thinking to translate in the logic of non-contradiction that which exceeds it boundlessly. In such a case, the resources of the alternative, as a distinct or original figure of thinking, seem to be simply forgotten. This is why, in what follows, I will ponder on this issue.

6. On the included third party and the idea of an alternative

Whoever would argue that the non-contradiction logic can be doubled by an antynomic logic does not necessarily consider the premeditated flouting of certain rules of logic. Nor is such a thing possible in the regular exercise of thinking. What is considered is only the possible access to another level of understanding, where the respective rules are no longer valid in their restrictive use. What sets the

considerations can be found in Pavel Florenski's work, namely in *Pillar and Ground of the Truth*. We find out there, especially in the "Letter on Contradiction," that the truly concrete fact manifests itself antinomically, which is an unavoidable situation for reason. The latter sees itself forced to give up itself and its non-contradictory logic, so as to have access to the original truth of the person and of divine revelation.

²⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Studii de teologie dogmatică ortodoxă (Studies on Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, Craiova, 1990, p. 194.

limits of these rules does not exhaust the comprehension field which is proper to humans. This field is much larger and, naturally, active at levels that are much different among themselves. Consequently, thinking can overcome the rule that it itself formulates in a certain way. It can deliberately flout that which, at a given moment, is strictly limited by it, or that which itself needs to approximate in time. It does not necessarily contradict itself by operating in this manner. Nor does it follow from here that it could overcome anyway those presuppositions or beliefs on the grounds of which it works continuously. If it asks, as it has done numerous times, how it can think that the same thing is both one and multiple simultaneously, it does not suspend itself with such a question, nor does it flout the non-contradiction axiom. Yet what can be formulated in time from a logical point of view – under severe determinations – can also be overcome. This follows simply from the thesis that any determination means negation, *omnis determinatio est negatio*. And what cannot be thus determined further unfolds itself in front of our mind's eyes and attracts it to it. Finally, it proves to be the non-determined and free source of all that is subject to certain forms of time as such.

When thinking exceeds certain rules of logic, it does nothing but reach their validity limits. It does not do this by suspending itself, but by orienting itself towards another mode of comprehension.

Let us recall that Stefan Lupaşcu supports with sufficient arguments the validity of a non-classical principle, that of the included third party, especially when he aims to describe the microphysical or psycho-mental world. He explicitly discussed about this principle after 1950, which created much confusion and reserve among the French academic milieu. The idea stands in relation with the dynamic logic of the contradictory, as he himself calls it. The basic tenet of this logic is explicitly resumed in the opening of the first chapter

of *The Principle of Antagonism and the Logic of Energy*²⁸. The weakening of the non-contradiction principle is inspired, argues the author in a footnote, by certain scientific experiments, such as those of Riemann and Lobachevski in geometry, Louis de Broglie in ondulatory mechanics, or Heisenberg, with respect to relations of indetermination. It also considers certain phenomena in psychology and human history, "in which contradiction seems to have found its favourite place". He was initially suspected for his eccentric or strange ideas, but later he was invoked in discussions about the multiple levels of reality and the non-classical forms of logic.

What precisely should I restate here, from Lupașcu's arguments? When two terms make up an opposition, for instance simultaneous/successive, continuous/discontinuous, neither is sufficient to define a certain phenomenon on its own. Each supports a type of partiality in what it alone indicates: when one term is actualised, the other is potentialised, but only together do the two tendencies describe the phenomenon as such. This means that each term can be found, no matter how precarious it might be, in the reality zone of the other. In their partiality and co-dependence, they make room, thus, to a third term. Or, the latter names precisely the element on which they are grounded or to which they make constant reference. Thus, I would now adopt the idea that the third term is included: it is already there, just that it is in another mode or at another

²⁸ "Any phenomenon or element, or logical event, as well as the thought that thinks it, the sentence that expresses it or the sign that symbolises it: *e*, for instance, needs to have always associated, structurally and functionally, an anti-phenomenon or anti-element, or a logical anti-event, and therefore a judgment, a proposition, a contradictory sign: *non-e* or \bar{e} ; and in such a way that *e* or \bar{e} can never be more than potentialised by the actualisation of \bar{e} or *e*, and not made to disappear, so that either \bar{e} , or *e* could be sufficient to themselves in independence and therefore in rigorous non-contradiction, as in any logic, be it classical or of any other nature, which is grounded on the allmightiness of the principle of non-contradiction" (translation from the Romanian translation from French by Vasile Sporici, Iași, 2000, p. 11). The idea will be refined in other works such as *Les trois matières*, Julliard, Paris, 1960, or in *La tragédie de l'énergie*, Casterman, Paris, 1970.

level than the other two terms that ensure the relation of opposition. As antithetic terms appear as distinct dynamisms, they cannot “fuse in the creation of a third synthetic term”. Either one dominates the other, or neither prevails. In fact, each dynamism leads to potentialisation or actualisation, tendencies which never reach their end. And the third term, the included third term, represents the moment “of the strongest contradiction”, when neither opposite dynamism can actualise or potentialise itself²⁹. Apart from to the two opposed tendencies– one towards identification, the other towards diversification – there emerges a third one, that is contradictory or dubitative and that constantly challenges the others. This means that, ultimately, “the dynamic logic of the contradictory is a trialectics.”

In an earlier work, Lupaşcu had identified a single element for which this mode of logical expression would not be appropriate: affection as such. It is only about affection that one can say that it is that which it is. In other words, only affection would recover the tautology proper to the being as such.³⁰ It is the only one that makes visible the signs of transcendence: it is inexhaustible or excessive, and it transgresses the common thinking operations, like an original, indefinite source. Of course, it is not easy to accept the idea that such a reality, about which a metaphysical statement can be made, would be the only one that announces a type of radical alterity. What Lupaşcu says about affectivity does not concern only this intentional act. After all, the flux of living, although one and the same, can become excessive with each individual act and yet allow some profound schisms in itself. And the statement under discussion, “something that is that which is”, seems to bring to the same point, via their late echoes, two completely different sources, one from the Testaments (*Exodus 3, 14*) and another one, from Aristotle (*Metaphysics, IV, 1, 1003 a*). They do not compose a single

²⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 25-26.

³⁰ Cf. *Logique et contradiction*, ed. cit., p. 128.

impersonal voice in time, but rather an alternative, in a more special meaning of this word.

However, what I mean to say about these ideas of Lupaşcu is different. He does not argue that the rule of non-contradiction should ever be discarded as invalid. As we have seen, nor will the axiom of the excluded third term be abandoned, but only restricted in its validity field³¹. This axiom, after all, does not lead to contradictory statements. To accept it does not mean to suspend the data of classical logic in the air. In fact, a few distinctions have been made in this respect, so as to make things clearer. One can talk, as Lupaşcu does, about an excluded third logical term that can relax contradictory terms in quantum or psycho-mental phenomena, for instance. There is also an ontological included third term, i.e. a third state that concerns another level of reality, where the contradictory relation of some initial terms becomes a relation of unity. On this latter level there can emerge new contradictory couples, whose solution is possible at another proximate level. Therefore, the included third term requires us, ontologically, to consider the idea of some multiple levels of reality. Eventually Michel Camus suggested the idea of a “secret included third term,” the place of recognition and protection of a truly irreducible mystery³². Such a tendency that orients towards an included third term does not annihilate antagonic terms. It only takes them out of their singular expansion and relaxes them immensely. The excessive potentialisation of one no longer entails the excessive actualisation of the other. Lupaşcu talks about the tendency towards a kind of balance of these terms, though it is unstable, oscillating. Thus, reality itself takes the shape of an elementary and ceaseless balance, a rhythmic that is, nevertheless, impossible to express in logical formula. The orientation towards the included third term indicates in fact a third tendency that would be constitutive in any

³¹ Cf. Basarab Nicolescu, *Noi, particula și lumea (We, the Particle and the World)*, translated by Vasile Sporici, Iași, 2002, p. 210. In other words, the law of the included third party – should it be a law – does not lead in any way to contradictory statements, as we might think at first.

³² *Ibidem*, pp. 189, 212.

contradictory dynamism. If manifest or visible tendencies are antagonic, under a movement that can bring everything to self-destruction, the third tendency transforms such an elementary logic. More precisely, it transforms primary opposition into an alternative. Lupaşcu does not use this latter term, but I think it can express the new situation of antagonic tendencies. In fact, the alternative is not given now by either of the terms in confrontation, nor by their possible synthesis, similar to the Hegelian one. The alternative does not mean an other opposed term, nor a tendency that differs from the dominant one. On the contrary, it becomes possible only in a ternary configuration of the phenomenon. It is given precisely by the possibility of orienting these tendencies towards something else, beyond them. However, the latter tendency does not imply another term alongside the other two, a third angle in an elementary triangle of manifestation. It rather implies a different economy of the whole procession. In order to name the separate difference of the third tendency, Lupaşcu singles it out. For instance, if the first two mean homogenisation and heterogenisation, the third will be proper to the quantum world, where the two tendencies are inseparably intersecting. If the first two mean forms of prevalence, the third names precisely their confrontation, "their inhibiting conflict/for both of them"³³. If the first two

³³ Stéphane Lupaşcu, *Les Trois Matières*, Juillard, Paris, 1970, p. 52. The true matter of things is no longer time or their becoming, as in Hegelian phenomenology, but in their inner conflict. In other words, what defines them ultimately is of agonal nature. In *L'énergie et la matière vivante*, 1962, p. 90, Lupaşcu argued that contradictory dynamisms "are in agony till the end of the world." We know that these words were used by Pascal with reference to Christ's sacrifice, in its absolute difference from this world. What happens here, therefore, is totally different from what the Hegelian contradictory movement announces. Cf. in this matter Constantin Noica, *Forward to Stéphane Lupaşcu, Logica dinamică a contradictoriului (Dynamic Logic of the Contradictory)*, translated by Vasile Sporic, 1982, pp. 10-12. Some interpreters have sought to relate this vision to the *Qual* idea (original tension or effort, trouble, that grants the true quality of a thing) from Jacob Böhme's philosophy; cf. Jean-Jacques Wunenburger, op. cit., p. 153.

can become visible in the mineral and living world, the third finds a certain evidence in the subtle world of quantum and psycho-mental phenomena. In an extreme case, it could be seen as a source of certain phenomena that cannot be understood in terms of non-contradiction.³⁴ Differences point to other lines of ontology as well: the third state does not manifest itself as such in continuous space or in successive time. It cannot be experimented in the data of such categories, it does not lend itself to our common perception, it can be neither measured nor described in terms of quantity. It actualises itself, in fact, as unusual intensification of quality, making a totally distinct nature become perceivable. Yet, as we have seen, everything will be found again only in a ternary configuration of the phenomenon or of life.

In other words, to observe the rule of non-contradiction, especially when thinking operates legitimately with objects, is natural and essential, at any time. But it is equally natural to admit that there is something that does not observe this rule, i.e. that which is not determined as a logical object. The latter, although decisive in the order of existence, does not reveal itself as such to analytical or technical thinking. As Gadamer said, there does not exist just one experience of truth only³⁵. Other experiences, apart from the analytical or technical one – for instance, aesthetic or religious experience – attract thinking where the antinomy accepts a new significance, apart from the one already known. Both paths are essential, which means that both define us in our relation with ourselves, with the other and with our world. To say at a given moment that a statement does not observe the non-contradiction rule does not mean the exclusion of the path opened by this rule. On the contrary, it remains where it belongs and leads to what is proper to it. When it is not obviously followed, it is still there, either as a common place of thinking, or as a certain solution when faced with obscure indistinctions.

7. Disposition for alternative visions

³⁴ Cf. Basarab Nicolescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 207 sq.

³⁵ Cf. Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, second part, II, 3 b.

Thinking often has to accept a certain competition of the paths followed, yet without proceeding by exclusion. The non-exclusion of the competing path entails great difficulties. Yet it can also bring in its proximity foreign symbolic experiences that are much different from those legitimated in the common space of living.

We know now that, with respect to the delimitation of the sciences of the spirit, Dilthey accepts at a given moment the possibility of different attitudes towards one and the same thing. This is what happens when we consider, for instance, the human body, the language in which a poem is written, the legislation of a certain epoch or the human psychological life. In the case of such phenomena, thinking can be doubly oriented. On the one hand, it tends to clarify certain possible causes, their recurrent classifiable data that are easy to be expressed in statistics or even in a calculus. In this case, it delimits homogeneous fields of facts: causal relations, structures and regularities. This is how someone preoccupied by the poetical technique of an author would proceed: they would try to see what the proportion of nouns and verbs is in a poem, how many of them come from one language and how many come from others, to what extent adverbs are more frequent etc. It is the same with the one who, when talking about the legislation of a country, would like to know, for instance, if it makes possible the easy and certain capture of a criminal. On the other hand, thinking tries to find a larger meaning of these phenomena, their possible meaning in that horizon that the course of life can offer. It orients now towards what we call inner life, will and intentionality, faith and long-term purposes. It tries to distinguish, as much as possible, precisely the sensitivity of a person and of an age, self-consciousness. This is what Ihering did when, in his preoccupation for the ancient Roman law, he wished to understand its very spirit, its historical difference. It is just that these two orientations of thinking are not at all separate because they are not two different classes of objects, nor are they two foreign paths of thinking. Dilthey foresaw this but he did not write about it clearly enough. When thinking

follows a certain path, it does not bracket completely that path that would be opposed to it. In fact, I think that this would not even be possible because it would entail that we could talk either about the Adamic chance of pure thinking, or about the absence of memory and of preliminary data. Yet, when any of its distinct modes actualises itself, the other modes of thinking are actualised as well, at least as echoes, background response or vague beliefs.

Let me bring to your attention another situation that takes this issue further on. Mircea Eliade retells in *Memoirs*, II, a discussion that he had in the summer of 1958 in Tokyo, with a Japanese professor of philosophy, after an international congress on the history of religions. The Japanese professor was an expert in German philosophy, especially in Heidegger but, strangely enough for a Japanese, he ignored Buddhist history and philosophy. Like many Japanese philosophers after the war, he considered Buddhism as belonging to the prehistory of thinking and that what really mattered only happened later, i.e. a perfectly systematic philosophy. Apart from Buddha's life, he was almost a complete ignorant in basic Buddhism. Eliade's comment on this situation did not tarry: "You have close at hand the most daring logic that the world has known before Hegel – the Buddhist logic, as it was elaborated by Nagarjuna, Vasubandhu, Dinnaga, Dharmakirti – and you leave it exclusively in the hands of historians and Orientalists. Your philosophers do not know it or, in any case, do not use it. Maybe it does not seem 'present-day' to you. But this just proves that you don't know it because this is Nagarjuna and his followers' problem: to logically prove that *Samsara* is identical with *Nirvana*, that becoming (cosmic 'irreality') is the same as being (i.e. ontological beatitude). At another level, pursuing another aim and using other means, Madhyamika philosophers were confronted with the same mystery – namely *coincidentia oppositorum* – that Cusanus will be faced with /in Europe/"³⁶. Ultimately, what is at stake

³⁶ *Memorii (Memories)*, volume II (1937-1960), edition coordinated by Mircea Handoca, 1991, pp. 178-179. Eliade then tried to translate in the philosophical language of his time this old problem: "Or, one can encounter *coincidentia oppositorum* today in some principles of nuclear

here is that states of things never have a single and exclusive meaning. The eye can continuously grasp their double condition, as simple phenomena and as signs. And signs – in any symbolic economy– obey rules or codes that are not always obvious. As Eliade argued, “the world is that which appears to be and at the same time a cipher”³⁷. As a simple phenomenon, a human act seems to be perfectly contingent and equal to itself. When it is seen as a game of signs, it can orient the gaze towards completely different meanings. Some of them appear at first really strange. For instance, when we talk about the modern image of progress, we can see in it, beyond what it offers at first, an exalted and quite vain ideology. Upon closer inspection, however, one can realise that there is more at stake, namely a new mythology of the human being in history, whose meaning must be connected with its radical solitude. The same holds true for the atheism of “Enlightenment” or for the late feeling of the “death of God”: they express, in fact, as Eliade argues, the new religious creativity of the modern world. Such phenomena can be interpreted both technically, literally, and religiously. Eliade often returns to this double image of our existence and avoids reducing one of them to the other, for instance, the world of appearances to its possible cipher. He prefers rather to describe a subtle dialectics of camouflage that probably nothing can escape.

In his pages of dogmatic theology, Dumitru Stăniloae writes with much clarity about the real presence of the alternative, as it is constitutive to the human mode of being. He starts from what was well understood in patristic literature, namely that the human being, as a person, is situated both between the boundaries of this world and

physics (for example, Bohr’s principle of complementarity), but we are increasingly and forcefully asked, at this historical moment where we are: for instance, how is freedom possible in a conditioned universe ? how can one live in history without betraying it, without negating it, and yet participating in a trans-historical reality? After all, this is the problem: how can one know the *real* camouflaged in *appearance*?”.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 355.

beyond them. To be beyond this world does not mean to be separated from it, which would be, in fact, impossible, but to be in relation with that which transcends it infinitely. This is a situation that generates many strong contrasts, true bifurcations of nature in the human life³⁸. They appear as real paradoxes, that do not necessarily require a logical or technical solution, such as the human person's character, that is inexhaustible and yet touched by finitude, or our stable will to know even what the mind cannot seize, in which case non-knowledge could mean "knowledge of the sacrament". One could also mention the double tendency that humans show continuously, towards spiritual edification and at the same time towards the fall in the world ("towards passionate pleasures")³⁹. This is the doubling process that "makes another possibility of alternative movement understood," for the human person. Some contrasts can be connected with the antynomic economy of the being. Such are the ones that uncover the person as one and the same in its very fascinating transformation. Other contrasts follow from here: unique and yet equal with the others, in itself and yet oriented towards another, always the same and yet always in evolution, ineffable and yet explainable in some of its data. It is continuously subjected to the laws of matter and at the same time it goes beyond them⁴⁰. Truly strange are those contrasts that concern the temporality proper to the human being. Although subjected to the present time and, apparently, totally lost in it, the human beings make room at

³⁸ Cf. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Studii de teologie dogmatică ortodoxă (Studies on Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, section B, chap. II, Craiova, 1990, pp. 173-200.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 179.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 181-184. As he writes somewhere else, "a paradox of the person, as well as a manifestation of its boundless depth and resilience, is the endless irradiation of light or darkness" (p. 190). Man proves to be indeed a "creature made of nothing, and this must preserve in him the awareness of humility. But he is also God's conscious creation, capable to gain knowledge about Him, and this gives him, at the same time, a priceless value" (p. 188). The obviousness of such paradoxes ultimately justifies the idea of a distinct type of apophatism, that is proper to the human person (p. 191).

any moment for their past and continuously expose themselves to future moments. Consequently, the present, the past and the future are simultaneously manifest in their being. We are temporal beings and yet we are able to go beyond our well dated chronology. "Both time and eternity" have a dense value for us; this means that one could talk about a double character of the person, "on the one hand temporal, on the other hand eternal". Hence the "eternal importance of the temporal moment", when the moment finds in eternal things its true content.

Invoking St. Gregory of Nazianz, Staniloae will restate his suggestion that one "ought not to suppress /from the mind/ so many things that one has not understood", such as the incomprehensible things about the very presence of God. Similarly, one ought not to ignore the much different tendencies that the human being manifests. "The two sides of the paradoxical human composition, the tendency towards holiness and the necessity to satisfy bodily needs, do not justify the despise of either, but require the infusion of the latter by the power of the former"⁴¹. This idea will be resumed in the discussion about the complicated relationship between spirit, body and the world. "Man can also delude himself by thinking that he is satisfying this ever fuller thirst for knowledge by directing it towards the world as an exclusive reality and towards taking joy in it, exclusively through the body, which brings monotony and spiritual impoverishment up to what we consider to be death"⁴². The idea that the human beings manifest through their very nature a real alternative is expressed forcefully and clearly in these pages. One's chronological time and the *durée* that is discovered in the mind or in hope cannot be separated, nor can one separate one's limited space from that which is, to a certain extent, a-spatial.⁴³ A true paradox endures in all this, namely the possibility to live simultaneously both one's own

⁴¹ *Ibidem*, p. 181.

⁴² *Ibidem*, p. 183.

⁴³ *Ibidem*, p. 182.

finitude and the presence of divine non-finitude⁴⁴. Nobody can limit himself to himself or to what which is simply human. Genuine self-value cannot be obtained only through human effort alone⁴⁵. What is even more serious is that these contrasts that are proper to the human being can become fully degraded. For instance, the inexhaustible character of the person can easily degenerate in simple monotony or lead to that endless balance in which there is an alternation between “joys and pains, fear of death and boredom with life”⁴⁶. What appears to the human being as sacred can hide a grounding ambiguity and lead to self-delusion⁴⁷. After all, no matter how spectacular such a paradox could be, if it ends in exclusion it will lead to utter poverty in the human being. Hence, the attention that will be given to the third term, if we temporarily accept this latter expression. As he argues at one point, the antinomic unity of the person “cannot be explained without the absolute One in which all is virtual and which has created and supported all in unity”⁴⁸. If antinomic unity, for instance, concerns the relation between what someone has received as gifts and what is later offered, its name will be that of kindness. It is precisely the latter, kindness, which represents the third term, because, after all, it “unites them all”⁴⁹. Probably this situation becomes maximally evident in what we call dialogue. When it takes place between two persons, dialogue becomes possible as such via the presence of a third instance. The latter is given by what is to be reached in such a dialogue. And what is to be reached, either as a sense that is above subjective sense or as a mode of life and communion, precedes to a certain extent any consciousness that enters into dialogue. When the dialogue is perfect, it takes place in God, “in Whom there are three persons for this purpose”⁵⁰. The human desire to accede to

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 184.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 188.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 176.

⁴⁷ *Ibidem*, pp. 179-180.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 193.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 197.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 201.

this original dialogue is natural, but it cannot be satisfied only through human effort. For this purpose, one of the divine persons has become man, while remaining God at the same time. So, the third term can be seen in the way logos brings in its light the two voices in the real procession of a dialogue.

As we can now realise, the alternative, as a mode of thinking or as a mode of being, does not entail divergence or separation, nor the simple disagreement with itself or with that which appears foreign, which, sooner or later, ceases to be so. The simply divergent thinking, as well as dialectic thinking, fail to achieve that which is proper to the alternative. The image of the divergence of two rays of light that, in their forward movement, become more and more distant one from the other, is not at all appropriate to illustrate the fact of the alternative. Yet if we talk about a distinct path that thinking simultaneously and unevenly uses, this means that each of them affects the other, lies in its proximity like a necessary relation or like a shadow that it cannot part with. This means that, in fact, each of them is to a certain extent constitutive of the other, no matter how little obvious this would be.

(translated by Drd. Sorina Chipser)

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