



STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS
BABEŞ-BOLYAI



PHILOSOPHIA

2/2022

**STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS BABEŞ-BOLYAI
PHILOSOPHIA**

Vol. 67, No. 2, August 2022

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in *Emerging Sources Citation Index*.

YEAR
MONTH
ISSUE

Volume 67 (LXVII) 2022
AUGUST
2

PUBLISHED ONLINE: 2022-08-12
ISSUE DOI: 10.24193/subbphil.2022.2
ISSN (online): 2065-9407

STUDIA UNIVERSITATIS BABEȘ-BOLYAI PHILOSOPHIA

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Issue Coordinator: Ion COPOERU

Publishing Date: August 2022

DIRECT INTERACTION: METHODS OF RESEARCH, EPISTEMOLOGY, CONCEPTUALIZATION (I)

ION COPOERU*

“Are you investigating direct multimodal interactions?” This is the first question that we addressed to our colleagues who are conducting research in fields, such as linguistics, education science, didactics, psychology, sociology, anthropology and, of course, philosophy. If you are interested in knowing more about this topic or you are conducting yourself an investigation in this area, you might enjoy some of the research papers presented at the hybrid event hosted by the Dept. of Philosophy of Babeş-Bolyai University from Cluj-Napoca in June 2nd – 4th, 2022.¹

The interactions constituted a topic of investigation in social sciences and philosophy starting with the beginning of the 20th century. Initially, the study of interactions was associated with the investigation of human experience. Georg Simmel and Erving Goffman have shifted the understanding of social phenomena by reversing their traditional framing as means-end and cause-effect chain models.

For Simmel, the phenomena of face-to-face interaction were central to the sociological investigation. Through Cooley and Mead, social interactionism emphasized the importance of interaction in social psychology. In developmental psychology, Vygotsky was among the first to speak about the role of interpersonal interactions for cognitive development. The interrelations of people’s behaviors in each other’s immediate presence became the focus of interest for many researchers in the first half of the century. Therefore, the method of measuring and analyzing the behavior of persons in face-to-face interactions received a greater attention. However, the investigation of interactions was not the primary object of study, but rather a means for explaining social institutions and human relationships. Linguistics, ethnology and anthropology largely contributed in the last decades of the century to bring about the structure of the interactions and to describe accurately the entirety of elements involved in them. In linguistics, three major fields of research were opened: the conversation analysis (Goffman, Kerbrat-Orecchioni), the politeness theory (Brown and Levinson) and speech acts theory (Austin, Searle). The “action” as unite of the behavior have been identified and measured (Chapple), paving their way for quantitative research on social organization structure. Studies on body motion (the Birdwhistell’s kinesics, for example), and the recent surge of gesture studies field of visible bodily action (driven by authors such as Kendon or McNeill), that plays a central role in understanding

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¹ The event was and co-organized with LIDILEM laboratory from Grenoble Alpes University (France). The complete program of the workshop, as well as the abstracts of the keynote papers and the overview of the panels can be found at <https://lidilem.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/direct-interaction-methods-research-epistemology-and-conceptualization>.



language and more broadly the communication process in human interaction, in various culture and social context, nowadays have many applications areas. Goldin-Meadow even shows that gestures have an important role in cognition in general. On the other hand, joint attention, i.e. attention to an object or situation that is shared with another person, plays an important role in language development (Yu & Smith).

Another parallel approach focused on the classification of the content of what people communicate. Bales' system of categories, for example, is based on a theory of the interactive process as problem-solving situation.

In the first two decades of the 21st century a larger quantity of research has been directed towards direct interaction, in which participants are standing in direct contact and are wholly engaged or immersed in interaction. As a consequence, researchers considered new aspects of the interrelation between the body, the surroundings, and the interaction itself when actors are coming together.

The theoretical and methodological advances in studying interactions, particularly face-to-face interactions, both required and prompted a series of conceptual (philosophical) clarifications:

- the definition and the structure of the situation; emerging traits in situation;
- the definition of action and interaction; typology of interactions; verbal and co-verbal aspects; taking-turns; multimodality;
- the role of subjectivity in interactions; children and adults in interaction;
- the potential impact of an interactive theory of various field of research and human activity;
- the types of theories which are fit to capture the nature and the complexity of interactions; the theoretical models subjacent to the measuring and analyzing of interactions.

From the 19 papers presented during the workshop, 7 are contained in this issue. The second part of the contributions will be published in the Issue No 3 (December). The papers are covering a large variety of topics and areas of research, such as embodied learning, interactions in distant languages, philosophical training, professional skills, and mediating systems, with very few exceptions, adopted a strongly interactionist perspective. Also, they have all put a methodological concern in the center of their investigations and made an effort to construct a model for the studied interactive processes or, more generally, for (direct) interaction. From this perspective, one can say that the workshop made some advances in the research of direct interaction and in bringing new light on it.

In her paper, **Manon Boucharechas**² proposes a theorization of interaction anchored in the framework of socio-didactics, as a 'linking concept', and the different issues that arise from this position. This way she conceptualizes interaction allows her to make a bridge between different disciplinary traditions and ways of analyzing human interactions. As an object *and* a tool, it makes it possible to link and to take into account different points of view of the participants', as well, as their imaginaries.

For the study of dimensions coming from the imagination of the participants in a relational perspective, she relies on the model of ethos (Amossy) in interaction (Sandré), as a place of the crystallization of these different dimensions. Thus, the interaction is analyzed by

² Manon Boucharechas, L'interaction en didactique du FLE : du concept reliant aux défis méthodologiques. In : *Studia UBB. Philosophia*, Vol. 67 (2022), 2, pp. 11-27, DOI:10.24193/subbphil.2022.2.01

adopting an angle that cuts across imaginary dimensions of the discourse in a dynamic perspective of co-construction. The ethos works as a heuristic “machine” (Chevallard), which gives access to didactic interaction. In order to show that the ethos is an all-encompassing notion, she selected a short interaction snippet from her research corpus, that she eventually transcribed. This extract allowed her to observe the possible links to be made between the study of the negotiations of the interpersonal relationship and that of the imaginaries in soliciting the notion of ethos.

Clotilde George³ is interested in the form of the interaction that takes place between a chef and an allophone apprentice in a French restaurant, through the comparative analysis of one speech act, a coffee proposal, captured by a camera on four occasions, from the first day of training to the fourth month of the apprentice's employment. This data set allows her to bring to light two combined temporalities, that of production-reception and that of language acquisition. She illustrates the relevance of the longitudinal dimension in describing not only the form and function of the interaction, but also its evolution over time.

After a definition of the interaction situation, in which the notion of *role* has a central place, and the description of the relationship of the interactants, based on the notions of common ground and conversational history, Clotilde George presents the corpus and the sub-corpus of her study and propose a description, as well as a comparative analysis of the “coffee” sequences. The “micro-comparison” approach that she develops points to the constitutive asymmetry of this type of interaction that implies a phenomenon of interactional “bricolage” made from a repertory of shared multimodal languages resources, which are continuously evolving and are genuinely co-constructed.

Loulou Kosmala's paper⁴ presents a multimodal and multilevel model of “inter-fluency”, which takes into account different levels of analysis (talk, gesture, and interaction) by combining different theoretical frameworks and methodologies in gesture studies and interactional linguistics. The aim of the paper is to go “beyond the production model” of (*dis*)fluency (*uh* and *um*, filled and unfilled pauses, self-repairs and the like). In this view, this phenomenon should not be solely regarded as a mental process, but as a multimodal process which includes the whole range of semiotic features of language (the stream of speech, hand gestures, body posture and orientation, gaze behavior).

Following McCarthy's notion of confluence, Kosmala proposed the term inter-fluency, placing it in the more general framework provided by the notions of intersubjectivity, interpersonal relations, and interaction and signaling the ongoing interaction between the different dimensions of fluency. With the help of some examples, the author highlights the interactional dimension of fluency, which does not solely reflect online cognitive processes, but also relies on participation and cooperation. As a possible conclusion, disfluency should not solely be regarded in terms of its opposition to “fluency”, but rather as a multi-level embodiment of the notion fluidity and flow.

The next paper⁵ is a theoretically and methodologically oriented study rooted in the field of social developmental psychology. Its major aim is to show how transgressive situations

³ Clotilde George, « Petit ou grand café ? » : quelques questionnements liés à l'analyse d'un acte langagier saisi dans une temporalité large en contexte de formation professionnelle exolingue. In : *Studia UBB. Philosophia*, Vol. 67 (2022), 2, pp. 29-48, DOI:10.24193/subbphil.2022.2.02

⁴ Loulou Kosmala, Rethinking (dis)fluency within the scope of interactional linguistics and gesture studies. In : *Studia UBB. Philosophia*, Vol. 67 (2022), 2, pp. 49-66, DOI:10.24193/subbphil.2022.2.03

⁵ Héléne Maire, Rawan Charafeddine, Jean-Baptiste van der Henst, interaction and its failures: an approach through embarrassment and shame. In : *Studia UBB. Philosophia*, Vol. 67 (2022), 2, pp. 67-81, DOI:10.24193/subbphil.2022.2.04

are conducive to study of social norms governing interactions. For that, shame and embarrassment are outlined in order to better describe how they can highlight social norms in interactions. The authors are illustrating their proposal to study social norms through emotional reactions by presenting an ongoing experiment, that examines how children may react to a power situation. The authors are paying attention to the observable emotional reactions produced by the transgressions and show that everyday transgressions, especially those involving power relations, may be useful for understanding how social norms govern interactions. Many questions regarding gender identity and cognitive development in connection with this topic are discussed.

“Is interaction just a dynamical process?” **Mihai-Alexandru Petrișor**⁶ invites us to imagine the landscape of types of interactions as a line segment whose ends represent radical positions: purely inferentialist or purely simulationist theories on one end and radical embodied cognition on the other. In order to articulate his position, he critically discusses Gallagher’s radical claims of embodied cognition as constituting social interaction. The main point that he makes regarding this theory is that, even though it provides a satisfactory explanation for types that correspond to motor-perceptual processes, it only manages to metaphorically describe cases of interaction that involve articulated language use and, generally, semantically charged actions. As a consequence of that, the author supports a pluralistic vision of interaction and social cognition. He also points out that, by seeing mental states as being fundamentally interwoven, a better model of interactions can be drafted.

Martina Properzi’s article⁷ is addressing the issue of the meaning of human-machine interaction as configured in the light of the results achieved in the design and the manufacture of Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems. The starting point of her investigation is a solution for meaningful AI recently suggested by Froese and Taguchi from the perspective of “augmented intelligence”, which distinguishes itself by the fact that it merges the interacting poles into a new hybrid entity. In the final part of her paper, Martina Properzi takes into account the concept of “bio-synthetic augmentation,” where hybridization overlaps with the enhancement of human bodily skills.

In the last paper of this dossier, **Claudia Varga and Ion Copoeru**⁸ provide an insight on the successful elements of the group counseling interaction through which addicts manage to overcome the denial of addiction and go through the stages of recovery. This exploratory study attempts to identify an innovative perspective of the aspects pertaining to the recovery from addiction which are susceptible to be disclosed primarily by using methods inspired by the analysis of interactions. After transcribing and annotating data concerning interactions from video and audio recordings, the findings are suggesting a particular dynamic of change in which the key elements are related to the shifting roles of the participants in the context of the “organization of the action” (Goodwin). We are thus able to see that the group makes possible real, open, and direct interaction, allowing individuals to express their vulnerability, to be receptive, to anticipate change, and finally to change their behavior.

⁶ Mihai-Alexandru Petrișor, Is interaction just a dynamical process? In: *Studia UBB. Philosophia*, Vol. 67 (2022), 2, pp. 83-100, DOI:10.24193/subbphil.2022.2.05

⁷ Martina Properzi, Meaningful human-machine interaction: some suggestions from the perspective of augmented intelligence. In: *Studia UBB. Philosophia*, Vol. 67 (2022), 2, pp. 101-112, DOI:10.24193/subbphil.2022.2.06

⁸ Claudia Varga, Ion Copoeru, Interactions as source of the change of behavior in addiction and recovery from addiction. An exploratory study. In: *Studia UBB. Philosophia*, Vol. 67 (2022), 2, pp. 113-134, DOI:10.24193/subbphil.2022.2.07

L'INTERACTION EN DIDACTIQUE DU FLE : DU CONCEPT RELIANT AUX DÉFIS MÉTHODOLOGIQUES

MANON BOUCHARECHAS*

ABSTRACT. Interaction in French as a Foreign Language: From the Concept Itself to Methodological Challenges. This paper proposes a theorisation of interaction anchored in the framework of sociodidactics, as a 'linking concept', and the different issues that arise from this position. This epistemological reflection focuses on interaction as a concept that allows to bring together several aspects of research. Thus, interaction as a concept allows us to weave links between different disciplinary traditions, between different theories and ways of analysing human interactions. As an object and a tool, it makes it possible to link and considers the different participants in the research, their points of view, their imaginaries. This brings many challenges (relational, interpretive among others) to be met.

Keywords: interaction, epistemological reflection, imaginary, ethos, proximity.

RÉSUMÉ. Cet article propose une théorisation de l'interaction ancrée dans la sociodidactique en tant que « concept reliant », ainsi que les différents enjeux qui découlent de cette prise de position. Cette réflexion épistémologique considère l'interaction sous différentes facettes permettant de relier différents aspects de la recherche. Ainsi, l'interaction comme un concept permet de tisser des liens entre différents traditions disciplinaire, différentes théories. En tant qu'objet et outil, elle permet de relier et prendre en compte les différents participants à la recherche, leur point de vue, leurs imaginaires. Cela induit de nombreux défis (relationnel, interprétatif entre autres) à relever.

Mots-clés : interaction, réflexion épistémologique, imaginaire, ethos, proximité.

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Introduction

Théoriser les interactions sociales permet d'en construire une représentation (Chevallard, 1992). Je propose de définir les interactions comme un concept dont la constitution est subordonnée à mon positionnement personnel. Ce positionnement prend lieu de façon située, dans le champ de la didactique des langues. Le foisonnement de références et de modèles disponibles pour interroger les interactions induit d'effectuer des choix en tant que chercheur, tant d'un niveau épistémologique que méthodologique.

Dans cet article, je propose de définir l'interaction en tant que concept reliant. Que ce soit entre différents champs disciplinaires ou possibilités d'analyses, entre les pratiques et univers subjectifs des personnes voire entre les personnes elles-mêmes, s'intéresser à l'interaction en tant qu'objet de recherche et outil d'analyse permet d'établir des liens entre plusieurs niveaux de réflexions, entre différents univers de connaissances.

J'interroge les implications d'une telle définition de l'« interaction » dans le cadre épistémologique et méthodologique d'une recherche en didactique du Français Langue de Scolarisation. Cette réflexion à partir du modèle épistémologique permettra de définir ce concept ainsi que les notions sollicitées pour interroger les interactions observées dans le cadre de ma recherche doctorale, mais aussi de préciser les défis méthodologiques qui découlent de cette prise de position.

L'interaction comme concept reliant

Des inspirations théoriques multiples

La multiplicité des paradigmes épistémologiques disponibles pour étudier les interactions se reflète bien dans le choix fait par Pekarek Doehler de parler d'« approches interactionnistes au pluriel » (2000: §15). Cette diversité des sources d'inspiration (Arditty et Vasseur, 1999) est la bienvenue, car elle permet une prise de position décloisonnante par rapport aux phénomènes ayant trait au discours des participants. Elle suppose néanmoins de mettre au jour et d'assumer une prise de position en tant que chercheur, ce que je cherche à faire à travers cette réflexion.

Ma recherche se situe au croisement de plusieurs champs de recherche, notamment celui de la didactique du Français Langue Etrangère et Seconde et de la sociolinguistique. La définition de l'interaction sur laquelle je m'appuie correspond au champ de l'interactionnisme symbolique (Goffman, 1974). Elle désigne la rencontre entre plusieurs individus, où une communication (même non verbale) s'établit.

Les interactants s'influencent mutuellement lors de cette rencontre (Vion, 1992 ; Kerbrat-Orrechioni, 1990).

Suite à cette définition, plusieurs paradigmes restent disponibles pour l'étude des interactions : qu'on parle d'analyse conversationnelle, d'analyse interactionnelle, d'analyse du discours en interaction, d'approche ethnométhodologique, ce foisonnement terminologique peut être déconcertant lorsqu'on tente de se positionner en tant que chercheur. Les questionnements touchant ces différentes approches se rejoignent : les pratiques langagières appelées « interactions verbales » sont naturelles et empiriques ; elles donnent à voir le caractère co-construit des échanges, en tant que « forme du comportement social » (Labov, 1972 : 176). S'intéresser à l'interaction induit donc de se positionner au sein de plusieurs paradigmes épistémologiques.

Une multiplicité de dimensions analysables

La multiplicité des dimensions d'études reste vaste au sein des interactions. Comme le disent bien Arditty & Vasseur, « le langage est un objet complexe que l'on peut envisager de différents points de vue, qui ont tous au départ leur légitimité et qui tous peuvent contribuer à une compréhension du phénomène » (1999 : 4). Ainsi, il est, entre autres, possible de s'intéresser à des phénomènes relatifs aux dimensions subjective, relationnelle, identitaire et affective, à travers les traces que les interactions verbales donnent à voir (Kerbrat-Orechioni, 1998). Je fais le choix de me concentrer sur l'« imaginaire idéal » (Muller, 2021 : 38) des enseignants de FLSc¹ et des apprenants dits EANA², et sur l'impact que celui-ci peut avoir sur l'interaction didactique, notamment au sein de la relation qui se construit entre enseignants et apprenants. L'interaction donne à voir l'expérience subjective des individus à travers des phénomènes discursifs analysables. En ce sens, elle est un vecteur qui donne accès à des informations complémentaires relatives à la subjectivité des participants.

Le modèle auquel je souhaiterais arriver, pour l'étude des dimensions relevant de l'imaginaire des participants dans une perspective relationnelle, est celui de l'ethos (Amossy, 2010) en interaction (Sandré, 2014), en tant que lieu de cristallisation de ces différentes dimensions. Cette notion permet d'analyser l'interaction en adoptant un angle qui recoupe des dimensions imaginaires du discours dans une perspective dynamique de co-construction. L'ethos fonctionne ici comme une « machine » (Chevallard, 1992 : 77) heuristique, qui donne accès à l'interaction didactique en cours de FLSc.

¹ Français Langue de Scolarisation.

² Elèves Allophones Nouvellement Arrivés.

L'éthos est le lieu d'inscription de l'identité discursive des interlocuteurs. Je le décris à l'aide des traces discursives qui le caractérise : l'énonciation (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1980) et la communication d'éléments relatifs à soi (Tisseron, 2011). Je considère l'image de soi construite en interaction comme une représentation portant sur soi, construite sur la base de toutes les représentations intervenant dans la prise de position personnelle. Je décris les représentations présentes dans les discours des interlocuteurs en identifiant les procédés de catégorisations. Je m'intéresse également aux positionnements revendiqués par rapport aux imaginaires. En interaction, la construction de l'éthos se cristallise au sein du positionnement effectué par les uns et les autres à travers la mise en place de la relation interpersonnelle, dont les marqueurs sont appelés les « relationèmes » (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1992 : 39). Ces négociations permettent d'identifier les ajustements entre l'éthos préalable à l'interaction et l'éthos effectif revendiqué par les interlocuteurs (Maingueneau, 2014), et entre les images revendiquées par les personnes et celles attribuées par leurs interlocuteurs (Sandré, 2014).

De l'intérêt didactique de cette réflexion

Au terme de cette réflexion, je me revendique du champ de la sociodidactique (Dabène & Rispail, 2008) pour lequel l'interaction donne à voir des pratiques et des représentations réelles, dont la compréhension est centrale pour constituer une modélisation théorique située et ancrée dans le concret de la réalité des classes. Ainsi, les interactions entre enseignants et apprenants sont susceptibles de refléter des processus sociaux à l'œuvre, pertinents à mettre au jour et à comprendre d'un point de vue didactique.

Selon la théorie socioculturelle de l'apprentissage, « l'interaction et [l]es conditions sociales qui la régissent » influencent fortement les processus d'apprentissage (Pekarek Doehler, 2000 : §6). Ainsi, de plus en plus de didacticiens s'intéressent aux discours et aux interactions en classe (Bigot & Cicurel, 2005). Certains font le choix de se questionner sur des dimensions subjectives inhérentes aux interactions didactiques (notamment Muller, 2021 pour ce qui est à trait à l'imaginaire ; Piccardo, 2013 et Dewaele, 2022 sur la prise en compte des affects). Cela témoigne de la portée de ce type de réflexions et de mon intérêt pour les phénomènes relatifs à l'imaginaire en jeu durant les processus d'enseignement-apprentissage en cours de FLSc. Cet ancrage dans le champ de la didactique m'amènera à mieux comprendre les conditions de l'acquisition de connaissances par les apprenants (Lahire, 2007), ainsi que les interactions didactiques, medium par lequel se construit l'apprentissage.

L'« imaginaire idéal » (Muller, 2021 : 38), portant à la fois sur soi, mais aussi sur l'autre, sur le savoir, etc., a une influence qui peut se traduire à travers les attitudes qu'adoptent les personnes selon les référents concernés³. Cet imaginaire joue un rôle important dans la construction de la relation interpersonnelle et dans la co-construction avec l'autre. Cette prise de position réciproque étant constitutive de la relation interpersonnelle, il est pertinent de s'intéresser à cette dernière (Castellotti, 2015).

Les UPE2A comme contexte d'observation

Caractéristiques du contexte

Le contexte est primordial à prendre en compte dans l'analyse interactionnelle (Bigot, 2005). La « scène englobante » (Maingueneau, 2014) du contexte didactique introduit des spécificités dans les prises de position des interactants. En effet, le caractère institutionnel alloue des rôles spécifiques aux enseignants et aux apprenants entre lesquels un contrat s'établit : les échanges sont orientés vers un but de transmission, d'acquisition de connaissances, leur relation est souvent axée sur la hiérarchie et la distance (Cicurel, 1994, Bigot, 2002 : 131).

Les observations ont eu lieu au sein d'« Unité Pédagogique pour Elèves Allophones Arrivants », dans des établissements scolaires relevant de l'Education nationale en France. Ces classes d'accueil ont pour mission principale de soutenir l'apprentissage du français en tant que langue de scolarisation des EANA⁴. L'organisation des cours de FLsco varie selon les établissements en termes de nombre d'heures, de niveau des groupes, du nombre d'élèves inscrits. Ces dispositifs induisent des spécificités qui influencent le déroulement des interactions. Ainsi, les EANA sont parfois vulnérables du fait de leurs situations personnelles compliquées (migrations forcées, venus en France pour se protéger, parfois mineurs isolés...) et qu'ils ne parlent pas encore la langue de leurs pairs. L'enseignant de FLE, en tant que personne-ressource chargée de leur enseigner le français, a souvent une place spéciale pour eux (Cortier, 2005 : 484). Cette place particulière le questionne sur son positionnement et son investissement envers les apprenants (*ibid.*). La dimension

³ Ainsi, un enseignant n'aura par exemple pas les mêmes façons d'évaluer selon son rapport à la norme, il n'adoptera pas les mêmes comportements en cours selon l'image qu'il a des rôles attendus chez un enseignant. Un apprenant n'adoptera pas les mêmes stratégies selon l'image qu'il se fait du processus d'apprentissage. Il n'aura pas la même relation avec ses pairs selon l'image qu'il se fait de lui parmi eux. Et de ces attitudes et comportements découlera une relation particulière entre l'enseignant et les apprenants.

⁴ Elèves Allophones Nouvellement Arrivés.

interculturelle des cours de FLScO crée de plus un espace au sein duquel les représentations sociales, culturellement partagées, influencent la construction des éthé et les négociations de la relation interpersonnelle.

Le terrain de l'étude

4 groupes-classe au sein de 3 établissements ont été observés dans cette étude. Les caractéristiques de ces groupes sont présentées dans le tableau ci-dessous.

Tableau 1. Description synthétisée des groupe-classes

	Etablissement 1	Etablissement 2		Etablissement 3
Type d'établissement	Second degré - lycée professionnel et général	Second degré - cité scolaire		Premier degré - école primaire
Période de terrain	Octobre 2021 – Juin 2022	Novembre 2021 – Juin 2022		Avril 2022 – Juin 2022
Jour de présence	Lundi & mardi (deux mois, puis lundi)	Mardi		Vendredi
Nombres d'heures observées par jour	2h	3 puis 4h		1h
Organisation du dispositif	Module de 2 à 3 heures (2 pour le groupe entier, 1 en plus pour un des apprenants). Volontariat de l'enseignante	Module de 13 heures par semaine (8 pour le groupe A2, 5 pour le groupe B1). Activité principale de l'enseignante		Activité principale de l'enseignante
Groupe observé	4 apprenants (puis 5 dès avril 2022)	7 puis 6	5 à 10	4
Niveau	Deux N+1 B1, deux nouvellement arrivés A1 (puis un A2)	B1	A2 (puis six A1)	?
Age	16 à 18 ans	12 à 17 ans	11 à 16 ans	9 à 11 ans
Origine	Angolais (2), Algérien (1), Japonais (1), Tunisien (1)	Portugais (1), Algérien (1), Géorgien (1), Bulgare (1), Turc (1), Italo-marocain (2)	Américain (4), Japonais (1), Turc (2), Macédonien (1), Ukrainien (4)	Italo-marocains (4)

Le nombre d'apprenants inscrits a varié tout au long de l'année, certains ayant quitté les dispositifs ou étant arrivés en cours d'année.⁵

Le corpus de l'étude

Une fois les observations et enregistrements commencés, j'ai obtenu un nombre conséquent de données. Pour cet article, je dispose des données suivantes :

Tableau 2. Description synthétisée du corpus

	établissement 1	établissement 2	
		Classe N1	Classe N+1
Enregistrements interactions (HH:MM:SS)	16:19:23	09:30:43	16:14:55
Notes (pages)	84	175	
Entretiens apprenant	2		
Entretiens enseignante	1	1	

Les défis de l'accès aux terrains

J'ai obtenu des données au terme d'un processus long, accompagné de nombreux défis. L'école, milieu dans lequel se déroule les interactions, m'est apparue comme un milieu clos, difficile d'accès.

J'ai négocié mon entrée sur le terrain directement avec les enseignantes⁶ qui étaient en charge des dispositifs UPE2A. Le contact avec elles s'est fait à l'aide de plusieurs médiateurs⁷. Nous avons ensuite négocié ensemble avec la direction des établissements pour organiser ma venue. Bien que les enseignantes aient joué le rôle de passeur auprès de leurs chefs d'établissements, des négociations ont eu lieu avec la direction des établissements 1 et 3 pour établir ma venue. J'ai ainsi dû avoir un entretien avec la proviseure adjointe de l'établissement 1, qui voulait en

⁵ Un apprenant a rejoint l'établissement 1 en avril, et dans le cas de l'établissement 2, deux apprenants ont quitté la classe (un a quitté l'établissement en janvier, l'autre a arrêté le FLE en mars) et huit autres sont arrivés au cours de l'année et ont été répartis dans les deux classes.

⁶ J'avais déjà eu l'occasion de travailler avec l'enseignante de l'étab1 lors de mon année de master 2.

⁷ C'est par ailleurs une des enseignantes observées, qui a joué le rôle d'intermédiaire et m'a introduite auprès de l'enseignante de mon troisième terrain. Cette prise de contact médiée présente des avantages et des inconvénients, elle permet d'entrer plus facilement en contact avec les personnes (en créant la chaîne évoquée par Blanchet & Gotman, 2010), mais elle peut instaurer en contrepartie une relation de don et contre-don, une influence de la figure du tiers dans les éléments recueillis (Matthey, 2005 : §33).

savoir plus sur mes motivations. Pour l'établissement 3 qui relève du premier degré, j'ai dû négocier ma venue par mail avec l'inspecteur académique en charge de l'école, puis défendre mon projet dans une convention.

En tant que doctorante, il m'était impossible de me rendre dans les établissements en tant que stagiaire, statut reconnu donc facilement légitimé par des contrats. Afin d'établir le cadre juridique obligatoire et requis par les établissements pour encadrer ma présence, j'ai donc établi des conventions avec chacun d'eux. Ces documents stipulent par exemple la raison, les moments de ma venue, les lieux dans lesquels je peux me rendre au sein des établissements, les responsabilités de chacun en cas de problème, ma non-rémunération. Je me suis basée sur un modèle fourni par l'établissement 1 pour organiser ma venue dans cet établissement et le deuxième. Pour le troisième, l'école primaire, le rectorat a lui-même fourni une convention qu'il a ensuite fallu faire signer par pas moins de six partenaires. Ces contraintes administratives ont induit des contraintes temporelles importantes. Ainsi, environ un an s'est écoulé entre la prise de contact et la date d'entrée dans les classes. Ce délai explique le peu de temps dont j'ai disposé pour le dernier établissement, la prise de contact avec l'enseignante ayant eu lieu au début des observations au sein des autres établissements.

De plus, mon entrée sur le terrain ne m'a pas garanti d'office l'accès à l'enregistrement des interactions. Le processus pour y arriver a aussi été long. Dans un souci juridique, j'ai établi des formulaires afin de recueillir le consentement éclairé des personnes observées. J'ai fait le choix de recueillir les données audios uniquement, car je considère la présence d'une caméra comme trop intrusive : elle attire plus l'attention des participants et induit donc une plus grande perturbation des données. De plus, obtenir l'accord pour l'enregistrement des images des personnes, information qu'on peut considérer comme plus intime, m'a semblé constituer une demande trop intrusive, plus difficile à obtenir, notamment de la part des responsables légaux des apprenants qui ne m'ont jamais rencontrée.

Dans un souci éthique, pour éviter de brusquer les enseignantes et les apprenants engagés dans ma recherche, j'ai également pris le temps de faire connaissance avec eux et de laisser une relation se construire entre nous, afin qu'ils soient plus en confiance au moment de leur demander l'autorisation d'enregistrer les échanges. Dans le cas de l'établissement 2, il a par exemple fallu que je patiente deux mois après mon entrée dans l'établissement pour que l'enseignante accepte que j'enregistre ses cours. Elle me positionnait en effet en tant que « novice à former » et estimait que me concentrer sur les enregistrements me « déconnecterait » de la réalité de la classe. J'ai donc dû repréciser ma position de chercheuse plusieurs fois afin de réussir à la convaincre de l'intérêt pour moi de récupérer ces données.

L'interaction comme outil herméneutique

La méthodologie adoptée se rapproche de celle de la « proximité » telle que présentée par Rispaïl *et al.* (2018). À travers les interactions avec les participants, je souhaite opérer un rapprochement entre les personnes venant de différentes communautés de pratiques.

Une recherche ethnographique

L'interaction, en tant que donnée de recherche, est un objet sensible⁸, qui rend l'accès au terrain nécessaire mais difficile à manœuvrer.

Sensible d'une part, car elle est perceptible au moins en partie par des sens tels que l'ouïe et la vue⁹, mais reste fugace. Il est donc primordial de réussir à accéder directement au terrain afin de la comprendre. J'opte pour une démarche ethnographique (Cambrà Giné, 2003) *in situ*, afin d'observer le déroulement des interactions entre l'enseignant et les apprenants. Ce faisant, j'entre moi-même en interaction avec le terrain et les personnes y évoluant.

Sensible d'autre part, car les participants sont susceptibles d'être affectés, l'interaction didactique étant reconnue comme fortement émotionnelle (et *a fortiori* en classe de langue, Cicurel, 2011a). Ces acteurs évoluent dans des milieux dans lesquels les observateurs sont rares. Par ailleurs, les apprenants étant pour la plupart mineurs, des contraintes légales et éthiques se sont posées pour le recueil audio.

La perspective émique et les entretiens

Je souhaite également prendre en compte la subjectivité des personnes observées. Pour répondre à cette perspective émique, j'avais opté pour une démarche de collaboration avec les enseignantes (Desgagné *et al.* 2002). Cela s'est avéré difficile à mettre en place. Nos contraintes temporelles respectives ne permettaient pas d'établir une collaboration réflexive nécessaire à ce type de démarche (Bento, 2020). De plus, la place secondaire laissée aux apprenants ne correspondait pas à mon choix de valoriser le point de vue de chacun.

Le point de vue des enseignantes et des apprenants a été recueilli via des entretiens de « photolangage » (Bélisle *dir.*, 2017) à visée compréhensive (Kaufmann, 2011). Toujours dans cette logique de concept reliant, l'interaction entre

⁸ Je me réfère aux différentes définitions de ce mot données par le CNRTL en ligne, tour à tour et à la fois « vulnérable, prédisposé à subir certaines atteintes physiques » et « qui peut être perçu par les sens ».

⁹ Bien que nous ayons vu précédemment que dans le modèle épistémologique pour lequel j'ai opté, tout dans l'interaction ne se limite pas au domaine du directement perceptible par les sens.

chercheur et terrain, entre chercheur et acteurs, devient ici un outil herméneutique, une deuxième voie d'accès à la connaissance, complémentaire aux interactions didactiques¹⁰.

Des choix d'analyse entre rigueur et souplesse

Il est nécessaire de s'imprégner du corpus, afin d'en saisir le fonctionnement dans les détails. Cet intérêt pour les détails corrobore le concept de démarche guidée par les données (Traverso, 2007 et Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1998 : 58). L'interaction, en tant que corpus, est donc un objet modificateur, propice à renverser les hypothèses initiales (Rispaïl *et al.*, 2018 : 145) et pouvant obliger le chercheur à faire évoluer ses thématiques de recherches et les outils utilisés. Ainsi, une recherche interactionniste de qualité sous-entend d'arriver à un équilibre entre rigueur et systématisme, tout en autorisant assez de souplesse afin de pouvoir repérer des questionnements imprévus, de faire évoluer les notions convoquées (Iribarne, 2013).

Pour mieux appréhender les données dans leur globalité, je réalise des tableaux synoptiques qui permettent la découpe des interactions enregistrées. Le but est d'en saisir la logique à partir d'une vue d'ensemble (Ronveaux et Schneuwly, 2007). Sur les recommandations de nombreux chercheurs interactionnistes, j'ai choisi de « transformer l'oral en écrit » (Cicurel, 2011b : §6), car la quantité de données orales obtenues n'était pas exploitable en l'état. Mon corpus se scinde donc en deux ensembles : les enregistrements oraux sont mes « données primaires » et les transcriptions mes « données secondaires » (distinction trouvée sur le site du groupe ICOR <http://icar.cnrs.fr/corinte/>). Transcrire, en tant que pré-analyse, permet une immersion dans les données tout en prenant une certaine distance par rapport à elles (Traverso, 2008).

L'éthos comme notion englobante : présentation d'une application concrète

Pour cette analyse, j'ai sélectionné un court extrait d'interaction dans mon corpus, que j'ai ensuite transcrit¹¹. L'extrait en question est issu d'un cours ayant

¹⁰ L'interaction est également une ressource, un support réflexif dans la visée formative que je poursuis à plus long terme. Les enregistrements des interactions didactiques seront utilisés comme clef d'accès à l'imaginaire des personnes, pour déclencher des commentaires sur des événements, des verbalisations de représentations y étant reliées lors de formations de formateurs.

¹¹ Conventions de transcriptions (adaptées librement de celles du groupe Interactions Didactiques et Agir Professoral du laboratoire DILTEC de l'Université Sorbonne Nouvelle) :

- (texte) informations non verbales complémentaires.
- [texte] chevauchements des tours de parole.
- (XXX) extraits non compris.

eu lieu dans l'établissement 2 avec le groupe N+1 durant le mois de mars. Trois apprenants sont présents (R2, R3 et R4¹²). Au début du cours, R4 exprime le souhait d'aller en cours de français avec ses autres camarades de classe.

- 5 [>R4]: madame
6 [>Q]: (à R2) merci :
7 [E]: [oui]
8 [>R2]: [là] le dit
9 [>R4]: est-ce que : je peux aller-
10 [E]: [non]
11 [>R4]: [euh] faire des exemples de français avec mes amis avec madame G.
12 [E]: qu'est-ce que tu veux dire euh aller en cours de français /
13 [>R4]: oui
14 [E]: euh ::
15 [>R4]: et je viens + euh dans ce cours là parce que-
16 [E]: on verra oui tu vas commencer à y'aller oui oui
17 [>Q]: [en français/]
18 [>R4]: [mh parce que:] + je fais l'histoire tout tout tout +
19 [>Q]: sauf le français/
20 [>R4]: sauf le français [c'est tout]
21 [>Q]: [mhmh] [d'accord]
22 [E]: [oui je sais] + je sais + mais tu commences d'abord par écrire faire des
 rédactions et puis quand tu tu soigneras bien ton travail de rédaction tu iras là-bas
23 [>R4]: mh (*modalité exclamative*)
24 [E]: parce que là-bas c'qu'on va te d'mander ç- ça n'a rien à voir avec ce qu'on fait ici
25 [>R4]: madame en Tunisie c'est presque + la même chose sauf on +
26 [E]: euh R4 tu es en train de rêver là + d'accord
27 [>R4]: + comment c-
28 [E]: quand tu es arrivé ici tu écrivais deux lignes en français ce qu'on va
 te demander en classe c'est deux pages +
29 [>R2]: oui
30 [E]: sur des sujets de littérature +
31 [>R4]: [ah]
32 [E]: [demande] à ma petite R3 comment c'est hein + c'est bien [différent hein]
33 [>R3]: [on fait] trois rédactions + en classe
34 [>Q]: (à ?) merci (*en chuchotant*)
35 [>R4]: ça veut dire que :
36 [>R3]: rédaction ça veut dire euh un texte de : je sais pas quoi de livre où je sais pas
37 [E]: allez fais lui peur vas-y [(rires)]
38 [>R2]: et [>Q]: [(rires)]

- + pause.

- : allongement de la voyelle précédente.

- / modalité interrogative marquée.

¹² J'ai laissé les codes des apprenants en attendant que ces derniers optent pour le pseudonyme de leur choix.

- 39 [>R3]: regarde comme ça (*elle lui montre une de ses rédactions*)
 40 [>R4]: mhmh pendant (XXXXX)
 41 [>R3]: on fait des choses comme ça (*elle sort un trieur de son sac*) ça c'est mon classeur de français [d'accord t'as vu]
 42 [E]: (*ton amusé*) il va plus vouloir y'aller [(rires)]
 43 [>R2]: [(rires)]
 44 [E]: (*à moi*) donc souvent tu vois + (*elle s'installe à côté de moi, en chuchotant*) c'est une question de copain il veut être à trainer c'est normal
 45 [>Q]: mhmhmhmh
 46 [>R4]: (*à R3*) [mhmh mhmhmhmh]
 47 [E]: mais : et de fait ici + (*d'un ton encore plus bas*) ce genre d'enfant ici ne fait pas grand chose + parce qu'il est un peu à part
 48 [>R3]: comme ça on fait des choses [comme ça] (*à R4*)
 49 [E]: [et:] ++
 50 [>R3]: t'as vu (*à R4*)
 51 [>R4]: ok
 52 [E]: ouais mais pour l'instant t'écris trois lignes à moi
 53 [>R4]: + hein
 54 [E]: ouais quand tu m'fais des rédactions [tu écris quatre lignes]
 55 [>R4]: [non mais] pour l'orthographe vocabulaire conjugaison
 56 [E]: + oui bin commence déjà aussi à faire ici + pour l'orthographe oui je suis d'accord + mais : il y a pas un jour précis euh voilà

L'enseignant et l'apprenant construisent ici des imaginaires différents relatifs aux cours de français dit « ordinaire ». Pour l'enseignante, c'est un cours dans lequel on fait « des rédactions » (deux occurrences au tour de parole¹³ 22), de la littérature (TP30), qui fait « peur » et qui est radicalement différent du cours de FLE (TP32). En tant que garante, elle subordonne l'accès au cours de français aux résultats que les apprenants ont dans son cours. Selon elle, ils ne méritent d'y arriver que s'ils sont assez compétents, y accéder semble être une récompense. De son côté, l'apprenant considère qu'on y fait principalement de « l'orthographe, vocabulaire, conjugaison » (TP55), et qu'on y fait « la même chose » que ce qu'il faisait en Tunisie. Son enjeu ne semble pas se situer au niveau de la compétence, mais sur le fait de pouvoir assister aux mêmes cours que ses pairs. Chacun se définit au sein d'images qui entrent en résonance avec ces imaginaires différents. Ces différences viennent entrer en friction au sein des ethè revendiqués et attribués, qui ne correspondent pas. C'est après lorsqu'il se positionne comme égal à ses camarades que l'enseignante reprend l'apprenant (TP22) et que commencent les négociations entre eux. Le tour de parole 26 vient cristalliser cet écart entre leurs imaginaires : « tu es en train de rêver là ».

¹³ Dorénavant TP.

Dans une perspective relationnelle, l'enseignante appuie sa position haute pour faire valoir son propre imaginaire. Elle dévalue l'apprenant à plusieurs reprises dans ses compétences (TP 10, 22, 26, 47, 52, 54), le positionne comme à l'écart du groupe FLE (« ce genre d'enfant », « il est un peu à l'écart » TP47). Elle s'appuie sur une autre apprenante, avec qui elle partage le même imaginaire relatif au cours de français, pour faire valoir son point de vue (TP32). De son côté, l'apprenant tente de défendre l'image revendiquée. Il fait référence à son expérience en Tunisie puis, après plusieurs tours sans pouvoir parler, à ses compétences. On voit au TP55 qu'il recentre l'enjeu de l'accès au cours de français aux domaines dans lesquels il est plus à l'aise. Il précise par cette intervention son imaginaire relatif au cours de français ordinaire. C'est seulement lorsque l'enseignant comprend ce par rapport à quoi il s'estimait compétent, autrement dit lorsque son imaginaire est explicité et reconnu, qu'elle accepte de lui reconnaître l'ethos qu'il s'attribuait en fonction de cet imaginaire (TP 56).

Dans cet exemple, le positionnement de soi se fait par rapport à des imaginaires différents, ce qui entraîne une discordance dans les ethè attribués / revendiqués et donc des tensions dans la relation interpersonnelle. Ajuster les imaginaires qui entrent en jeu dans la définition d'une image de soi semble permettre en retour d'ajuster les ethè revendiqués-attribués par chacun et donc les négociations de la relation interpersonnelle¹⁴.

Cet extrait permet selon moi d'observer les liens possibles à faire entre l'étude des négociations de la relation interpersonnelle et celle des imaginaires en sollicitant la notion d'ethos. Cette notion permet donc d'étudier l'interaction dans une perspective qui intègre plusieurs dimensions de l'expérience intersubjective.

Discussion

De la difficulté de légitimer sa position en tant que jeune chercheur

La pluralité des paradigmes disponibles que j'ai mise en avant dans la première partie de cette communication représente à la fois un avantage et un inconvénient : comment réussir à se situer dans un paysage épistémologique aussi varié en tant que jeune chercheuse ? Prendre une position est d'autant plus délicat que certains auteurs utilisent des termes relevant de paradigmes différents comme des synonymes. Définir l'interaction en tant que concept reliant est-il pertinent pour réussir à mieux dépasser cette diversité ou cela induit-il un positionnement moins adéquat par rapport au concept ?

¹⁴ Je suis consciente que cet extrait ponctuel n'est pas suffisant pour théoriser le fonctionnement de l'ethos en interaction et pour arriver à des conclusions définitives.

J'ai également proposé une définition de la notion d'éthos en tant que notion englobante et j'en ai proposé un exemple d'application sur un extrait. Cette notion permet-elle de synthétiser les différents aspects en jeu dans les interactions sociales ?

Lors de ma prise de contact, j'ai fait le choix de me présenter à la fois comme une doctorante (donc une chercheuse) et comme une future enseignante (donc une novice) afin de ne pas aborder les enseignants avec une posture qu'elles auraient pu considérer comme surplombante. Cette première présentation m'a posé des difficultés pour faire reconnaître mes besoins, les enseignantes me renvoyant souvent explicitement à une place de « stagiaire ».

Il me semble que le point commun de toutes ces questions se situe dans la façon d'arriver à légitimer ses choix en tant que chercheur.

Le temps : une ressource précieuse mais problématique

On voit les nombreuses contraintes temporelles que présente la méthodologie adoptée. Elles posent la gestion du temps comme un défi délicat à gérer dans le cadre d'une recherche ethnographique. Du point de vue de l'accès aux données, les processus de prise de contact et de signature des conventions ont pris un an. De plus, la dimension éthique induit également une prise de position délicate à manœuvrer, que ce soit auprès des directions des établissements, des enseignants ou des apprenants. J'ai ainsi fait le choix d'attendre de faire connaissance avec les enseignants et les apprenants dans un objectif de mise en confiance avant de commencer les enregistrements. J'ai également patienté plusieurs mois avant d'organiser les entretiens, afin qu'ils puissent être le plus à l'aise possible avec moi pour parler. La proximité est une clef d'accès pertinente car heuristique, mais longue à instaurer.

En ce qui concerne l'analyse, observer les phénomènes dans la durée permet d'en acquérir une connaissance fine. J'ai réalisé des observations sur une durée allant de deux mois pour un des terrains à six mois pour un autre. Comment réussir à donner à voir l'intégralité de ces données ? Les transcriptions sont également un processus chronophage, que je décide de ne pas appliquer à l'intégralité des données en raison de contraintes temporelles. La démarche ethnographique en tant que démarche d'analyse et heuristique est-elle valable pour sélectionner les données pertinentes pour l'analyse ?

Conclusion

D'un point de vue théorique, mobiliser l'interaction comme concept reliant permet de prendre en considération différents paradigmes disciplinaires et dimensions d'analyse. En tant qu'objet de recherche, c'est un lieu de rencontre entre les individus, qui donne à voir, en fonction du contexte dans lequel elle se déroule, les contacts, les confrontations éventuelles et les ajustements entre eux. Sur le plan méthodologique, le contact heuristique de l'interaction avec les enseignants et apprenants m'a permis d'obtenir des données primordiales. Lorsqu'on s'intéresse à l'interaction, il semblerait qu'« il n'y a pas rupture mais continuité entre l'instrument de la compréhension et l'objet à comprendre » (Papinot, 2013 : §19). Cela induit d'affirmer des choix en tant que chercheur, en s'appuyant sur une réflexion épistémologique et méthodologique.

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« PETIT OU GRAND CAFÉ ? » : QUELQUES QUESTIONNEMENTS LIÉS À L'ANALYSE D'UN ACTE LANGAGIER SAISI DANS UNE TEMPORALITÉ LARGE EN CONTEXTE DE FORMATION PROFESSIONNELLE EXOLINGUE

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ABSTRACT. "Small or Large Coffee?": A Few Aspects Related to the Analysis of a Language Act Captured in a Broader Temporality in the Context of an Exolingual Professional Training. We are interested in the form of the interaction that takes place between a chef and an allophone apprentice in a French restaurant, through the comparative analysis of one language act, a coffee proposal, captured by a camera on four occasions, from the first day of training to the fourth month of the apprentice's employment. This data set allows us to observe the evolving character of the "interactional bricolage" and its inscription in two temporalities which are combined, that of production-reception and that of language acquisition, at the same time as it underlines the implications of the exolinguistic character of the situation for the role of the apprentice master.

Keywords : multimodal interactional analysis, exolingual interaction, workplace tutoring, professional situation, language acquisition

RÉSUMÉ. On s'intéresse à la forme de l'interaction qui a lieu entre un chef de cuisine et une apprentie allophone en situation de travail dans un restaurant français, à travers l'analyse comparée d'un même acte langagier, une proposition de café, capté par une caméra à quatre reprises, depuis le premier jour de formation au quatrième mois de l'apprentie dans l'entreprise. Ce jeu de données permet d'observer le caractère évolutif du « bricolage interactionnel » et son inscription dans deux

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temporalités qui se conjuguent, celle de la production-réception et celle de l'acquisition de langue, en même temps qu'il souligne les implications du caractère exolingue de la situation pour le rôle de maître d'apprentissage.

Mots clef : analyse interactionnelle multimodale, interaction exolingue, tutorat en entreprise, situation professionnelle, acquisition langagière

Introduction

Si l'interaction qui a lieu entre une cheffe et un commis en cuisine est particulière, si l'interaction qui a lieu entre un maître d'apprentissage et une apprentie est particulière, et si l'interaction qui a lieu entre un locuteur ou une locutrice experte (natif-ve) et un locuteur ou une locutrice apprenante de langue est particulière, on se demande quelle forme peut prendre une interaction dans laquelle sont réunies ces trois caractéristiques.

A la question de la construction de l'interaction telle qu'elle peut être saisie par l'analyse d'un moment clé, dans une approche s'appuyant sur une méthodologie inspirée à la fois de l'analyse conversationnelle (Sacks, Schegloff et Jefferson, 1974) et de la linguistique interactionnelle (Mondada, 1995), donc relevant de l'analyse micro et multimodale des pratiques situées, s'ajoute la question de la dynamique de l'interaction saisie dans une temporalité large, seule à même de révéler les processus d'acquisition professionnelle et langagière en jeu dans un tel contexte (celui de la formation professionnelle exolingue).

A partir de l'analyse comparée d'un acte langagier – le chef de cuisine, français natif, propose à l'apprentie, allophone, un café – observé à différentes reprises dans un corpus de données audio-visuelles captées dans la cuisine d'un restaurant en France, nous souhaiterions ici illustrer la pertinence de la dimension longitudinale pour décrire et comprendre non seulement la forme et la fonction de l'interaction, mais aussi leur évolution dans le temps de la formation.

Après une définition de la situation d'interaction, convoquant la notion de *rôle*, et une description de la relation des interactantes, convoquant les notions de *common ground* et d'*histoire conversationnelle*, puis la présentation du corpus et du sous-corpus de l'étude, nous proposons une description ainsi qu'une analyse comparée des séquences « café ».

Cette approche par « micro-comparaison » nous permet de montrer comment l'asymétrie constitutive de ce type d'interaction implique un phénomène de « bricolage » interactionnel réalisé à partir d'un répertoire de ressources langagières multimodales partagé, en évolution et coconstruit.

1. Chef et apprentie allophone en cuisine : une interaction complexe

1.1. Une interaction directe et « multi-strates »

Avant toute chose, rappelons que l'interaction cheffe - apprentie en situation de travail est une interaction directe, ce qui implique que celle-ci est foncièrement :

- relative à l'action (Kerbrat-Orecchioni, 1990),
- située, compréhensible dans son contexte d'émergence, notamment en situation professionnelle (Vinatier, Laforest, Filliettaz, 2018),
- multimodale (Traverso, 2016),
- coconstruite (Goodwin, 1979).

Dans notre recherche, différentes strates contextuelles viennent se superposer qui sont susceptibles d'influer sur ces caractéristiques. L'interaction est tout à la fois une situation :

- professionnelle : l'activité de cuisine dans un restaurant ;
- de didactique professionnelle : la formation d'une apprentie en cuisine ;
- exolingue : la communication entre un locuteur de français et une locutrice de polonais ;
- d'apprentissage de langue étrangère : l'apprentissage du français par l'apprentie.

En effet, le contexte multi-strates implique à la fois une multiplicité de rôles en interaction et une multiplicité de ressources mobilisées pour les accomplir.

1.2. Une multiplicité de rôles en interaction

Le rôle correspond à « l'ensemble des modèles culturels associés à un statut donné. Il englobe par conséquent les attitudes, les valeurs et les comportements que la société assigne à une personne et à toutes les personnes qui occupent ce statut », en somme à « ce que l'individu doit faire pour valider sa présence dans ce statut » (Linton, 1977, p. 71-72, in Vion, 1992, p. 82). En considération de ces rôles, l'interaction (macro) que nous nous proposons d'observer dans notre recherche est formée d'asymétries de type complémentaires (Vion, 1992), présentées dans le tableau suivant :

interactantes	CHEF	APP
Pseudonyme	Tristan	Ewa
rôle de dimension : profession	chef de cuisine	commis
rôle de dimension : formation	maître d'apprentissage	apprentie
rôle de dimension : langue- culture	locuteur expert de français	apprenante de français

Les participants sont donc engagés dans un rapport de type formant-formé, qui est certes un rapport de place inégalitaire où CHEF occupe la position haute et APP la position basse, mais où l'asymétrie est constitutive de l'échange et par là même acceptée voire revendiquée.

La nature conjointe de toute interaction directe conduit Vion à la formulation du « rapport de rôles » : « *Dans la mesure où jouer un rôle revient à établir un rapport de rôles et à s'inscrire dans une dynamique dont chaque acteur n'est qu'un co-acteur, la communication passe par la coordination et la négociation des rôles* » (1992, p. 82). Ainsi nos deux protagonistes vont se placer tour à tour et parfois de manière superposée ou confondue dans ces rôles et en fonction de la situation, et vont soit revendiquer ces rôles pour eux-mêmes (auto-assignation) ou pour leur partenaire (hétéro-assignation) soit accepter ou rejeter les rôles assignés.

Cette négociation dans le rapport de rôles se réalise à mesure que les interactants « bricolent » à partir de différentes ressources langagières pour l'intercompréhension et la réalisation des buts professionnels et de formation.

1.3. Un bricolage de ressources en interaction

A propos du bricolage, en ce qui le distingue de l'ingénierie, Lévi-Strauss écrit :

“son univers instrumental est clos et la règle de son enjeu est de toujours s'arranger avec les moyens du bord, c'est-à-dire un ensemble à chaque instant fini d'outils et de matériaux, hétéroclites au surplus, parce que la composition de l'ensemble n'est pas en rapport avec le projet du moment, ni d'ailleurs avec aucun projet particulier, mais est le résultat contingent de toutes les occasions qui se sont présentées de renouveler ou d'enrichir le stock, ou de l'entretenir avec les résidus de constructions et de destructions antérieures” (Lévi-Strauss, 1962, p. 27 in Mondada, 2012, p. 2).

Cette définition utilisée par Mondada pour décrire l'ALF (Anglais Lingua Franca) nous semble s'appliquer particulièrement bien à l'interaction complexe que nous souhaitons analyser. Tout d'abord, la dimension exolingue implique une variété de codes linguistiques (le français, le polonais, l'anglais) ainsi que des phénomènes tels que l'alternance codique, le mélange codique. Ensuite, les ressources visuelles (gestes et mimiques notamment) de même que les ressources sonores, vocales, mais non verbales (intonation, volume de la voix) jouent un rôle important dans l'intercompréhension, d'autant que la dimension verbale peut faire défaut.

Par ailleurs dans le contexte d'interaction de formation en entreprise où l'un des participants est en apprentissage à la fois de compétence en langue-culture et de compétence professionnelle, la variation des formes que peut prendre ce bricolage est fortement évolutive. Plusieurs facteurs expliquent l'évolution de la forme de l'interaction : l'acquisition de l'apprentie dans les compétences langagières et professionnelles, et l'ajustement du maître d'apprentissage à ces compétences. Également, la découverte mutuelle du *common ground* (Clark et Brennan, 1991), le bagage de connaissances commun aux interactants, et la création progressive de l'*emergent common ground* (Keskes, 2019), celui qui se construit via leurs échanges, essentiel dans les interactions interculturelles où le *common ground* est réduit. En somme, tout ce qui forme l'*histoire conversationnelle* (Golopentia, 1988), constituée de l'ensemble des interactions des sujets dans le temps.

C'est donc pour rendre compte de ces caractères contingent, séquentiel, mais aussi incrémental de l'interaction (Mondada, 2012), que notre méthode d'analyse consiste notamment en la comparaison de fragments (micro-interactions) de cette situation de formation (macro-interaction).

2. « Café » : La description d'un acte langagier saisi dans une temporalité large

Nous détaillons ci-dessous la méthodologie de collecte et de traitement du corpus constitué dans le cadre de notre recherche de thèse, puis nous présentons une description et une analyse du sous-corpus réalisé dans le cadre de cette communication.

2.1. Le corpus (OUICHEF) et le sous-corpus (Café)

Nous présentons ici le corpus réalisé dans le cadre de notre recherche de thèse ainsi que le sous-corpus réalisé dans le cadre de cette communication.

2.1.1. OUICHEF : une situation de formation en cuisine captée à différentes (re)prises

Avec une approche de type ethnographique, nous avons filmé une situation de formation professionnelle entre un chef francophone (français) et une apprentie allophone (polonaise) candidate au diplôme de CAP¹.

¹ Diplôme du Certificat d'Aptitude Professionnelle, premier niveau de qualification, obtenu en un an de formation pour ce contrat en particulier (la formation au niveau CAP est normalement d'une durée de deux ans).

Le protocole de collecte prévoyait une captation à chaque alternance de l'apprentie en entreprise, soit une prise par mois environ. Cependant, le contrat de formation (une année scolaire) et par conséquent notre collecte de données, a été perturbé par l'éruption de la pandémie covid-19 (début 2020) qui a contraint la fermeture du restaurant à mi-parcours. Au total, ce corpus que nous avons intitulé OUICHEF est constitué de cinq prises comptabilisant onze heures d'enregistrement. Même si celle-ci est réduite de moitié, la qualité longitudinale du corpus présente des avantages méthodologiques pour l'analyse. En effet, il permet de concevoir la dynamique de l'interaction entre les participants dans une temporalité large, permettant de documenter ou refléter des concepts en analyse de l'interaction (tels ceux cités supra).

En outre, alors que Mondada évoque trois temporalités caractérisant les « *processus linguistiques émergents* », qui sont celles de « *la production-réception* », du « *changement* » entendu comme variation linguistique, et de « *l'acquisition* », et qui sont « *généralement traitées au sein de paradigmes différents dans la littérature* » (Mondada, 2012, p. 5), nous constatons que notre corpus permet d'adresser deux de ces temporalités, à savoir la production-réception et l'acquisition. Nous accordons en effet de l'importance à la temporalité des échanges en ce qu'elle semble significative dans le processus d'encodage-décodage de l'interaction, et est révélatrice du phénomène de co-construction et du processus d'acquisition.

Quant à la méthode de la vidéo-ethnographie, elle permet de documenter les ressources langagières mobilisées par les participants, et de les analyser grâce aux nombreux avantages que présentent les données filmées, au premier rang desquels la capacité à transcrire les différentes modalités de l'interaction :

- verbale (dépendante d'un code linguistique "langue")
- interface verbale-vocale (interjections, rires, et autres énoncés plus ou moins inféribles sans maîtrise du code)
- vocale (prosodie : intonation, volume, débit, pauses silencieuses ou vocaliques, etc.)
- mimo-gestuelle (gestes et mimiques)
- proxémique (distance et (dé)placement des corps dans l'espace)
- regards

Pour rendre compte de toutes ces modalités et de leur imbrication, leur inscription dans la temporalité « production-réception » de l'interaction, nous avons choisi d'utiliser le logiciel d'annotation ELAN² pour le traitement de nos

² <https://www.mpi.nl/corpus/html/elan/>

données. Celui-ci permet d'annoter un fichier audiovisuel en une partition multiple contenant autant de pistes que nécessaire, convenant ainsi au besoin d'analyse de la complexité de la pratique langagière en interaction directe.

2.1.2. « Café » : quand CHEF propose à APP un café

Pour illustrer ces avantages méthodologiques, nous avons choisi de comparer quatre séquences extraites de quatre enregistrements réalisés à environ un mois d'intervalle et qui présentent un acte langagier identique : le chef propose à l'apprentie un café. Cette centration sur un acte nous permet d'observer différentes modalités de sa réalisation, dans un contexte presque identique avec cependant une variable « temps » importante.

Il s'agit de séquences très brèves, d'une durée allant de 9 secondes (extrait 2) à 26 secondes (extrait 1). Ces quatre extraits sont les seuls du corpus correspondant à l'acte de proposition de café impliquant le chef et l'apprentie. Le premier est extrait du premier enregistrement, le deuxième du deuxième enregistrement, le quatrième du quatrième enregistrement, tandis que notre cinquième enregistrement n'a pas capté d'acte de proposition de café.

2.2. Description des séquences « Café »

Nous proposons une transcription « horizontalisée » des énoncés, conservant l'alignement temporel de l'interaction, c'est-à-dire la durée des productions et la durée entre celles-ci, dans laquelle figure la situation précise de capture des images³, sous la forme de lettres alphabétiques, que l'on retrouve dans les planches d'images.

Voici les conventions de transcription pour l'ensemble des extraits présentés :

01,02, 03, etc. : numéro de l'énoncé (verbal ou non-verbal) par ordre d'apparition

APP : l'apprentie (pseudonyme : Ewa)

CHEF : le chef de cuisine (pseudonyme : Tristan)

³ Les captures d'image sont réalisées directement depuis l'interface d'ELAN.

STAG : le stagiaire en cuisine (pseudonyme : Théo)

(énoncé) : énoncé probable, supposé

xx : passage incompréhensible, autant de x que de syllabe identifiée

{propos} : commentaire de l'analyste

2.2.1. Extrait 1 : séquence "café 1" (enregistrement 1_oranges)

Pendant les quinze premières minutes de l'enregistrement, APP est en train de peler à vif des oranges, et les quelques interactions qui précèdent cette séquence consistent en l'explication par CHEF de la technique de pelage à vif pour réaliser des suprêmes d'oranges.

En ouverture de l'interaction, CHEF apparaît dans le champ sonore, proposant un café à APP « est-ce que tu veux un café ewa ? » (image A). APP se retourne (B) et regarde CHEF, établissant l'interaction. CHEF, à présent dans notre champ visuel, à une distance approximative de deux mètres de APP, produit une répétition de l'énoncé 1, en segmentant celui-ci en deux parties « est-ce que tu veux » et « un café » par une légère pause et une rupture dans le mouvement intonatif. APP hoche la tête en trois mouvements amples et sourit (D), alors que CHEF produit un nouvel énoncé verbal interrogatif : « tu as compris ? » dans le but de vérifier la compréhension. Si le hochement de tête signifie une réponse positive, peut-être est-ce l'absence d'une réponse sous forme verbale de APP ou son regard maintenu fixe qui le font douter de la bonne réception de sa question.

Aussitôt, APP produit une grimace lèvres tirées vers le bas (E) puis secoue la tête de gauche à droite et l'avance vers CHEF en déplaçant son corps d'un pas vers l'avant (F). C'est par ce langage corporel, auquel vient s'ajouter l'énoncé vocal « mm ? » produit dans une tonalité interrogative, que APP manifeste à CHEF sa non compréhension et son attention pour la suite de l'interaction.

Planche de l'extrait 1 : séquence « café 1 », corpus OUCHEF, enregistrement 1-oranges



Transcription de l'extrait 1 : séquence « café 1 », corpus OUICHEF,
enregistrement 1-oranges

CHEF		<u>est-ce que tu veux un café eva?</u>		<u>est-ce...</u>
tête CHEF				<u>place en fa...</u>
mains CHEF				
APP				
tête APP			<u>tourne vers CHEF</u>	-
mains APP				
regard APP				<u>vers CHEF</u>
mimique APP				
image				
Time		1931.930	A	B
<hr/>				
CHEF		<u>que tu veux un café</u>		
tête CHEF		<u>face de APP</u>		
mains CHEF				
APP				
tête APP		<u>tourne vers CHEF</u>	<u>hêche x3</u>	-
mains APP				
regard APP		<u>vers CHEF</u>		-
mimique APP				
image				
Time		1935.415	C	D
<hr/>				
CHEF		<u>tu as compris?</u>		<u>did you understand</u>
tête CHEF				
mains CHEF				
APP			<u>mm?</u>	
tête APP		<u>hêche x3</u>	<u>secoue DG</u>	<u>avance vers CHEF</u>
mains APP				-
regard APP		<u>vers CHEF</u>		-
mimique APP				
image				
Time		1938.900	E	F
<hr/>				
CHEF		<u>do you want some coffe</u>		<u>est-ce que...</u>
tête CHEF				
mains CHEF				
APP		<u>no</u>	<u>ah</u>	<u>mm</u>
tête APP		<u>avance vers CHEF</u>	<u>recule</u>	
mains APP				
regard APP		<u>vers CHEF</u>		<u>vers sol</u>
mimique APP		<u>bouche pincée lèvres vers l'intérieur</u>		
image				
Time		1942.385	G	H I
<hr/>				
CHEF		<u>tu veux un café</u>		<u>petit grand</u>
tête CHEF				
mains CHEF				<u>main D i.. main D iconique...</u>
APP			<u>oui</u>	<u>s'il vous plaît</u>
tête APP		<u>penchée D</u>	<u>penchée G</u>	
mains APP				
regard APP		<u>vers sol</u>	<u>vers CHEF</u>	<u>vers mains de CHEF</u>
mimique APP		<u>bouche ouverte</u>		
image				
Time		1945.870	J K	L M
<hr/>				
CHEF			<u>grand</u>	
tête CHEF				
mains CHEF		<u>[grand] index+po.. main D iconig.. main D iconig..</u>		
APP			<u>grand</u>	<u>merci</u>
tête APP				
mains APP		<u>main G iconique [grand] index+pouce &..</u>		
regard APP		<u>vers mains .. vers ses m.. vers CHEF</u>		<u>vers pdt</u>
mimique APP			<u>sourire</u>	
image				
Time		1949.355	N O P	Q R

Face à la non compréhension de APP, CHEF traduit alors son énoncé en anglais, produisant une répétition avec changement de code linguistique : « did you understand ? ». Moins d'une seconde après, APP produit l'énoncé verbal en anglais « no » continuant une mimique se pinçant la bouche vers l'intérieur (G) – qui pourrait être un équivalent mimo-gestuel de « *oups* » – tout en gardant son corps avancé vers CHEF. Celui-ci produit alors une reformulation en anglais : « do you want some coffe ? ».

Moins d'une seconde après APP manifeste sa compréhension par l'interjection « AH » (H), son regard, fixé depuis dix secondes, quittant alors CHEF, ce qui peut constituer également un indice de sa compréhension soudaine. Alors que APP recule d'un pas (I), son regard vers le sol ainsi que la production de l'énoncé vocal « mm » indiquent à CHEF la prise d'un temps de réflexion conclu par la tête penchée vers le côté (J) et l'ouverture de la bouche. Ces énoncés sont chevauchés par la reprise en français par CHEF de sa propre question : « est-ce que tu veux un café ? », certainement dans un but de didactique de français (voir le développement hypothétique en 2.3.)

APP semble ignorer cette reformulation à visée didactique, se concentrant sur sa production qu'elle amorce en redressant le buste et en l'orientant légèrement vers CHEF, le regard également dirigé vers celui-ci. La longueur de sa réponse sous la forme de l'énoncé verbal « oui » est marquée par la prosodie et un mouvement des lèvres, avec un avancement du menton vers CHEF et la tête à nouveau maintenue penchée, cette fois vers la gauche (K), que nous proposons d'interpréter comme une forme d'expression de gratitude.

CHEF interroge ensuite APP sur la longueur du café qu'elle souhaite, à l'aide de plusieurs modalités expressives concomitantes. Il produit en effet l'énoncé verbal « petit grand », avec un schéma intonatif qui semble servir à configurer les deux termes comme deux items d'un choix, en même temps qu'un énoncé gestuel de type métaphorique (Tsuyoshi, 2011) constitué en deux temps : la main D levée devant lui, CHEF produit d'abord l'énoncé gestuel <petit> avec son pouce et son index en forme de pince resserrée (M), puis l'énoncé gestuel <grand> avec son pouce et son index en forme de pince élargie en soulevant son index (N).

Si APP avait déjà préparé l'énoncé verbal « s'il vous plaît » qu'elle produit en chevauchement, son regard se fixe rapidement sur la gestuelle de CHEF. Le regard de APP se dirige ensuite vers sa propre main droite qu'elle vient de soulever (lâchant l'orange) et avec laquelle elle produit l'énoncé gestuel <grand> (O), reprenant le geste iconique de CHEF. Cet énoncé gestuel est doublé de l'énoncé verbal « grand » qui confirme la compréhension du geste. Nous voyons dans cette dernière séquence un phénomène de la co-construction de l'interaction avec l'établissement d'un code lexical gestuel commun, proposé par CHEF et ratifié par APP. Par ailleurs, alors que CHEF avait reproduit une fois l'énoncé gestuel <petit> (P) avant de percevoir la réponse de APP, il en atteste finalement la réception par la reprise de l'énoncé

gestuel <grand> (Q), également doublé par l'énoncé verbal « grand », formant ainsi un jeu de miroir avec un alignement verbal et gestuel très fin, conférant son caractère de réussite à l'interaction. La satisfaction induite par la performance de l'interaction est autrement soulignée par le sourire grandissant de APP (Q) et son hochement de tête dans un unique et rapide mouvement. Tandis que CHEF quitte le champ visuel de APP, cette dernière se retourne vers le plan de travail (R) et produit l'énoncé verbal « merci » qui clôture l'échange, reprenant son activité.

2.2.2. Extrait 2 : séquence « café 2 » (enregistrement 2b_oignons)

Planche de l'extrait 2 : séquence « café 2 », corpus OUICHEF, enregistrement 2b-oignons



Transcription de l'extrait 2 : séquence « café2 », corpus OUICHEF, enregistrement 2b-oignons

CHEF	tu veux un café théo?	ewa?	un petit un grand?	
posture CHEF	vers STAG	vers APP		=
geste_tête CHEF	tête tournée vers STAG	tête tournée vers APP		=
regard CHEF		vers APP		=
action CHEF				=
APP		oui		
posture APP				=
geste_tête APP		hôche_xl		
regard APP				=
action APP	découpe des oignons			=
STAG		xxxx		
image	A	B	C	D E F
Time	1334.326			
<hr/>				
CHEF				
posture CHEF	vers APP			
geste_tête CHEF	tête tournée vers APP			
regard CHEF	vers APP			
action CHEF		sort de la cuisine		
APP	mm grand			
posture APP				
geste_tête APP				
regard APP				
action APP	découpe des oignons			
STAG				
image		G		H
Time	1338.726			

Au début de cette séquence, l'apprentie, le chef et le cuisinier (CUI) sont en cuisine. APP vient de finir de ranger les couverts, elle prend les seaux vides pour les rapporter à la plonge (A). Au moment où elle sort, CUI apparaît dans le champ visuel (B), se dirigeant vers CHEF qui est hors champ, pour lui proposer un café via l'énoncé « chef vous voulez (un) café ? ». Celui-ci répond par la négative avec l'énoncé de réponse « non merci » (C), suivi de sa justification « j'en ai déjà bu assez », produite alors qu'il suit CUI dans sa trajectoire vers la plonge. Rapidement, il interroge CUI : « tu as proposé à ewa ? » (D puis E), qui répond « euh non j'ai fait deux ». Quelques secondes après, peut-être le temps d'estimer la disponibilité de APP, CHEF lui demande « tu veux un café ewa ? », proposant le café déjà préparé. Celle-ci accepte la proposition via l'énoncé « oui s'il vous plaît », à la suite de quoi CHEF indique la disponibilité du café : « ben il est prêt ».

2.3. Analyse comparée des extraits

2.3.1. Rôles, asymétrie et acte de langage

Ces quatre séquences permettent premièrement d'illustrer une caractéristique fondamentale de l'interaction chef (ou maître) et apprentie qui est son asymétrie. Nous constatons pour ces quatre occurrences que la proposition de boire un café émane de CHEF. En tant que chef, c'est lui qui oriente l'action dans la cuisine, et en tant que maître d'apprentissage plus spécifiquement, c'est lui qui oriente l'action de l'apprentie. A double titre donc, CHEF a la responsabilité de conduire APP, ce qui consiste à lui fournir des tâches et à la guider dans leur accomplissement, mais aussi à définir le rythme dans le temps de travail en circonscrivant les pauses ou les moments plus « relâchés » comme ceux des « cafés ». Ainsi la production de la proposition du café par CHEF respecte tout à fait l'ordre interactionnel et le contrat interactif implicite liant les deux protagonistes. Cette distribution correspond à des normes d'interaction qui agissent comme des contraintes plus ou moins flexibles (Vion, 1992) dans le cadre interactif situé. Car il ne s'agit pas du rapport entre deux personnes, mais bien du rapport entre deux personnes incarnant des rôles multiples dans l'espace-temps de la situation de formation.

Si à première vue les séquences « café » semblent échapper de l'analyse des pratiques langagières en situation de formation professionnelle, et relever plutôt de l'analyse de conversation, il s'avère qu'elles font partie intégrante de la part langagière au travail. D'une part, la conversation de type « café » s'inscrit dans le temps et le contexte professionnel. Toutefois, elle se situe en décalage avec l'activité

professionnelle, constituant une incise à l'échange orienté vers les tâches, ce qui peut participer à expliquer la difficulté pour APP à inférer son sens lors de sa première occurrence. D'autre part, les moments informels qu'elle constitue sont en fait essentiels au bon fonctionnement de l'activité professionnelle. Ils participent en effet à la formation de ce que Wenger nomme la communauté de pratique (1998).

Une observation de notre sous-corpus « café » permettrait de l'illustrer, et de vérifier le lien existant entre les actes langagiers, leur légitimité dans le cadre participatif (Goffman, 1981) et la participation à la communauté de pratiques. Pour Lave et Wenger (1991) décrivant l'apprentissage situé (situated learning) il est possible de distinguer une première phase de l'apprentissage dans laquelle l'apprentie néophyte occupe une « participation périphérique légitime », réalisant des tâches consignées, avant de prendre un rôle plus proactif. Nous supposons qu'il en va de même pour les actes langagiers dans le cadre participatif d'un apprentissage en entreprise. Dans les quatre séquences que nous analysons, l'acte langagier de l'apprentie consiste à accepter/refuser la proposition du chef (deuxième partie de la paire question-réponse si l'on se réfère à la grammaire interactionnelle) Or, dans la quatrième séquence, nous voyons que c'est CUI qui propose un café à CHEF (avant que celui-ci ne propose à son tour à APP), un acte qui selon nous mérite d'être souligné. Il faut s'intéresser au statut de CUI au sein de l'entreprise pour en comprendre la valeur. Également en apprentissage dans le restaurant, non seulement il est en BP⁴, mais il a aussi réalisé son CAP dans ce restaurant l'année précédente. En outre, il est tout comme APP apprenant de FLE. Au bout d'un an et demi passé dans l'entreprise, et y ayant validé un premier niveau de qualification, sa participation aurait donc gagné en légitimité, l'autorisant par exemple à prendre la posture de celui qui propose un café. L'observation de cet acte de langage permet également d'illustrer le fait que, par le gain de compétence à la fois professionnelle et langagière, la palette d'actes langagiers possibles s'étend.

Quant à CHEF, il joue le chef d'orchestre. En effet l'observation de notre corpus OUI-CHEF nous fait constater que :

- il a « l'initiative discursive » : c'est surtout lui qui produit les ouvertures ;
- il parle plus que les autres interactants ;
- il assume une plus grande part de responsabilité dans la réussite de l'échange.

Si ces trois constats se vérifient aussi dans les extraits de notre sous-corpus « Café », c'est sur le dernier que nous allons porter notre attention.

⁴ Le BP est le Brevet Professionnel, un niveau de diplôme professionnel supérieur au CAP (ici BP Art de la cuisine)

2.3.2. *Bricolage interactionnel et co-construction d'un répertoire de ressources évolutif*

Dans le premier extrait, on observe les efforts d' « aide à l'encodage » ou de facilitation du « travail interactif du partenaire » (Vion, 1992, p. 255) produits par CHEF : structuration des contenus, reprises et reformulations, traductions, gestes.

Lors de sa première répétition de la question, CHEF produit une reprise en la segmentant avec la prosodie, une adaptation doublée d'un effort d'articulation, qui relève selon nous du *foreigner talk*, une modulation de la production langagière du locuteur natif destinée à en faciliter la compréhension par le locuteur non natif.

On observe aussi l'utilisation de l'anglais, qui a servi d'abord à s'assurer que la question est comprise par APP (« *do you understand ?* ») puis à faire comprendre la question originale (« *do you want some coffee?* »). Dès que la compréhension est établie, CHEF reprend l'usage du français, même pour formuler une nouvelle question (« petit grand ? »). Cet emploi semble plutôt conférer à l'anglais la forme de « langue passerelle » (Forlot, 2014) au service de l'acquisition de français comme langue additionnelle pour APP.

C'est aussi ce que laisse penser la reprise en français de l'énoncé initial « est-ce que tu veux un café » après que sa compréhension a été attestée. Nous faisons l'hypothèse qu'avec cette occurrence CHEF occupe son rôle d'informant linguistique, la reprise en français visant alors l'acquisition par APP de cette forme particulière. C'est le fait de la reprise à l'identique de la construction grammaticale du premier énoncé (« est-ce que tu veux un café ») qui nous fait préférer cette hypothèse. En outre, cette reprise à visée didactique (acquisition linguistique) a davantage de sens que cet acte de langage est susceptible de se reproduire à maintes reprises à l'avenir dans le contexte interactionnel long de la formation (a minima 800 heures soit 133 jours de formation en entreprise environ).

Cette observation nous amène à souligner que l'analyse comparée des quatre séquences permet d'entrevoir la temporalité de la « production-réception » comme celle qui « *fonde en effet la mobilisation des ressources linguistiques dans les pratiques des locuteurs et permet de concevoir ces ressources* » (Mondada, 2012, p. 5). En effet, la première interaction de la proposition de café permet à CHEF de se représenter l'interlangue (Selinker, 1972) de APP, donc en quelque sorte de concevoir les acquis/non-acquis de APP et d'adapter son discours en fonction. C'est ce qui pourrait expliquer la rapide reformulation de la structure interrogative « est-ce que tu veux ? » en « tu veux ? ».

Par la même, il place ces éléments linguistiques en objets d'apprentissage (qui s'incarne, par exemple, dans la répétition finale de l'énoncé « est-ce que tu veux un café »), cela dans le but supposé d'assurer le principe de progressivité

(Mondada, 2012). Si le principe de progressivité est d'ordinaire employé pour décrire le niveau micro de l'interaction, nous proposons ici de l'appliquer à la temporalité élargie d'une histoire conversationnelle projetée, c'est-à-dire à venir, dans l'esprit des participants.

C'est ici, nous semble-t-il, que le rôle d'informant linguistique qu'investit le MAP dans la formation de son apprentie se distingue du rôle du formateur en FLE : dans le contexte de la formation en entreprise l'efficacité de l'activité professionnelle est directement subordonnée à l'acquisition langagière de l'apprentie. Cet aspect nous invite à penser le rôle d'informant linguistique comme se greffant au rôle du MAP tout comme le rôle du MAP se greffe au rôle de chef de cuisine. Le rôle d'IL (rôle situationnel) incombe d'autant plus à CHEF qu'il occupe le rôle de MAP (rôle institutionnel) impliquant la responsabilité, certes partagée avec l'apprentie, de la réussite de la formation professionnelle.

C'est pourquoi la première séquence café présente une mobilisation de ressources importantes et variées par les participants, et notamment par CHEF : des reprises et reformulations, deux vérifications de compréhension, une traduction, une gestuelle métaphorique, des modulations prosodiques. Cela a pour conséquence de créer une rupture dans l'activité. APP s'interrompt pour comprendre, se retourne, se déplace, lâche son ustensile, tandis que CHEF prend le temps de construire l'intercompréhension. La comparaison avec la deuxième séquence est sans équivoque : l'activité n'y est aucunement interrompue, APP répondant à CHEF sans même le regarder, maintenant la concentration sur sa tâche. Cela nous permet de conclure que APP comprend tout de suite l'acte de proposition de café, ce qui sous-entend l'acquisition de l'acte langagier. D'ailleurs, on retrouve dans cette séquence l'interrogation « petit grand ? » à laquelle APP répond également immédiatement (« grand »), révélant cette fois l'acquisition d'un terme qui était objet d'apprentissage dans la première séquence. Le geste « petit grand » a permis cette acquisition lexicale et c'est grâce (entre autres) à cette partie de l'histoire conversationnelle que le geste crucial en 'café 1' devient superflu en 'café 2'. En effet en 'café 2', aucune ressource mimo-gestuelle n'est mobilisée. Il semble que, en l'absence de besoin de telles ressources pour l'intercompréhension, l'activité de travail prime sur l'activité interactionnelle. C'est du moins ce que laisse penser cette séquence, foncièrement plus courte et moins complexe (deux paires de question-réponse consécutives, un seul code linguistique, pas de gestes ni de mimiques) que la première.

En somme, il apparaît que, après un enrichissement des ressources liées à une médiation importante du chef, l'acte, routinisé, est simplifié en vue de l'efficacité de l'interaction en situation de travail.

Les ressources que les interactantes mobilisent pour se comprendre, et en vue de mener à bien les buts de formation et de travail, forment leur bagage de connaissances commun qui se consolide tout au long de leur histoire conversationnelle. Si l'on reconnaît l'importance de cette histoire dans l'attribution du sens par les interactantes, est-il alors légitime d'isoler des séquences pour son analyse, pour nous qui observons et tentons d'analyser l'interaction, mais qui accédons à une infime portion de cette histoire ? Nous ne prétendons pas répondre à cette interrogation, déjà soulevée par Vion (1992), de même que nous continuerons à nous interroger sur la valeur de nos analyses réalisées à partir de données lacunaires (absence de données de certains regards et gestes avec l'angle de captation pour l'ensemble du sous-corpus « café », segments impossibles à transcrire, etc.) ou inégales (absence de données du langage mimo-gestuel et proxémique pour « café 3 » et un segment de « café 4 »). Mais il semble que l'on a pu tirer de la comparaison de ces quelques séquences une meilleure compréhension du fonctionnement de l'interaction maître-apprentie en situation de travail-formation exolingue.

Conclusion

Nous avons pu voir dans cette étude en quoi les effets de corpus enrichissent les micro-analyses. C'est grâce à la perspective longitudinale que nous pouvons constater une évolution dans la forme d'un acte de langage – le chef propose à l'apprentie un café – répété au sein d'une histoire conversationnelle.

Ainsi la première occurrence, en tout début de formation, est fortement multimodale (expressions faciales, gestes, postures, regards) et particulièrement médiée par le maître d'apprentissage (reprises et reformulations, usage de l'anglais, gestuelle), puis les occurrences suivantes montrent une économie de ressources langagières au profit de l'activité de travail, mais aussi le réinvestissement d'un répertoire langagier commun (« petit ou grand »). A partir de l'observation de la négociation du contrat interactif, et de la forme du « bricolage interactionnel », nous voyons qu'à la responsabilité de l'apprentie-apprenante d'apprendre, se dégage en miroir la responsabilité pour le maître d'apprentissage de faciliter l'intercompréhension. Et, à mesure que s'accroît l'acquisition par l'apprentie de la langue française, langue utilisée sur le lieu de travail, décroît la tâche de médiation langagière opérée par le maître d'apprentissage.

Nous avons également mis en évidence l'interrelation entre l'acte langagier, les compétences langagières soutenues par les compétences linguistiques, et les compétences professionnelles, qui délimitent les rôles et par là même la

légitimité de la production de l'acte : l'apprenti confirmé peut initier une proposition de café quand l'apprentie novice se contente d'accepter l'offre. C'est donc par le biais de l'analyse interactionnelle qu'un acte langagier a priori anodin se trouve a posteriori révélateur des enjeux de rôles et de places liés aux compétences langagières sur le lieu de travail.

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RETHINKING (DIS)FLUENCY WITHIN THE SCOPE OF INTERACTIONAL LINGUISTICS AND GESTURE STUDIES

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ABSTRACT. The study of so-called ‘disfluency’ phenomena (*uh* and *um*, filled and unfilled pauses, self-repairs and the like) has gained a lot of attention in various fields in linguistics in the past few decades, but a majority of studies tend to be production-oriented and often disregard fundamental aspects of face-to-face communication such as interactional dynamics and gesture. This paper presents a multimodal and multilevel model of “inter-fluency”, considering different levels of analysis, mainly, talk, gesture, and interaction, by combining different theoretical frameworks and methodologies in gesture studies and interactional linguistics in order to bridge this gap and go beyond previous cognitive-oriented models.

Keywords: Interaction, fluency, gesture, multimodality, interactive model

Introduction

The study of so-called ‘disfluency’ phenomena (i.e. the study of self-repairs, repetitions, “uh” and “um”, pauses etc.) has received a lot of attention in the past sixty years within a variety of research fields, from psycholinguistics (Levelt, 1983; Shriberg, 1994) to conversation analysis (Sacks et al., 1974), but there is a lack of consensus regarding the definition and use of terms. In the fields of psycholinguistics and phonetics, the term ‘disfluency’ is commonly associated with speech disturbances, disruptions, or errors (Ferreira & Bailey, 2004; Mahl, 1956), while in conversation analysis, most authors use the term “repair” (Sacks et al., 1974) to refer to systematic

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practices in interaction. The issue, I will argue, is mostly theoretical. Most studies conducted in the field of disfluency in psycholinguistics tend to be largely production-oriented, mostly based on speech production models at the utterance level (Levelt, 1989). Studies in conversation analysis and interactional linguistics, however, focus exclusively on features of talk-in-interaction such as preference structure (Stivers & Robinson, 2006; Yule, 1996), stance-taking (Kärkkäinen, 2006), or participation framework (Goodwin, 2007), among others. The aim of this paper is to offer an integrated model of fluency which goes beyond production-oriented views of ‘disfluency’ phenomena by combining different approaches and theoretical frameworks, such as gesture studies, multimodality, and interactional linguistics. This paper further presents a unified view of fluency and disfluency phenomena, hence *(dis)fluency* (Crible et al., 2019) as highly complex constructs revolving around multiple processes at the same time which are in constant *interaction* with one another. As this paper will show, the concept of fluency should not be restricted to one view or one model, which invites us to consider it from different dimensions of language (speech, gesture, and interaction) as deeply embedded within social structures, hence going beyond production-oriented approaches isolated from larger interactional contexts.

This paper is structured as follows: I first provide a brief overview of production-oriented models of disfluency as largely defined in the fields of psycholinguistics and phonetics, then review other theoretical frameworks relevant to the study of (dis)fluency but which offer additional dimensions; I then present an integrated framework of *inter-fluency* which combines these different approaches, and illustrate its application with an example taken from a corpus of audio-visual data analyzed with specific tools. Lastly, I conclude this paper with a discussion around the concept of interaction and its definition, as well as its major role in the study of (dis)fluency. The present work is largely based on Kosmala (2021b) but this paper focuses more specifically on the concept of *interaction*, whether it is to describe the role of intersubjectivity in *talk-in-interaction*, or to highlight the *interaction* and *interrelation* between the different modalities and dimensions of language within the study of fluency.

Production-oriented models of disfluency

In the field of psycholinguistics, the study of disfluency, or *speech errors* (see Levelt, 1983, 1989; Menn & Dronkers, 2016) has mainly been concerned with the analysis of utterance surface structures according to speech production models which identify different mental operations at different stages of execution or

production¹. When speaking, the primary goal for speakers is to produce maximally acceptable speech in both content and form (Hieke, 1981, p. 150) which compels them to monitor their own speech by following different steps, such as message construction, formulation, and articulation (Levelt, 1983). A number of researchers have been interested in sudden breaks or changes in the monitoring process, in other words, when “speech breaks down” (Lickley, 2015, p. 12): whenever the speaker detects an error in the speech apparatus. This process is commonly identified as a departure, or shift from an *ideal fluent delivery* (Ferreira & Bailey, 2004) known as *disfluency*. Researchers in psycholinguistics and phonetics have thus been interested in the structure of disfluent speech events, and have identified several parts, or regions, illustrated in the figure below, taken from Shriberg (1994, p. 8).

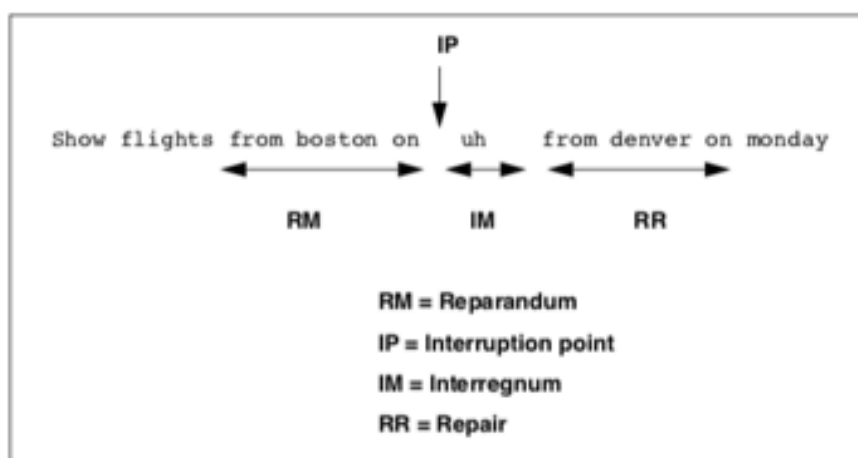


Figure 1. Disfluency Regions (Shriberg, 1994)

First, the *reparandum* region shows the item that needs to be repaired. This region ends at the *interruption point* (or *suspension point*), the point in which the speech flow breaks down. It is then followed by the *editing phase* (also called *interregnum*, or *hiatus*) defined as “the time interval between the point of suspension of fluent speech and the point of its resumption” (Clark, 2006, p. 245). This time interval can be empty, or contain a silent or filled pause. When the interregnum is filled, the utterance does not necessarily have to be followed by a disruption, but

¹ Extensive work has also been conducted on L2 fluency (e.g. De Jong, 2018; Gilquin, 2008; Götz, 2013, among others), which is not the primary focus of this paper, although it has also been included in the present inter-fluency model. Read Kosmala 2021a for more information.

can be resumed with no repair (*suspensive interruption*). However, in some cases, a repair (or *reparans*) does occur (*disfluent interruption*), which will then lead to the *resumption* of fluency (i.e. the fluent delivery).

Let us now illustrate this model with an utterance taken from the SITAF Corpus (Horgues & Scheuer, 2015) which has been analyzed in detail in previous work on disfluency (Betz & Kosmala, 2019; Kosmala, 2021b, 2021a; Kosmala et al., 2019).

*but I'm not sure (be)cause here um (0.768) [!]
here (0.898) if you:u uh I ain't got the w word*

This utterance is taken from a native French speaker talking in her second language (more details will be provided in the following sections) who appears to be experiencing difficulties in her speech production. An expert in disfluency research would commonly make the following observations regarding the number and types of disfluencies in this segment (two repetitions, two filled pauses, two silent pauses, one tongue click, one syllable prolongation etc) and where they are located in this utterance (between the *Reparandum* and *Repair* at the *interruption point* within the *Interregnum*). Drawing from this type of analysis, we can make the preliminary assumption that this particular speaker is highly *disfluent*, given the number of disfluencies found in her speech. This could be related to many cognitive processes, such as difficulties in grammatical encoding or lexical access in her second language (Hartsuiker & Notebaert, 2009; Hilton, 2008), or it could reflect stress and anxiety (Christenfeld & Creager, 1996). This type of analysis has been conducted for years within the fields of psycholinguistics, phonetics, and computational linguistics to understand how spoken speech production systems work, with applications in speech modelling and human-machine dialogue (Betz et al., 2018; Eklund, 2004; Eklund & Shriberg, 1998).

However, this type of analysis does not give us the full picture. Most analyses conducted in disfluency research are based on decontextualized utterances and focus exclusively on processing and planning processes associated with their production, but we rarely get to see their pragmatic and interpersonal dimension in larger interactional contexts (except for a few, see Allwood et al., 1990; McCarthy, 2009; Tottie, 2014, among others). There are even fewer studies which address the role of gesture and gaze with regards to disfluency (except for a few, Seyfeddinipur, 2006; Graziano & Gullberg, 2013; Tellier et al., 2013; read Kosmala 2021a for review). In addition, there are several underlying problems with the term “disfluency” (read Kosmala, 2021b for a full review) which presupposes a

disruption, or a problem to be repaired; yet so-called disfluencies are a highly natural aspect of spontaneous talk, as they are said to occur at the rate of six to ten per hundred words (Bortfeld et al., 2001; Dollaghan & Campbell, 1992; Fox Tree, 1995; Shriberg, 1994). The term “disfluency” thus stems from the monolithic and mythical assumption that a speaker is either “fluent” or “disfluent” or that a structure either reflects “fluency” or “disfluency”. But language represents so much more than a binary opposition or a series of words in decontextualized utterances; it is an embodied experience, grounded in our overall environment comprised of our own bodies, our movement in space, and our *interaction* with the people and objects around us. The present work thus stresses the need to situate (dis)fluency phenomena within a larger interactional and multimodal framework, going beyond previous production-oriented models of disfluency.

Beyond the production model: the interplay of speech, gesture, and interaction

In this view, (dis)fluency should not be solely regarded as a mental process, isolated from other visible cues in interaction, but as a multimodal process which includes all semiotic features of language (the stream of speech, hand gestures, body posture and orientation, gaze behavior), following the frameworks of interactional linguistics, gesture studies and multimodality.

Interactional linguistics is an interdisciplinary framework which brings together a growing community of linguists who are interested in studying many aspects of grammar and prosody from a specific interactional approach. One of its major theoretical influences (among two others, read Couper-Kuhlen & Selting, 2001) is *Conversation Analysis* (CA; Sacks et al., 1974) which introduced major analytic tools for the study of social interaction, through qualitative micro-analyses of talk-in-interaction (i.e. naturally occurring speech in every day conversation, cf. Schegloff, 1991). CA regards interaction as “the home environment of language”, (Sidnell, 2016, p. 2) an orderly, interactionally managed system, whereby norms and practices are shaped by speakers’ actions. Actions refer to what the co-participants of a conversation are doing interactionally in relation to one another (Pomerantz & Fehr, 2011; Schegloff, 1996). In other words, the act of speaking does not only involve the individual productions of one speaker, but its coordination and cooperation with other participants of a conversation within turns. Sacks et al., (1974)’s seminal paper, entitled *A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation* sketched out some of the fundamental aspects underlying

the construction of talk-in-interaction, and demonstrated the way speakers, when engaged in ordinary, everyday practices, co-produce stretches of talk in orderly ways, which can be subject to detailed qualitative analyses. As Schegloff (1991) further argued, the expression of messages in specific linguistic forms (i.e. utterances) does not result from mental cognitive processes, but is shaped by the orderly structure of the interaction. Another major contribution is found in the field of social interaction and linguistic anthropology, and more specifically in the work of C. Goodwin and M.H. Goodwin (Goodwin, 1981, 2003, 2017; Goodwin & Goodwin, 1986, 1996, 2004) who studied embodied participation frameworks (initially introduced by Goffman, 1981). Participation refers to “action demonstrating forms of involvement performed by parties within evolving structures of talk” (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004, p. 222). Within this framework, the focus is essentially on two interactive practices, mainly (1) how participants orient themselves in ways relevant to the activities they are engaged in, and (2) how situated analysis of an emerging course of action shapes the further development of action (Goodwin & Heritage, 1990, p. 292). In this respect, participation is viewed as a “situated, multi-party accomplishment” (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004, p. 231), in which the status of the participants (e.g. speaker or hearer, addressee or recipient etc. cf. Goodwin & Heritage, 1990) can shift depending on the organization of particular situated activities (e.g. assessment, topic initiation, story preface). In addition, the participation framework is established through the alignment of the participant’s *bodies*, who can make use of hand gestures to build an embodied action during the course of the talk (Kendon, 2004). Speakers thus have a multiplicity of semiotic resources at their disposal, co-deployed altogether to build actions oriented to the hearers, and which are all relevant to the ongoing situated activity. The speakers’ deployment of multiple semiotic resources for building action is hence another central aspect of the interactionist approach to social interaction, which leads us to the field of gesture studies and multimodality.

In the past few decades, the study of what has commonly been labeled “nonverbal” or “non-linguistic” communication has increasingly become a central interest of research among scholars in various disciplines (e.g. cognitive linguistics, psycholinguistics, linguistics anthropology, interactional linguistics). With the rise of interactionist approaches to social interaction who started working on video recordings of everyday interactions, new perspectives emerged for studying language practices as embodied within their social, material, and spatial environment. This includes the study of gesture, gaze, head movements, facial expressions, body movements, as well as the manipulation of external objects in the environment (cf. Boutet, 2018; Goodwin, 2003; Morgenstern & Boutet, forth.; Streeck et al., 2011).

The term *multimodality*, which has become an overarching term in the field of interaction studies and gesture studies, refers to the plurality of communication channels and modalities deployed in interaction. It is defined as “the various resources mobilized by participants for organizing their action – such as gesture, gaze, facial expressions, body postures, body movements, and also prosody, lexis and grammar” (Mondada, 2016, p. 337). Stivers & Sidnell (2005) further distinguished between the vocal-aural and the visual-spatial modalities of face-to-face multimodal communication: the vocal modality includes the lexico-syntactic channel (e.g. work on lexical items such as “okay”), as well as the prosodic channel (e.g. upward or downward intonation, prosodic contour), and the visuo-spatial modality includes the study of visible behavior, such as hand gestures, gaze, and body orientation within the spatial environment. Extensive work has also been done on the classification of hand gestures (read Kendon, 2004; Ferré, 2019; and Kosmala, 2021b for review) which can be analyzed on the basis of their form (handshape, orientation, execution etc.) or function in discourse (pragmatic versus referential). More recently, a closely related framework has emerged, known as *Analyse de Discours Multimodale* (Analysis of Multimodal Discourse, Ferré, 2019) which integrates visible, verbal and vocal resources specifically within the area of discourse analysis. Speech is further subdivided into the verbal mode (discourse at the segmental level), the vocal mode (at the suprasegmental level) and the gestural mode.

In this view, speech cannot be separated from its context of occurrence, which is constantly being (re)-shaped by speakers’ actions within the ongoing interaction, and interaction is not exclusively built by speech, but by a combination of semiotic features which are harmoniously coordinated within the materiality of the exchange. This further invites us to reconsider the concept of fluency, based on these different frameworks: while studies in so-called “disfluency” phenomena seem in contradiction with the tenants of interactionist studies, I believe that they could supplement one another as to provide a richer and more complex picture of the phenomena under study. It is not surprising to note that the term “disfluency” is virtually excluded from all researchers’ analyses in interactional linguistics, given what the term entails. Interactional linguists have opted for terms such as “repair” (Goodwin & Goodwin, 2004; Schegloff et al., 1977), although homonymous with the one used by psycholinguist Levelt (1983), has entirely different implications, as it is said to be “neither contingent upon error, nor limited to replacement” (Schegloff et al., 1977, p. 363). The aim of this paper is therefore to bridge the gap between production-based psycholinguistic studies conducted on “disfluency” and interactional, multimodal approaches to social interaction.

Towards an integrated framework of inter-fluency

The present model invites us to reconsider fluency from multiple dimensions (also see Canda, 2000; Grosman, 2018; Segalowitz, 2016) situated within a larger integrative framework. The concept of *fluency* is not restricted to the notions of ideal delivery or second language proficiency, but is understood in broader terms such as “communicativeness” “smoothness” “fluidity” “progressivity” and “flow” which can all be applied respectively to: (1) speech production (i.e. flow of speech), (2) interaction (i.e. fluidity and progressivity of the exchanges), and (3) gestures (i.e. gestural and body flow). Following McCarthy’s (2009) notion of *confluence*, which focuses on the co-creation of fluency, I have proposed the term *inter-fluency*², with the prefix “inter” to draw a parallel to the notions of intersubjectivity, interpersonal relations, and interaction. In addition, the prefix *inter* further symbolizes the constant ongoing interaction between the different dimensions of fluency, exemplified in the figure below.

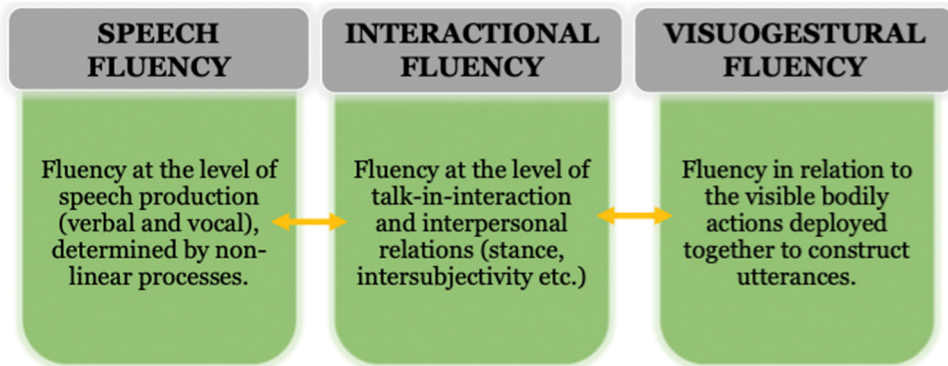


Figure 2. Multidimensional model of inter-fluency (Kosmala, 2021b, p. 96)

² In my PhD dissertation (Kosmala, 2021b) I discuss the terminology in detail regarding the use of terms ‘disfluency’ versus ‘fluency’ or ‘(dis)fluency’. The term ‘(dis)fluency’ is also sometimes used in this paper as a reference to Crible et al.’s (2019) work who focused on the dynamic, flexible and ambivalent nature of these processes, also used extensively in Kosmala (2021b). This paper aims to gradually remove the ‘dis’ from ‘disfluency’ which remains too closely associated with disruptive features of speech that are negatively connotated.

This model comprises three different dimensions. First, the *speech* dimension (equivalent to Segalowitz's (2006) *utterance fluency*) is restricted to the level of speech production (verbal and vocal) which takes into account morphosyntactic and temporal features of speech, in line with previous psycholinguistic models. The second dimension, the *interactional* dimension (similar to Grosman's (2008) *socio-interpersonal dimension*) further includes the situated conversation languages practices at play, and the *visuogestural* dimension (which echoes Götz's (2013) *nonverbal fluency*) considers visible bodily behavior during utterance construction. The term "utterance" here is not only restricted to the speech level, as it follows Kendon's acceptance, defined as the following: "the ensemble of actions, whether composed of speech alone, of visible action alone, or a combination of the two" (Kendon, 2004, p. 111). In addition, the term "fluenceme" is adopted in this model, following Götz (2013) to replace the phrase "disfluency marker".

In sum, the present definition of inter-fluency involves multiple dimensions that are not mutually exclusive, but interactively complementing one another in the course of the interaction. In some contexts, a verbal utterance that is considerably highly "disfluent" in the speech flow will not necessarily impede the interactional flow of the multimodal interaction; in other contexts, however, the presence of a single fluenceme may potentially disrupt the progressivity of an interactional sequence (e.g. with turn-initial uhms displaying a dispreferred action, see Hoey, 2014; Yule, 1996). This is exemplified in the following section.

Methodology and tools

Let us now illustrate this model with an excerpt from a videotaped corpus, initially presented in the first section. This excerpt, as explained earlier, is taken from the SITAF Corpus (Horgues & Scheuer, 2015) which includes face-to-face interactions between tandem partners at Sorbonne Nouvelle University alternatively speaking in their L1 and their L2, in French and English. The following excerpt shows an entire interactional sequence, using multimodal transcription conventions (cf. Appendix) between a French speaker (Elena) and an American speaker (Francis), who are talking about the prices of tuition fees at university (also analyzed in Kosmala, 2021a).

Excerpt: Tandem interaction in French

- 1 *ELEN: but I [/] I'm not sure (be)cause here um (0.768) [!] [/] here (0.889) if you:u uh I ain't got the w word here ((thinking face a.)) ((looks up; smiles b.))



a. here (.) if you:u uh b. I ain't got the w word here

eh hhh. um if the <state> didn't ((looks towards Francis))

- 2 *FRAN: +< mm mm. ((head nod))

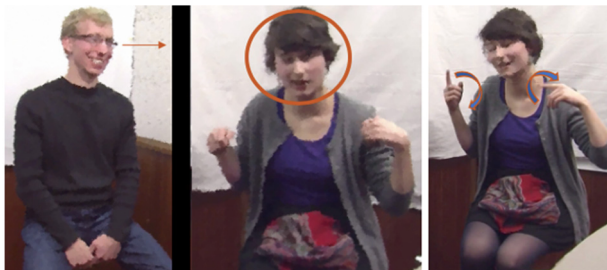
- 3 *ELEN: give you som:me do(llars) don do xxx +//. ((thinking face c.))

*ELEN: ((smiles))

- 4 *FRAN: I repeat.

((cyclic gesture+ eyes closed d.))

- 5 *ELEN: if the state doesn't give you money. ((looks towards Francis))



c. som:me do don xx

d. I repeat

- 6 *FRAN: mm mm.

- 7 *ELEN: you have to pay uh four hundred (0.569) euros for a year.
but I don't.
- 8 *FRAN: mm mm.
- 9 *ELEN: so to me [//] for me it's free.
- 10 *FRAN: yeah.
- 11 *ELEN: a:and my teachers are (0.632) really great so (0.735) +...
- 12 *ELEN: I don't think that you have to pay to have a great education.
- 13 *FRAN: four hundred euros a year man.

As stated in the first section of the paper, Elena is experiencing a number of lexical and grammatical difficulties in her second language, which makes her verbal utterances highly “disfluent” from a strictly verbal perspective. However, unlike the isolated utterance presented earlier, this excerpt shows us that fluency mechanisms do not operate on a single level but on several interrelated ones, which are not restricted to the speech dimension. Here Elena is enacting a lexical search activity by coordinating vocal fluencemes and bodily actions which enable her to project the current progressivity of her search. As she is trying to make a point (that students don't have to pay a lot of tuition fees to get good education) she first displays a state of uncertainty with a *thinking face* (Goodwin & Goodwin, 1986; picture a.), while suspending the course of her utterance, which makes her word search explicit. She makes her current activity even more visible and almost theatrical by raising her head, looking up, and smiling (picture b.), as if the words were going to fall from the sky. She then initiates a new segment “if the state” (turn 1) and gazes towards her partner to display her tentative lexical retrieval success, but then produces a series of truncated words (turn 2) accompanied by a second thinking face which makes her abandon her current utterance and start a new one (“I repeat”) which states her current re-adjustment towards the completion of the segment (“if the state doesn't give you money”). This re-adjustment is also embodied in a cyclic gesture, in which both hands are rotating as to convey the process of starting over (picture d.). Her tandem partner, Francis, seems to attend to her actions attentively, as he coordinates his behavior with her by punctuating the interaction with several backchanneling devices and tokens of agreement (“yeah” “mm” and head nods) without interrupting her. It is only after the completion of Elena's lexical search activity that he shifts his participation status of “hearer” from “speaker” (Goodwin, 1980), and makes an assessment (“four hundred euros a year man”, turn 13). In sum, while Elena's utterances are highly “disfluent” from a strictly verbal perspective, it doesn't stop her from pursuing her word search activity without her partner's assistance. She also actively provided information

about the progress of her search, from verbally expressing her uncertainty (turn 1) to re-shaping the outcome of the search with a self-interruption following her production difficulties (turn 3).

This example highlights the interactional dimension of fluency, which does not solely reflect online cognitive processes, but also relies on participation and cooperation, in line with the frameworks of Interactional Linguistics. This novel approach to inter-fluency can be analyzed with different tools, adopting previous annotation systems conducted on (dis)fluency (Crible et al., 2019; Pallaud et al., 2019) combined with conversation-analytic methods to social interaction (Sacks et al., 1974) as well as gestural notation systems (Kendon, 2004). All these analyses were conducted using the annotation software ELAN (Sloetjes & Wittenburg, 2008) which is a multilayer and multipurpose annotation tool developed at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics to provide a technological basis for the annotation of multi-media recordings. Therefore, this type of analysis favors audio-visual data in spontaneous, naturalistic and ecological settings within situated and social activities, known as *talk-in-interaction*. Three essential analytic orientations emerge from this conversation-analytic approach to interaction (Atkinson et al., 2002, p. 204): first, talk and bodily behavior are the primary “vehicles through which people accomplish social activities and events”; secondly, the significance of the participants’ social activities is contingent on their immediate context, as they progressively shape it moment by moment; thirdly, participants rely on social practices to make sense of their actions and of others’, which are accomplished through the deployment of multiple semiotic modalities. In a similar vein, gestural actions also pertain to the ecologies of their neighboring environment: they can project a turn or an action, and provide co-participants with a “forward understanding”; an anticipation of what will come next (Streeck, 2010, p. 228).

In a previous corpus-based study (Kosmala, 2021b), the present methodology was applied to two videotaped corpora, the SITAF Corpus (mentioned earlier) and the DisReg Corpus (Kosmala, 2020) which includes recordings of French students engaged in two different communication settings, during individual class presentations, and in pairs during a conversational talk. These two datasets were chosen for their multimodal quality as well as their ecology; they share a similar set of features as they both include semi-realistic situations of students interacting within a shared institutional and social environment, the university. Therefore, this allows for an efficient and reliable quantitative treatment of the corpus sample (following corpus-based analyses, e.g. Crible et al., 2019) as well as micro-qualitative analyses of the data (following conversation-analytic methods, e.g. Sacks et al., 1974). These two corpora also capture different interactive situations (tandem exchange, conversation between friends, and individual oral presentations) during which students are

engaged in different tasks across different settings and languages. Several recurrent interactive multimodal practices were identified in the corpus study, which further provides an interactive frame for the analysis of fluency.

Discussion

The aim of the present model is to offer a multidimensional account of fluency phenomena, going beyond previous cognitive-oriented models of speech production and integrating other theoretical frameworks which consider talk from a multimodal and interactional perspective. Several assumptions or questions emerge from this interactional approach:

- Disfluency phenomena should not solely be regarded in terms of a binary opposition between “fluency” and “disfluency, but rather as a multi-level embodiment of the notion fluidity and flow.
- Fluency may result from two systems of communication, interactive communication management, and own communication management (following Allwood, 2017). In this sense, inter-fluency does not only reflect internal cognitive processes, but also exhibit essential features of talk-in-interaction. The present model suggests that these different dimensions should work together and include visible bodily behavior to capture the complexity of human interaction.
- Fluencemes are merely “disfluency markers” indexing a suspension point in the speech flow, they are highly flexible and dynamic categories which are shaped by their context of use. Context is understood here in terms of (1) the immediate neighboring environment of the fluencemes, (2) the syntactic position of fluencemes within the verbal utterance, (3) their sequential position within a turn; (4) their co-occurrence with bodily actions, (5) the situated language activity speakers are currently engaged in, and (6) the overall material environment, i.e. the objects they are manipulating.
- Speakers continuously adjust their body and talk for the co-participants of the exchange and rely on a multiplicity of semiotic resources and diverse media to build meaning in interaction.

Appendix

Transcription conventions for fluencemes and gestures
based on CHAT and CA conventions.

CHAT conventions (MacWhinney, 2000)	
+/	interruption by other participant
+//	self-interruption
[/]	word repetition
[//]	self-repair
+...	trailing off
(0.250)	unfilled pause (number in milliseconds)
wo:rd	prolonged vowel or consonant
+< >	overlapping talk
(a)bout	shortenings
+/ +"/.	quoted utterance
xxx	unintelligible words
CA conventions (Jefferson, 2004)	
[!]	tongue click
.hhh	inbreath
hhh	outbreath
creaky	creaky voice
(())	description of events, or analyst's comment
Gesture annotation (Kendon, 2004)	
~ ~ ~	preparation of gesture stroke
***	gesture stroke
***	hold
-.-.-	return to rest position

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INTERACTION AND ITS FAILURES: AN APPROACH THROUGH EMBARRASSMENT AND SHAME*

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ABSTRACT. The present study is a theoretical and methodological proposal rooted in the field of social developmental psychology and describes three objectives. First, it aims to show how transgressive situations are conducive to study of social norms governing interactions. Second, the similarities and differences between two emotions, namely shame and embarrassment, are outlined in order to better understand how their respective measures can highlight social norms in interactions. Third, we illustrate our proposal to study social norms through emotional reactions by presenting an ongoing experiment, that examines how children may react to a power situation.

Key words: social norm; transgression; embarrassment; shame; power situations; mixed-gender interactions; children

1. Studying the contours of interactions through transgressions of social norms

1.1. Social norms: definitions and functions

The term *interaction* refers to “reciprocal influence that participants have on each other's actions when they are in physical presence” (Goffman, 1967). Far

* This work has been carried out within the framework of the ANR-21-ANR-21-CE28-0014 CHILD-GAP project supported by the French National Research Agency.

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from being random or arbitrary, an interaction is guided by *social norms* or *conventions*, namely, rules of socially valued behaviors or attitudes a given context (e.g., ways of speaking, dressing, using artifacts, etc.). Social norms play not only a *descriptive* role (i.e., as mere reflections of what is done, of what is taken for granted) but also a *prescriptive* one, as “compass for action”, by encouraging certain socially desirable behaviors and attitudes while discouraging others. Social norms invite group members to coordinate and to display their commitment to the group, and thus they aim to reduce interpersonal conflicts and facilitate a cooperative functioning (Rakoczy & Schmidt, 2013, 2016).

The ability to assimilate and enforce social norms emerges at an early age, not only when norms are perceived as legitimate and emanating from an already established social group, but also when they are perceived as new and arbitrary. For instance, Abrams and Rutland (2008) observed that children aged 9 to 11 judged peers (i.e., ingroup members) who deviate from group norms more negatively than outgroup deviants, and preferred outgroup children who condemn deviance over ingroup members who do it (“black sheep effect”). Moreover, when 3-year-olds were taught the rules of a new game and then watched a puppet playing the game without following the rules, they taught the puppet the right way to play (Rakoczy et al., 2008, 2009; Schmidt et al., 2011, 2012). Thus, even very young children are not merely passive targets of social norms, but they actively contribute to enforcing them.

1.2. Sanctions for transgressions

In everyday interactions, the behavioral guidance of norms is performed by social sanctions emanating from the other interactants. Sanctioning a deviant behavior allows one to: 1) show adherence to norms, in order to build a positive public image, and 2) reinforce the predictability and the controllability of conducts, thus stabilizing coordination and promoting cooperation (Rakoczy & Schmidt, 2013). These other interactants sanctions take the form of verbal and/or non-verbal behaviors: some sanctions are *positive* and approving, rewarding the exemplary compliance of normative behaviors (e.g., smiling, explicit or tacit acquiescence, etc.), while other sanctions are negative and disavowing, punishing the infraction in response to deviant behavior (e.g., admonishment, angry looks, etc.) (Goffman, 1967).

However, these two types of sanctions are not equally salient. For instance, in a Western country, a woman wearing a skirt and mascara is unlikely to elicit any particular reaction and is perceived as *normal*, while a man dressed in the same way is likely to elicit some negative and noticeable reactions (e.g., surprise, distrust,

outright hostility...). Similarly, positive sanctions in the course of an interaction can be considered as “bonuses” for adherence to social norms: they relentlessly support the course of the exchanges underpinning a fluid and predictable “expressive order” (Goffman, 1967), but go unnoticed. In the example above, compliance with a gendered dress code may sometimes elicit polite assent, but most of the time, this assent is completely invisible. Conversely, the reactions of disapproval that follow the transgression of a norm are salient, even voluntarily amplified to appear as conspicuous. Bystanders may blame the counter-normative behavior, express skepticism through mimicry, disappointment or disgust, to ostensibly disassociate themselves from the author, etc. These visible marks of disapproval are intended to deter the transgressor from reoffending and any witnesses from committing an infraction in turn. In this sense, the negative sanctions that follow deviant behavior contribute to informal social control (Chekroun, 2008).

The integration of norms and peer pressure in cases of deviance has been observed in very young children. The case of gender norms is particularly illustrative since their transgression is judged negatively even by preschoolers. For example, negative reactions to atypical behavior (e.g., refusing to be friends with a boy who wears nail polish) appear as early as age 3 and increase until age 5 (Stoddart & Turiel, 1985; Ruble et al., 2006, 2007). Moreover, social control by peers is itself gendered, since it is greater when: 1) it comes from male witnesses than from female witnesses (boys are often more negative about violations of gender norm than girls who have more egalitarian attitudes), and 2) the transgressor is a boy (e.g., Blakemore, 2003; Ruble, 2006). As in adults, it is likely that negative sanctions such as rejection or teasing are more visible than positive sanctions that reinforce gender-conforming behavior.

2. Embarrassment and shame as observable traces of emotional reactions to a transgression

2.1. Reflexive social emotions as integrated “thermostat” supporting the expressive order of interactions?

Disapproving witnesses often have no particular legitimacy to sanction (Osgood et al., 1996), but take on the temporary role of “Robin Hood” for the situation, becoming temporary vectors of informal social control. While effective in “bringing deviants into heel”, these types of negative sanctions require the active intervention of on-the-ground witnesses, making the process costly and relatively uncertain.

Indeed, witnesses may be inhibited or reluctant to act due to fear of retaliation, lack of resources, motivation, cognitive resources, or courage, etc. Moreover, the social control exercised by the witnesses necessarily acts “*downstream*”, once the infraction has been committed. To these *external* sanctions, *internal* sanctions must be added in order to optimize the maintenance of the expressive order. The interactants not only incorporate norms (among others in the form of *habitus*, Bourdieu, 1986), they also internalize *the penalizing potential that could result from their violation*. Thus, people tend not to deviate from the norm to avoid sanctions such as the fear of ridicule, which is quite mild, to social opprobrium, which can be much more harmful.

In addition, psychological and social motivations related to self-presentation, reputational concerns and impression management also encourage people to shape their own public image according to social norms. Indeed, human beings early 1) assume implicitly that their behavior or appearance could be evaluated by others positively or negatively, and 2) have a default preference to elicit positive instead of negative evaluations from others (Botto & Rochat, 2018, 2019). Consequently, they use reputational tactics like conforming to majority opinion (Haun & Tomassello, 2011), or appearing to be cooperative: for example, adults tend to be more generous in public compared to in private (Dana et al., 2007) and children become more altruistic when a third-party observer is watching them (i.e., sharing more resources, being more helpful, stealing less or cheating less; Engelmann et al., 2012; Leimgruber et al., 2012; Piazza et al., 2011; Shinohara et al., 2019, 2021). Both avoiding deviant conducts and building one’s positive public image are “*upstream*” self-regulation that contributes to informal social control, in addition to that exercised by others. Taken together, these mechanisms (i.e. reactive or “*downstream*” vs. preventive or “*upstream*”, originating from others vs. oneself) ensure an anticipatory filtering of counter-normative behaviors.

Nevertheless, these filtering mechanisms are not always sufficient to prevent certain deviations from occurring. Among internal mechanisms, in addition to *preventive* sanctions, some *reactive* sanctions, acting a posteriori (i.e., once the norm has been transgressed), are also necessary. To be effective, they must act quickly, almost automatically and in a way that is relevant to the situation. Certain emotions may play this “*thermostat*” role in any potential transgressor, allowing upstream self-regulation. For example, when pairs of 3-, 4- and 5-year-old children were confronted with a norm violation such as inequity in resource distribution, namely they receive either more or less stickers than their social partner, they expressed negative emotions, such as unhappiness (LoBue et al., 2010). Specifically, *reflexive social* emotions such as shame, guilt, pride or embarrassment, participate in early embodied social control (Semin & Papadopoulou, 1990). Indeed, it is well established that these

reflexive social emotions motivate strategies to avoid rejection and facilitate relational appeasement and social cohesion (e.g., Chobhthaigh & Wilson, 2015; Miller, 1996; Muris & Meesters, 2014). Children acquire these emotions later than basic emotions (happiness, fear, sadness, anger, surprise, disgust) which exist from the first year of life (e.g., Colonnesi et al., 2010; Lewis et al., 1992; Tangney & Dearing, 2002). Their development goes hand in hand with the acquisition of social norms, in a double movement. It is because children assimilate social norms that they are gradually able to evaluate their own behavior as deviant or not, and thus become capable of feeling shame or embarrassment when they transgress (or pride when their conduct is noticeably exemplar or conforms to the norm perceived as important). Moreover, it is also because shame and embarrassment are unpleasant that children internalize norms effectively. In line with the image proposed by Harris (2006), just as physical pain warns the organism of a threat to its physical integrity, shame and embarrassment are a kind of “social warning” that allows the maintenance of the individual's “social integrity”. In addition, their display after violating a norm communicates the transgressor’s knowledge of the violated norm and a submissive apology to appease others (Keltner, 1995; Tangney et al., 1996). In short, these painful emotions prevent deviance (upstream, with the avoidance of transgressions) or minimize it (downstream, with reparative behaviors and the message of “repentance” for one’s conduct expressed via the simple manifestation of one’s emotion).

2.2. Indicators of shame and embarrassment, emotions typical of public norm transgressions

When violating a norm, transgressors may react emotionally either to the violation itself or the sanctions from witnesses. Their emotional responses encompass a variety of observable states, ranging from simple clumsiness to an inability to express oneself. Among reflexive social emotions, embarrassment and shame are of particular interest for four reasons.

First, they always occur in front of a real or imaginary audience (e.g., Cova, 2019; Miller, 1996; Smith et al., 2002). Second, they result from a norm transgression. In the case of embarrassment, the infringed norm is a social convention: there is a discrepancy between the real image that one gives by one’s conduct and a status or a role that one is supposed to assume (for example, arriving in disguise at a party where no one else is, using familiar terms when talking to one’s superior). In the case of shame, a shortcoming contravenes a personal standard often associated with a real or projected status, that is damaged or lost (e.g., failing through incompetence in an oral presentation that is important to us) or a norm underpinned by moral values (e.g., allowing someone to be punished instead of oneself, laughing with

others at someone who is absent) (Lewis, 2008; Maire et al., 2019). Third, they are associated with an evaluation of the Self, either in its central aspects for shame, or in more peripheral ones for embarrassment. Since norms are incorporated, their violation could elicit emotional states related to self-evaluation and to the (in)adequacy to the ongoing interaction. Finally, these two emotions are not only felt, but they are also expressed. Their expression serves a communicative purpose, as they signal to others and adherence to group social and/or moral norms.

A key issue for interactants is to identify expressions of shame and embarrassment. Verbally, they are often exemplified by silence and show few typical manifestations, only some negative self-evaluations (e.g., “I’m no good at this” for shame), in contrast to positive self-evaluations for pride (e.g., “aah!”, “I did it!”) (Alessandri & Lewis, 1993, 1996; Edelman & Hampson, 1981; Lewis et al., 1992). In speech, embarrassment can be identified by paraverbal cues such as stuttering, an unusually low- or high-pitched voice, quavering or slurred speech, nervous laughter or giggling. Finally, shame and embarrassment share certain non-verbal displays: blushing, blanching, blinking, sweating, lowering of the eyes, gaze aversion, attempts to hide face bowing of the head, tremor of the hand and hesitating or vacillating movement (Botto & Rochat, 2018; Goffman, 1955, 1956; Keltner, 1995; Ogien, 2019; Rochat, 2009; Stipek et al., 1992; Tracy et al., 2009). However, embarrassment is characterized in adults by a dynamic and orderly 5-second sequence of downward gaze, head movement and a non-Duchenne, nervous, coy or silly smile, as well as increased body motion (Edelman & Hampson, 1981; Keltner, 1995). Nervous laughter and hands covering the mouth have been observed in young children (Buss et al., 1979). Shame, on the other hand, has a static and non-smiling display, with, in children, body collapsed, corners of the mouth downward, lower lip tucked between teeth, eyes lowered with gaze downward or askance, withdrawal from task situation (in contrast to pride, which is defined as erect posture with shoulders back and head up, smile, eyes directed at others, points at outcome or applauds; Alessandri & Lewis, 1993, 1996; Ferguson et al., 1991; Lewis et al., 1992). The main similarities and differences between shame and embarrassment are summarized in Table 1.

Thus, embarrassment and shame, insofar as they produce observable traces in the interaction which serve to signal to others that one has internalized the social norms, constitute indirect but effective means to study social norms. Since even young children know social norms and are able to express social reflexive emotions, below we propose to examine how they emotionally respond to a violation of a gender norm.

	Shame	Embarrassment	
Triggers	...underpinned by (global) moral values or personal standards	Public transgression (real or imagined) of a norm... ...linked to a (local) social convention	(Smith et al., 2002)
Link with the status in interaction	Associated with a loss of status	Associated with a change in status or with a counter-normative status	
Evaluation...	...of the core self	...of the presentation self	(Miller, 1996; Tangney & Dearing, 2002)
Age	From 3 years	<i>Primitive embarrassment (sensitive to an audience reaction): from 5 years</i> <i>Mature embarrassment (less sensitive to an audience reaction, resulting from a discrepancy between the desired self-image and the effective self-image): from 6 to 10 years?</i>	(Bennett, 1989; Chabbihaigh & Wilson, 2015; Colombesi et al., 2010; Lewis et al., 1992; Selinger et al., 1988)
Experience	Self-evaluation always negative: depression, regret, feeling of being worthless, incompetent, inferior or powerless	... often negative: feeling of being clumsy, awkward, unsuited to the situation, uncomfortable, unmasked	(Maire et al., 2019)
Verbal cues	Silence, little/no typical verbal expression <i>Negative self-evaluation de soi négative (e.g., "I'm no good at this")</i>	?	(Alessandri & Lewis, 1993, 1996; Buss et al., 1979; Edelman & Hampson, 1981; Ferguson et al., 1991; Lewis et al., 1992)
Paraverbal cues	?	Stuttering, quavering/disturbed speech or breaking of the voice, Unusually low- or high-pitched voice <i>Nervous laughter and giggling</i>	(Ferguson et al., 1991; Goffman, 1955; Keitner, 1995; Ogden, 2019; Tracy et al., 2009)
Non-verbal cues	Blushing, blanching, blinking, sweating, lowering of the eyes, gaze aversion, and hesitating or vacillating movement Static display No smile <i>Body collapsed, corners of the mouth downward/lower lip tucked between teeth, eyes lowered with gaze downward or askance, withdrawal from task situation</i>	attempts to hide face bowing of the head, tremor of the hand, Dynamic display in an ordered and brief sequence (coy, silly, non-Duchenne smile, head movement) <i>Nervous laugh and hands covering the mouth</i>	(Alessandri & Lewis, 1993, 1996; Baro & Rochat, 2018; Buss et al., 1979; Edelman & Hampson, 1981; Ferguson et al., 1991; Goffman, 1955; Keitner, 1995; Lewis et al., 1992; Selinger et al., 1988)
Interpersonal functions	Inhibition of morally undesirable/inappropriate behavior	Communication of adherence to social norms and a desire for appeasement	(Keitner, 1995; Tangney et al., 1996)

Table 1: Summary of similarities and differences regarding triggers, self-evaluation, age, associated experiences, interactional cues (verbal, paraverbal, nonverbal), and interpersonal functions of shame and embarrassment. *Items in italics refer to results obtained in children.*

3. Empirical proposal

3.1. Asymmetrical situations as highly normed situations useful to study the emotional reactions of a transgressor?

Although norms permeate social life from its inception, their influence on behavior varies according to context. Asymmetrical situations, in which an individual has power over another, may be good candidates to study norms transgressions, for at least three reasons. First, this type of interactions is often associated with highly codified communication rules, which make deviations from the norm very salient. Second, power relations often carry high stakes because they are often related to symbolic, economic or identity-related issues. As a result, actors may be particularly motivated to ensure that exchanges run smoothly, and therefore the sanctions for failure may be more marked than in egalitarian interactions. Third, power relations involve a verticality that engages social self-evaluation. A person's social image is gauged 1) as a dominant or subordinate individual, and 2) as a representative of one's own social group whose status varies within the social space (cf. "ingroup self", Pinto & Marques, 2008). Such a public negative self-evaluation is at the heart of the reflexive social emotions mentioned above.

In sum, since power asymmetrical interactions provide an example of easily detectable, heavily sanctionable and potentially emotionally charged transgressions, they appear as an opportune context to identify some traces of embarrassment and shame, as reflections of internalized social control and incorporation of norms.

3.2. Ongoing study

Here we present the experimental design of an ongoing study with 8-9 year old children, which is part of a larger project investigating how the conceptualization of gender hierarchies emerge in childhood. People typically view the gender distinction as a status distinction (Carli & Eagly, 2001), and by preschool age, children are already aware of male power (Charafeddine et al., 2020). In a cultural context imbued with a gender norm associating power with masculinity, one can ask about children's readiness to identify with the dominant or subordinate character, not only in situations where the interaction conforms to the norm (M>F) but also when it contravenes the norm (F>M). Children's reactions may be an indicator of the degree to which the male power norm permeates the construction of their social self. We therefore seek to investigate the social reflexive emotions that arise in these situations.

In this work in progress, the experiment consists of presenting children with an image of two characters interacting, one in a posture of dominance (head up, pointing the finger like someone giving an order) and the other in a posture of subordination (head down, contrite posture, see Figure 1). Children are first asked to identify with one of the two characters, by associating their own picture with the chosen character (i.e., dominant or subordinate). Then, they are shown the face of the other character, revealing their gender. The resulting power interaction can be either mixed (F-M) or unmixed (F-F, M-M), and either normative (M>F) or counter-normative (F>M). A hidden camera films the children as they discover the gender of the other character in the image, in order to capture any possible facial, gestural and vocal emotional expressions. Based on the respective indicators identified above (Table 1), these different expressions will be rated using the Facereader software. Children are also asked to indicate, on illustrated scales, their level of embarrassment, shame, surprise, pride and fear immediately after the discovery of the other character's gender.

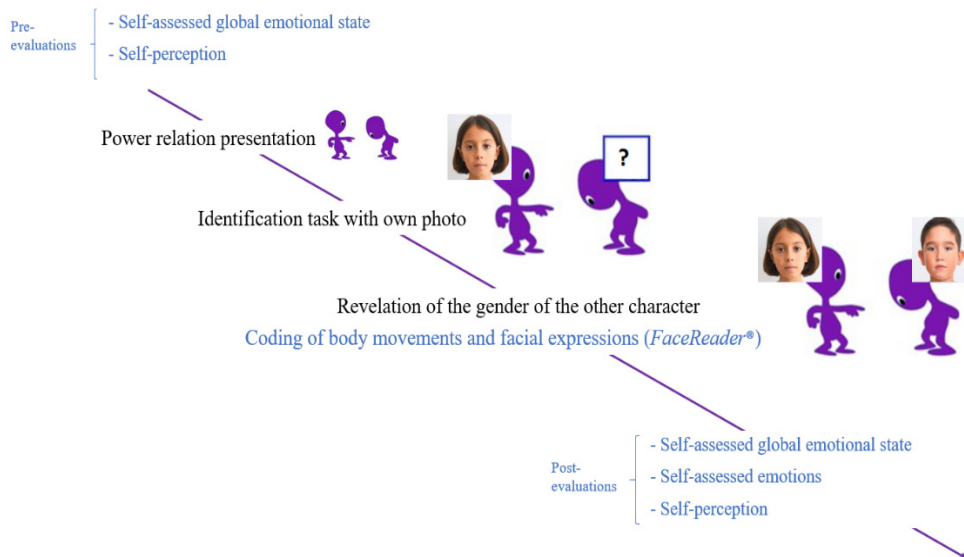


Figure 1: Time course of the study (NB: in the example, the participant is a girl, the interaction is mixed and the situation is counter-normative since the participant has been associated with the dominant character).

In addition, self-perception (Harter, 1982; Maintier & Alaphilippe, 2006) and general emotional state are assessed before and after this sequence through direct questionnaires. Shyness and competitive behavior are also rated through parental questionnaires (Crozier, 1995; Tassi & Schneider, 1997).

Our main hypothesis is that the counter-normative mixed-gender condition (F>M) will elicit more shame in boys than the same-gender condition (M>M), and more embarrassment in girls than the same-gender condition (F>F). Indeed, boys will consider the F>M interaction as a loss of status, that may elicit shame. In contrast, girls will see it as a discrepancy between their gender and the high status that they endorsed in the interaction, that may create embarrassment (no pride). A secondary hypothesis is that variations in emotional state and self-esteem (i.e., pre- vs. post- evaluations) will be greater in the mixed-gender condition than in the same-gender condition. In addition, shyness is expected to be associated with more shame and embarrassment, particularly in the counter-normative situation, and competitive behavior is expected to be associated with more pride.

3.3. Avenues of discussion and questions in progress

The present paper proposed that everyday transgressions, especially those involving power relations, may be useful for understanding how social norms govern interactions because transgressions often produce observable emotional reactions. However, many questions regarding gender identity and cognitive development remain unanswered.

In the ongoing study as well as in most publications, gender identity is considered as stable, objective and treated as a binary measure (i.e., participants are either boys or girls). However, recent literature indicates that some children might not identify with a binary gender. It suggests that gender identity may also be treated as a subjective and continuous measure, for example by using a continuum ranging from 'feeling totally like a boy' to 'feeling totally like a girl' (Gülgöz et al., 2022). Adding a measure of felt gender identity to our current protocol may be a mean to capture some gender differences in responses to counter-normative situations in a more fine-grained way.

Moreover, will 8-9-year-old children be old enough to have integrated gender norms and hence be sensitive to the proposed counter-normative situation? In addition, comparisons between different age groups would also be useful to see if with age, emotional reactions change. On the one hand, it can be hypothesized that the *experienced* emotions might increase because internalized social control becomes more powerful as social norms are acquired. On the other hand, it can

also be hypothesized that the *expressed* emotions might decrease because the control of emotional expressions develops, thus making it possible to mask them if necessary. Moreover, the asymmetrical situation presented here induces social power via postures related to physical dominance, that are salient aspects of the interaction. But the cues that children use to infer power relations are numerous and go far beyond the physical manifestation of power. Individuals considered as powerful are those who 1) access to or control over resources, 2) achieve their intended goals at the expense of others, 3) control others' outcomes, for example by granting and denying permission, 4) giving others orders, for example to divide labor, and/or 5) setting norms, that may be explicitly stated (e.g., powerful children deciding the rules to a game) or implicitly manifested (e.g., peers imitating powerful children's behaviors or appearance) (Charafeddine et al., 2020; Gülgöz & Gelman, 2017). Thus, could we sketch the same hypotheses by inducing power asymmetry through other power cues, that might be less immediately readable than physical dominance? Finally, we can also ask whether children are aware of their emotional reaction. If so, how do they explain it? Can they invoke i) personality traits vs. gender-specific characteristics, ii) stable vs. temporary explanations, iii) global vs. local, limited to the situation presented?

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IS INTERACTION JUST A DYNAMICAL PROCESS?

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ABSTRACT. In this article I argue for a pluralistic vision of interaction and social cognition in general: we should imagine the landscape of types of interactions as a line segment whose ends represent radical positions (purely inferentialist or purely simulationist theories on one end and radical embodied cognition on the other) on which different types of interactions fall. The closer to any extreme a particular type is, then the more likely it is to be better explained by the theory the extreme point represents. In order to delineate the controversy that stems from different conceptualizations of the same phenomenon and to articulate my position, I criticize Gallagher’s radical claims of embodied cognition as constituting social interaction. The main point that I make regarding his theory is that, even though it provides a satisfactory explanation for types that correspond to motor-perceptual processes, it only manages to metaphorically describe cases of interaction that involve articulated language use and, generally, semantically charged actions. Given that a serious researcher should be interested in accurate predictions or descriptions, it follows that Gallagher’s account is not all-encompassing, and, given the many virtues of other theories, we should adopt a pluralistic point-of-view.

Keywords: social interaction, social cognition, interaction, enactivism, embodied cognition, dynamical systems, theory of mind, simulation theory

Gallagher has recently argued for a view of interaction as “a mutually engaged co-regulated coupling between at least two autonomous agents, where (a) the co-regulation and the coupling mutually affect each other, and constitute a self-sustaining organization in the domain of relational dynamics”¹. In his account, for most cases, the relational-dynamics approach exhausts the cognitive

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¹ Gallagher, S., *Action and Interaction*, Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 99.



performance, meaning that there is no need for postulating propositional contents, mental states, or beliefs, that exist inside the head of the interlocutor. In addition, de Jaegher et al. posit that social interaction, as defined above, puts “social cognition back where it belongs: between individuals and not inside their heads”². According to what Gallagher calls Interactive Theory, “instances of theoretical inference or simulation that target mental states per se are rare relative to the majority of our interactions.”³. While I agree that some of our interactions can be captured by relational-dynamics, I argue that mental states should not be taking a secondary role in explaining interactions. Rather, different levels of explanation relative to a concrete situation should be employed in studying interaction. On this account, explanations that differ in level will vary in specificity and appropriateness. The core argument that I am making is based on similarities between the relational-dynamics and theory of mind approaches, and a similar debate taking place in cognitive science between dynamical-systems based approaches and classical representationalist accounts. As Markman & Dietrich argue, “the classical approach to representation must be extended, but not replaced”⁴ – similarly, the classical theory of mind approach to interaction must be extended, but not replaced. This differs from Interactive Theory (IT) in the following respect: explanations involving mental states should not be regarded as a tool for, mostly, analyzing exceptional cases of interaction (IT sees theory of mind as a strictly opposed model, rather than complementary to or interwoven with itself), rather, they should be employed so as to make sense of cases of more complex interaction, cases which we encounter on a frequent basis and require an appeal to know-that. There are, however, two challenges to overcome if, as I suggest, the theory of mind approach is to be extended: The Narrative Practice Hypothesis and Direct Social Perception. In this essay, I suggest a way to elude these challenges which consists in viewing most mental states (emotions do not figure in this) as being a finite set of coherent beliefs that each agent co-engaged in an interaction possesses. Far from being a form of know-how, practical in nature, the “web of belief” is 1) theoretical and 2) coherent. Drawing on Quine’s and Ullian’s “The Web of Belief”, I argue that positing beliefs that lie in an agent’s head is a better explanation of some quite common cases of interaction that require higher-level processes in order to make sense of the agent’s intentions, reasons, emotions, etc. My thesis goes as follows: social interaction, as

² de Jaegher, H., di Paolo, E., & Gallagher, S., “Can social interaction constitute social cognition?”, *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 14(10)/2010, 446.

³ Gallagher, S., *Action and Interaction*, Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 98.

⁴ Markman, A. B., & Dietrich, E., “Extending the classical view of representation.”, *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 4(12)/2000, p. 475.

defined by Gallagher, is to be viewed as a low-level process that corresponds to concrete, know-how situations, whilst the theory of mind account of interaction is to be viewed as describing a high-level process complementary to or interwoven with social interaction, corresponding to more abstract, know-that situations. The first section of this paper briefly summarizes Gallagher's Interaction Theory. Emphasis will be placed on the more problematic tenets, such as the reliance upon the dynamical systems theory from cognitive science, as much of the argumentation that will be laid out in section II will be targeting those points. In section II I will formulate a few objections to IT. Section III deals with possible responses that an interactionist may have, and section IV contains some final remarks.

I. Interaction Theory and interaction

Let us examine a typical example of an interaction between two agents. For the sake of the argument, we'll assume that, when studying this phenomenon, we use Theory of Mind principles, and that this method is the way most of the people interested in researching interaction go about studying it. I meet my friend at the bus station. We make eye contact and I infer from this, in conjunction with the knowledge that I have of people in general, that he wants to talk to me. We exchange a few lines, then a bus with the number "33" displayed on the window stops next to us. Knowing that this is the bus that goes by his house I deduce that he will want to get into it. Now, our typical example of interaction may go in two different directions: either 1) the inference is correct, and the interaction ends, or 2) my inference has failed, and the interaction continues. In the second case, I might even begin to ponder why he did not take the bus: maybe my friend had different plans, of which I had no knowledge, or he really enjoys the conversation and wants to catch up more. No matter the real *cause* of his actions, we may begin to notice a pattern emerging in the way I engage with my friend in this hypothetical case. On the surface, from a third-person perspective, I may seem like I am engaged in the interaction, but, from my point of view, I take an "observational stance"⁵. That is, I observe my friend acting, and from this, I deduce his mental states. His visible actions, his behavior, *depend* on his beliefs, emotions, etc. The picture described here views the mind as something "hidden away and inaccessible to perception"⁶: in order to get to them, I must engage in an extra-perceptual process of inferring.

⁵ Gallagher, S., *Action and Interaction*, Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 71.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

My social skill depends on the effectiveness of my strategy, or, in other words, the theory of mind that I use. This theory consists of abstract general rules and principles, the likes of: “when X does Y, he is angry”, or “if X does Y, he acts on a belief Z”. As a consequence, the sense data that are given to me as an input, are meaningless unless I interpret them, in a *homuncular* fashion. In all if not most of my interactions I form a representation of the one that I am interacting with, I establish the representation’s meaning in relation with other representations I have, and under the guidance of the Theory of Mind, I make an inference, a prediction about the mental states of the other.

This account may or may not be an accurate representation of the actual way a theorist⁷ analyzes a typical example of interaction. In section II, I argue that this is a straw man. As of now, I hope that it seems highly implausible. It would seem, as Gallagher notices, that “on this view, interaction is not a solution but simply another way to state the problem of other minds”⁸. The problem identified here is that the above-described picture frames interaction as a way of two ontologically opaque minds trying to exchange information “across the seemingly thin air of an unbridgeable gap”⁹. In order to refute this view, Gallagher will adopt a dynamical systems theory. The dynamical systems theory emphasizes time: van Gelder held that “details of timing (durations, rates, rhythms, etc.) are critical to a system that operates in a real body and environment”¹⁰. Likewise, Gallagher considers time as internal to action and, *in extenso*, to interaction: “action shares the same intrinsic temporal structure as consciousness and perception, and more generally, cognition”¹¹. One “feature” of this theory is that information need not be stored in discrete representations. Two dynamical systems engaged in an interaction need not exchange representations over an unbridgeable gap: “there is no representation passing”¹², rather, the systems are coupled, so a change in system 1 is simultaneously reflected by a change in system 2. With no need for discrete representations, the homuncular aspect becomes superfluous. The meaning will need to be accounted for in a different way, by appealing to the notion of “affordances”: “Affordances are relational; they do not describe objective features of the environment unrelated to

⁷ I use “theorist” to refer to the individual who employs a theory of mind. For the purposes of this essay, the term is used to indicate a theory-theory approach.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 99.

¹⁰ van Gelder, T., “What Might Cognition Be, If Not Computation?”, *Journal of Philosophy*, 92(7)/1995, p. 379.

¹¹ Gallagher, S., *Action and Interaction*, Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 34.

¹² Eliasmith, C., “The third contender: A critical examination of the Dynamicist theory of cognition”, *Philosophical Psychology*, 9:4/1996, p. 445.

the particular agent involved. An affordance specifies a relation between an agent and some aspect of the environment.”¹³ In Gallagher’s enactivist view, each action carries along its circumstances, the sum of which make up the action’s context. An action is best understood at its highest realized affordance level which is “the highest semantic or functionally useful level of behaviour”¹⁴. To paraphrase a famous example, one could describe my action as simply moving my arm up and down while, on the highest semantic level, my action is defined by the fact that by moving my arm up and down I pump poisoned water into a household. Cognition is *for action*: “When I see your action I see it as an affordance that motivates my own action—your action is perceived as something that I can respond to, and that is a good part of precisely how I understand your action.”¹⁵ A core tenet of Gallagher’s enactivist view is entailed by this theoretical commitment to perceiving affordances: Direct Social Perception. DSP, for short, refers to the process of being able to perceive an agent’s mental states *in action*. To illustrate: if a man approaches me with his cheeks slightly turned red and a frowning expression I *see* that he is angry, and I need not infer, via an extra-perceptual process that he is angry. There is an affective component to DSP: seeing the angry man I am in a certain sense affected by this perception.

Besides DSP, which, in theory, is sufficient to explain a lot of aspects relating to interactions, the interactionist has another tool at his disposal. The Narrative Practice Hypothesis states:

that direct encounters with stories about reasons for acting, supplied in interactive contexts by responsive caregivers, is the normal route through which children become familiar with both (i) the core structure of folk psychology and (ii) the norm-governed possibilities for wielding it in practice, knowing how and knowing when to use it.¹⁶

DSP may not be able to account for more complex interactions, and this is precisely the role that NPH is supposed to fill. By framing my particular knowledge of my friend in a narrative, I am able to make sense of his reasons for not taking the bus. Emphasis is placed here on 1) the fact that narratives are not theoretical bodies of knowledge and 2) on the fact that “we learn from narrative practices how to frame an understanding of others”¹⁷. 1 is meant to convey that narrative practice, as its

¹³ Gallagher, S., *Action and Interaction*, Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 10.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

¹⁶ Hutto, D. D., *Folk Psychological Narratives: The Sociocultural Basis of Understanding Reasons*, MA: MIT Press, 2008, p. 117.

¹⁷ Gallagher, S., *Action and Interaction*, Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 167.

name suggests, is not a form of know-that, but rather a form of know-how. I know how to make sense of someone's action from the context in which it is realized. I do not need an inference and a general principle so that I could deduce someone's mental state expressed in their particular action. 2 makes explicit the fact that I do not literally and consciously make up a narrative for every single friend that I have or every single person that I interact with. I implicitly frame someone's actions in a narrative, because that is how I know how to make sense of their reasons for acting.

We may now define interaction as a "co-regulated coupling between at least two autonomous agents, where: (i) the co-regulation and the coupling mutually affect each other, constituting an autonomous self-sustaining organization in the domain of relational dynamics and (ii) the autonomy of the agents involved is not destroyed"¹⁸. (ii) simply eliminates cases where the interaction is heavily one-sided: for example, the "interaction" between a master and a slave. Although NPH and DSP are not explicitly mentioned in this definition, their presence is implied by (i).

II. Raising a few problems

At this point, IT may look as though it is quite an elegant description of our day-to-day interactions, at least on the surface level. It seems rather intuitive that our interactions are mostly the result of immediate know-how, as though we can talk of a "tango of communication"¹⁹. Also, it seems obvious that our body shapes, in a certain sense, the way we carry out our interactions. I do not think of myself, or of others, as a brain-in-a-vat: certain gestures, certain glances, can restructure the meaning of the whole situation. We act according to the affordances our environment provides, so the context of our actions it's highly important to the semantic side of our interactions. A hug from my best friend changes its meaning when it is realized in a casual situation, at the bus station, from an exceptional case, at a funeral. Given all this evidence, why am I still not convinced?

Let us first look at the more radical claim of IT. It states that the study of social cognition has been done in an improper way and that we should reconsider the fundamentals of our methodology, as the picture in question does not accurately represent the way individuals understand each other, through interaction. Namely, methodological individualism, and its correlatives, the theory of mind approaches, need to go. But one should note that this claim rests on the premise

¹⁸ de Jaegher, H., di Paolo, E., & Gallagher, S., "Can social interaction constitute social cognition?", *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 14(10)/2010, 442.

¹⁹ Gallagher, S., *Action and Interaction*, Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 157.

that interaction has actually been improperly understood by the theorist. The premise holds if Gallagher's account of interaction is an accurate description, and so we should investigate his arguments in order to correctly assess IT and integrate it into the larger picture of interaction and social cognition.

First, what does it mean that behaviour co-constitutes a mental state? Walter argued that the debates between classic approaches to cognition and embodied or situated approaches revolve around two main problems: 1) the locational delineation problem and 2) the relational delineation problem²⁰. The first one refers to the topos of the mind, where is it located, and the second one refers to the relation of either causal dependence or constitution that defines cognition and extra-cranial processes. We can see that Gallagher makes two important claims: 1) that the mind is located in a second person, that is, always in a set of circumstances that are extra-cranial and 2) that mental states are co-constituted by embodied behaviour. That means that he leans on the radical side of the debate. As such, he would not be satisfied by integration of DSP into the theory of mind for example, because it denies him the relational claim, and probably also the locational one. I will explore the multiple problems that arise out of his commitment to dynamical systems and the notion of "affordance", and I will argue that his radical position is unappealing as a whole. The interactionist would still have a word to say, as types of interactions involving low-level processes, such as dancing and some aspects of more complex interactions (such as an agent raising his tone) seem to be better described as dynamical, rather than inferential or simulationist.

Second, Gallagher considers that, from the theory of mind approach point of view, one typically assumes that mental states are hidden peculiar entities, that can only be accessed via a process of inference. This is the assumption that is supposed to rule out DSP and NPH as viable ways of reaching those mental states. But I think that this ruling out is not entailed by the theorist's convictions. The theorist is not committed to actively inferring mental states all the time, in all contexts, as though he is realizing a computer algorithm. When I'm at a restaurant I do not need to infer the mental states of the waiter that is coming to take my order. And, indeed, there are many such cases that are uninteresting for mindreading. A good, second example, is that the theorist need not infer the mental states of other drivers in traffic. The fact that this is the case is neither an argument against mindreading, nor an argument for the interactionist, as these may as well not be interesting cases of interaction at all. One may argue that they don't even qualify for proper interactions as, at least in the case of the waiter, the affordances

²⁰ Walter, S., "Situated Cognition: A Field Guide to Some Open Conceptual and Ontological Issues.", *Review of Philosophy and Psychology*, 5(2)/2013, p. 251.

of a human waiter are in no way different from the affordances of a computer program that would realize the same function. The waiter is simply a tool to fulfill a purpose. Seeing people as tools, as fulfilling social roles is a recurring motif throughout Gallagher's theory. Moreover, as Overgaard and Michael note, the theorist may not be locked out of the option of perceiving the other's mental states, as they are expressed in his actions²¹. The "inference" may be a sub-personal mechanism or process, rather than a consciously realized process. The fact that cognition is "for action" may simply be restated as the trivial truth that "perceptual and cognitive systems evolved to maximize survival, just like circulatory and digestive systems"²². In this sense, someone's behaviour expresses a mental state, that is ontologically located in his "head", and the behaviour *depends* on the mental state existing there. This is a claim that will likely not sit well with an interactionist, as his radical departure from theory of mind approaches is precisely that the behaviour *constitutes* the mental state and, as such, it is ontologically dis-located: extra-cranial and not intra-cranial. But I shall return to this point in section III.

Third, Gallagher points out that the theorist takes an observational stance towards interaction, and this is precisely the reason why it fails to grasp the relational dynamics that constitute it. But what does an observational stance actually mean? Does it necessarily mean that one is not engaged in the interaction? Overgaard and Michael give the example of a first date, in which usually one is actively trying to mindread the other person²³. One important thing to note concerning this example is that, despite being in what Gallagher would call an observational stance towards the other, this does not rule out the dynamic dimension of the interaction. You could still directly perceive some intentions, emotions, etc. And it seems as though you are still engaged in it. Even more so: it's significantly more engaging than a casual conversation in a bus station. If this is the case, then two assumptions are challenged: 1) that we can be in just one stance at a time, or, to be more precise, while interacting, we can be in just one stance, be it either a first-person engaged one, or a third-person observational one; and 2) the observational stance rules out any dynamical aspect of an interaction.

²¹ Overgaard, S., & Michael, J., "The interactive turn in social cognition research: A critique.", *Philosophical Psychology*, 28(2)/2013, p. 165.

²² Goldinger, S. D., Papesh, M. H., Barnhart, A. S., Hansen, W. A., & Hout, M. C., "The poverty of embodied cognition.", *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 23(4)/2016, p. 963.

²³ Overgaard, S., & Michael, J., "The interactive turn in social cognition research: A critique.", *Philosophical Psychology*, 28(2)/2013, pp. 171-172.

Moreover, the theorist is said to be committed to a claim of universality. That is, our primary and pervasive way of understanding others is by mindreading them. Whether the theorist is actually committed to a claim of universality, or whether he can discard it at no expense is irrelevant. I don't think we can arrive at a clear-cut, definitive, and universal answer in this matter. The problem resides in the fact that experience differs from individual to individual. Some may resort to mindreading more often than others. One unlucky individual may have first dates quite often and so, will find himself mindreading most of the time. A salesman may employ a theory of mind strategies in order to persuade potential buyers into making a purchase. That is not to say that he will not engage in dynamical relations with his friends or family. What I'm getting at is that the point is not which way of interacting is representative of the majority of our interactions, since interactions vary in complexity. A serious researcher, I think, will be more interested in studying different types of interactions and, in doing this, different methodologies will vary in appropriateness. I don't think that casting aside mindreading as a marginal, exceptional, and peculiar way of understanding others does justice to the study of interaction. It certainly holds as a rhetorical strategy, but not much more. And this account needs much more than rhetorical hocus-pocus in order to be convincing.

We will now look at more technical aspects of Gallagher's theory. In particular, I want to raise a few problems regarding the relational dynamics approach, and regarding the semantical aspect of the "agentive situation"²⁴. It is a feature of the dynamical approach that the boundaries separating agent from environment are blurred. This has led some to see this as "the problem of the systems boundaries"²⁵. The main concern for Eliasmith is that, in terms of a research program, the dynamicist, due to the fact that he sees cognition as embedded, is unable to provide a viable model for it. The huge amount of factors involved in the cognitive process and, by extension, in the interaction process (cultural norms, values, various affordances, etc.), forces the dynamicist to use collective parameters. And because of the fact that collective parameters must be readjusted with every run of the experiment, initial conditions are hard to specify, and the result is constrained, rather than arrived at²⁶. A similar point of view, related to embodied cognition (not specifically to dynamical systems but still applicable) is held by Goldinger et al.

²⁴ Gallagher, S., *Action and Interaction*, Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 13.

²⁵ Eliasmith, C., "The third contender: A critical examination of the Dynamicist theory of cognition", *Philosophical Psychology*, 9:4/1996, p. 451.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 451-454.

More critically, although the EC hypothesis motivates many experiments, it appears extremely challenging to incorporate into a formal model and is therefore limited to broad, qualitative predictions. How might we write an equation that expresses embodiment? How can the environment (such as the affordances of various objects) be parameterized?²⁷

What I am getting at is that “the starting problem”²⁸ may not be so easily avoided by the interactionist. The argument that I’m making is not that in our day-to-day interactions we are not able to determine the relevant factors – that would be absurd. I am simply pointing out the fact that the dynamical approach may have a hard time determining the relevant factors, and this means that the interactionist *explanation* of the phenomenon in question may not be able to specify what is relevant. We should distinguish between the phenomenon *per se* and a theory that tries to explain it. The dynamical explanation can still *feel* like a pertinent one, but this may be owed to the fact that it is an all-encompassing metaphor, as Eliasmith would suggest: “It simply makes sense to think of the behavior of cognitive systems in terms of an “attraction” to a certain state (e.g. some people seem to be disposed to being happy).”²⁹ But the metaphorical description is of no use if it cannot provide some new insight into the phenomenon described. Nevertheless, we must stress the fact that it may be the case that some interactions are best described as dynamical, such as a dance of tango (generalizing, there is no requirement of representation passing and no requirement of homuncular interpretation or manipulation of symbols). But this does not entail that more complex types are also best described as being dynamical, such as a heated discussion between friends at a bar (language and meaning seem to be harder to account for in a dynamical framework). Gallagher might bring up the distinction between know-how and know-that ascriptions of knowledge in order to dispel the objection that his theory is, at best, metaphorical. But we should emphasize that these *are* ascriptions of knowledge: we ascribe types of knowledge to the people whose behavior we observe (it is not a feature intrinsic to the activity being employed). And it is not the case that it is a clear-cut distinction³⁰: we can speak of some students as knowing-how to talk to the principal in order to get out of a bad situation, but certainly, this

²⁷ Goldinger, S. D., Papesh, M. H., Barnhart, A. S., Hansen, W. A., & Hout, M. C., “The poverty of embodied cognition.”, *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 23(4)/2016, p. 964.

²⁸ Gallagher, S., *Action and Interaction*, Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 76.

²⁹ Eliasmith, C., “The third contender: A critical examination of the Dynamicist theory of cognition”, *Philosophical Psychology*, 9:4/1996, p. 460.

³⁰ Snowdon, P., “Knowing how and knowing that: A distinction reconsidered”, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* 104 (1)/2004, p. 26.

involves knowing-that the principal likes to be complimented. Therefore, invoking this distinction does not elude the challenge of proving that the dynamical explanation is not just a metaphor.

The interactionist would try to argue that precisely because he sees the agent as embodied and situated, he can determine the relevant aspects of interactions in terms of environment and context. I think that there are many problems to be addressed here. First, we should note that the relationship between situation and agent is one of co-constitution, mereological in nature. We may see the agent as a part that relates to the whole of the situation. A change occurring in the agent is reflected simultaneously in the situation. This is probably the reason why Gallagher takes the observational stance as being fundamentally disengaging in an interaction. Because it threatens the coupling aspect of the systems and makes place for discrete representations, or mental states. That is, *his own premises* that specify the dynamical constitution rule out an intuitive aspect of the phenomena being studied, and this does not seem to call for a reevaluation of the observational stance, as it seems to be a weakness on the theory's part.

III. In-discrete semantics

The interactionist might say that, even as a sub-personal process, inference is not the way people actually, and *truly understand* each other, and that thinking of DSP as something compatible with theory of mind approaches is a reductionist move: "to the extent that the theory theorist would treat the perceptual aspect as merely phenomenal or, indeed, epiphenomenal or banal, direct social perception really plays no significant role in social cognition."³¹ Let us analyze the first claim: that people do not actually understand each other through an inference. Gallagher insists that deducing someone's mental states is an explanation of their behaviour, and not an understanding³². But what does *understanding* mean for Gallagher? It seems as though it requires an affective response to the other³³. The concept of understanding seems to play an important role in what he calls the diversity problem – a simulationist merely projects himself on the other person, failing to account for his specific differences. The theorist isn't able to grasp diversity either: because he uses general, abstract knowledge, instead of particularistic, narrative-

³¹ Gallagher, S., *Action and Interaction*, Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 138.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 72; p. 79.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

like know-how³⁴. This particularity, in conjunction with an affective response, gives us the requirements for something to qualify as an instance of understanding. It is obvious, I think, that these points come as consequences of Gallagher's larger picture of social cognition. The theorist and the simulationist think of social cognition as something wholly solipsistic, due to their commitment to homuncularity, discrete representations, and extra-perceptual processes of inference or simulation. Many objections can be raised against this account, but I'll mention just two of the most important. Keep in mind that what I'm doing by analyzing this concept is trying to see if DSP and NPH can imbue our actions and interactions with meaning (without resorting to representations), and if there are any tensions between their conceptualizations and the conceptual background of Gallagher's theory. First, it is not clear what an affective response actually means and whether one can hold that seeing perception as affecting us can really constitute "true" understanding. Take the example of an angry person rushing toward me. Of course, I will be affected by the perception of their expression and action because I will probably think that I am in danger, although this may not be the case. This does not mean that I *understand* their anger or their action. And no appeal needs to be made to the reason why they are angry, for which I am supposed to frame their actions in a narrative (I can interact with someone at a superficial level, without reference to his reasons or motivations). I simply affectively respond out of fear for self-conservation. Of course, other examples, such as some cases of empathy, may satisfy this requirement. But many other counter-examples can be formulated, which are not particularly exceptional³⁵. Also, as Overgaard and Michael point out, some detached third party, an uninvolved observer, might better understand the feelings of my interlocutor, as in the example of a heated debate³⁶ (Overgaard & Michael, 2013, p. 170). As such, it seems as though the affective response is neither sufficient nor necessary for understanding the other, at least in some not-so-exceptional cases. Second, I find it hard to grasp how particular knowledge about someone, or about contextual factors, is not theoretical. For challenging this view, we have to tackle the NPH.

It is clear that NPH is not meant to be just an account of how we learn to interact with others. Rather, it is a more radical claim, that this is how we actually make sense of others' reasons for acting. Overgaard and Michael pointed out

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

³⁵ I might stumble upon my friend who has an angry expression and might conclude that his anger is directed towards some injustice that he has just faced and that I know about. I might even console him, saying that I understand how he feels, yet he might be angry for a whole different reason.

³⁶ Overgaard, S., & Michael, J., "The interactive turn in social cognition research: A critique.", *Philosophical Psychology*, 28(2)/2013, pp. 167.

the fact that “the sort of understanding children are said to gain [from narrative practice] is not plausibly construed exclusively in terms of knowing-how” (Overgaard & Michael, 2013, p. 167). Gallagher would argue that, when framing Laura’s actions in a narrative, I do not make a Laura Theory (Gallagher, 2020, p. 167), and I can understand her reasons as making sense within one of several possible narratives. But I don’t think that a theorist would hold this kind of view. And I don’t think that taking particular knowledge about someone as theoretical, about my friend John, for example, would mean that I am somehow constructing the John Theory. From narratives, children learn how to make sense of someone’s actions, in terms of their reasons for acting. This implies the fact that children, as noted in section I, learn “*that* mental states are connected in such-and-such ways with other mental states and contextual factors”³⁷. John might be a very talented fisherman. His knowing how to catch a particular fish certainly consists in, or can be traced back to his knowing that this fish comes out at midday and that he likes a particular bait, and so on. Moreover, it is not the case that only the know-how aspect is important, and that the know-that aspect can be left out. Considering a favorable case, John does know how to use the fishing rod. This knowledge is co-constituted by the fact that he knows that under a certain load it can break. But the activity of using the fishing rod can be hardly said to be reduceable to “know-that”, propositional or factual knowledge. It seems as though, on an imaginary line segment, the further away from strictly perceptual-motor descriptions the activity is, the more likely it is to incorporate more propositional aspects (which, in turn, can be better explained in terms of “knowledge-that”). In order to see why the John Theory reply is not problematic, we need to provide a competing picture.

It is not sufficient to critique Gallagher’s radical position. It is also important to give a competing account. Gallagher seems to think that it is not plausible that a single mental state can cause someone to act³⁸: for example, the mental state of thirstiness is not the cause of my action of going to grab a glass of water. One important mistake is that he conceived this relation as being either one-to-one or one-to-many. One mental state has to do all the job. A better account of our mental states would see them as interwoven, as forming a “fabric” that described their interrelatedness. That is, no one mental state is at play at any time *t*. Rather, many mental states are engaged in most of our actions, all at once. My action of getting a glass of water is based on my sense data of my surroundings, my belief that this is how I would clench my thirst, my being thirsty, etc. Drawing on Quine’s and

³⁷ Ibid., p. 8.

³⁸ Gallagher, S., *Action and Interaction*, Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 39.

Ullian's concept³⁹, we can say that every person has a web of beliefs⁴⁰, which is a set of finite coherent beliefs. Coherency does not mean consistency: we may hold beliefs that entail contradictory propositions, and conflict between them is not ruled out. This seems to give an accurate picture of how we often find ourselves in positions in which we have to choose between conflicting viewpoints: believing that, for example, our usual news source is trustworthy or believing that it is not, after our friend debunks one or multiple of their stories. We can see that each option engaged multiple other beliefs, which we must be ready to give up, as a result of choosing one of two options. Getting rid of too many beliefs (some have more weight than others) may cause the whole fabric to dissipate. Two points have to be emphasized: the web of belief is 1) theoretical, and 2) coherent. My belief that John is going to India to see the Taj Mahal is not based on some know-how narrative framework of him. Rather, it is based on other beliefs, for example, the belief that John likes to travel and my knowledge that he is fascinated by Indian history. Other, general principles of folk psychology might justify my conclusion. It is important to note that coherency leaves open the possibility that I, as an agent, might not be entirely consistent, and might often make mistakes⁴¹. Moreover, the web of belief contains and is therefore influenced by the cultural norms that I've been inculcated with, and they have a much higher weight than sense data (which is the part of the web that can be easily gotten rid of, without much loss, at any one time t). The racist is not so easily persuaded to see people of different races as humans because, if he were to drop his prejudice, a lot more beliefs will at the same time have to be dropped⁴². Likewise, since sense data is peripheral to the fabric, my perception will be influenced by my own already formed biases.

Concerning the John Theory reply, I simply create an abstract model consisting of a set of beliefs, that I think John shares, and try to see what they cohere with. It is not a theory that I am constructing, I just interpret my representation of John, considered as being here and now, with beliefs that may be informed by past experiences, not as some entity in the process of self-actualization. That is, I think of John in the present, at the time t_0 and of his reasons for his acting in a certain way, in isolation from his past development. That past is reflected in the beliefs he holds right

³⁹ I do not want to import the concept of the web of belief with all of its conceptual determinations. Rather, I use it as a visual model of how our mental states are related, like they are interwoven and form a fabric.

⁴⁰ Quine, W., V., & Ullian, J. S., *The Web of Belief*, McGraw-Hill Education, 1978, p. 41.

⁴¹ We can conceive of emotions as readjusting the weight of certain beliefs. For example, when I am sad I am more likely to evaluate things negatively than I would be in normal conditions.

⁴² Gallagher, S., *Action and Interaction*, Oxford University Press, 2020, p. 154.

now. Likewise, when I wonder: “Why is John going to India?” it is not the case that I’m wondering, like an author writing a novel, whether it is plausible that this is how his character develops. I find it more plausible that I just wonder whether his actions are coherent with his other beliefs. If we take a narrative framework to be a frame that links temporal events with each other in a linear fashion (which is a plausible and a charitable interpretation) and expressing a meaning that transcends this temporal dimension, embedded in the character’s development, it seems as though this position is in tension with the dynamical side of interactions that Gallagher emphasizes. As it implies that I see my interlocutor as having a past development and a possible future one, and not as being here and now and interacting with me. Of course, one could say that this is not a good interpretation of narrative framing, but what interpretation would be an appropriate one? Narratives usually show actions unfolding through time and constituting meaning by expressing the configuration of a character’s dispositions and affordances. Shouldn’t a narrative framing mean exactly that I see someone as developing new affordances through his actions?

The interactionist might say that “It is not something in the past that causes or determines my action; rather, it is some possibility of the future, some affordance or goal that draws me out of my past and present circumstances and allows me to transcend, and perhaps to change, all such determinations.”⁴³. Let us analyze the notion of “affordance”. According to Gallagher, we perceive others in terms of affordances, that is, as affording the possibility of interacting with us. We also perceive them as fulfilling a certain social role and as such, as having a different set of affordances (waiter, driver, professor, etc.). I take issue with this wholly unrestricted notion. The main problem is rather delicate: while we can intuitively say that we act so as to realize affordances (looking to the future) the jump from this, to perceiving the environment and others in terms of affordances, does not seem valid. First, an issue relating to the qualitative aspect of experience: do you see your lover as a set of possibilities for acting? In some sense it is true that being my significant other means that we can act in ways that I could not with a random stranger on the street. But it seems not only reductionist, but solipsistic to think of someone as a set of affordances. If we were to follow this thesis to its logical conclusion, then every aspect of an interaction is reduced to me, as being able to do this or that (it seems trivial for tools, but does it hold for other people?). In a dynamical system, a part’s behaviour is defined by a differential equation that takes other parts of the system as parameters. Every part is defined in relation to the whole and in relation to other parts. I’m not saying that Gallagher would agree that

⁴³ Ibid., p. 39.

people's behaviour can be captured in this sort of equation. But this is what the dynamical systems approach ultimately implies. From a first-person perspective, everything I perceive that is given as input of some sort is just a quantitative change in the equation. This parallels Searle's Chinese Room⁴⁴. Given that a person, my friend, and a tree are just quantitative changes, are they meaningful? I think we have solid reasons to think otherwise: my relationship with my lover is not something that can be quantified, and neither are the relations I have with my friends. Gallagher's theoretical framework simply ascribes, metaphorically, a set of affordances to every type of interaction, but this hardly is *the* explanation for the phenomenon in question. And given its many vices, it hardly constitutes an alternative to more plausible theories, such as simulation theory or theory of mind.

Second, an issue seems to prevail. Goldinger et al. argued that language perception is not fundamentally embodied⁴⁵. The problem is based on the fact that the interactionist considers cognition as something action-oriented. Language is set to be analyzed with an understanding based on actions (for example, we understand the meaning of narratives by seeing them as action-oriented; we first grasp the meaning of the actions, and then the meaning of the narrative). If we are to understand statements in a typical conversation as providing new attunements, or new perspectives on a situation, by revealing new or closing old affordances, then it is not clear how are we supposed to grasp the meaning of affordances before grasping the meaning of a sentence: "we cannot conceive of any language comprehension system that would allow a person to appreciate the affordances of a sunset as a precondition to understanding a sentence about that sunset."⁴⁶ The core idea is that "explaining sentence perception without internal representation appears hopeless"⁴⁷. If affordances are to be perceived, without prior interpretation, than it seems like we have reversed the cart and the horse, at least for interactions where the two agents communicate using articulated language (not only through speech acts). We can now see why, even if we were to accept that the dynamical systems approach affords meaning, that there is a fundamental problem with Gallagher's view. Granted, when it comes to more low-level processes, such as dancing tango, the affordance claim seems to not be problematic. And a dynamical description seems like the better explanation of this kind of interaction. Paralleling

⁴⁴ Searle, J. R., *The Rediscovery of the Mind (Representation and Mind)*, MIT Press, 1992, p. 204.

⁴⁵ Goldinger, S. D., Papesh, M. H., Barnhart, A. S., Hansen, W. A., & Hout, M. C., "The poverty of embodied cognition.", *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 23(4)/2016, p. 973.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 973.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 973.

the attack on the notion of representation in cognitive science⁴⁸, we can think of IT as extending, rather than replacing standard approaches to social cognition and, by extension, to the study of interaction. Speaking about “levels” of interaction may suggest some sort of hierarchy, as though talking about what to have for dinner is somehow more elevated than dancing tango. It might be an unfortunate choice of words, but it is nonetheless a heuristical device. We can imagine a line segment of interactions and its extremes as representing highly abstract operations at one end, such as playing chess with someone or talking about philosophical interpretations of interaction, and motor-perceptual processes at the other, such as riding a dual bike or dancing. “Higher-level interactions” refers to those types that fall closer to the first extreme, and “lower-level interactions” refers to those types that fall closer to the latter. Is this a vague distinction? Yes, but it's not meant to be clear-cut. It is just meant to be heuristically useful, and I think it accomplishes its role by resisting attempts to reduce types of interactions either to theoretical inferential or simulationist models or to dynamical ones.

IV. Conclusion

Let us briefly summarize the arguments laid out. I set out to support a pluralistic vision of interaction and social cognition in general: IT is to be viewed as a low-level process that corresponds to concrete know-how situations, such as dancing, whilst the theorist's account of interaction is to be viewed as describing a high-level process, complementary to or interwoven with IT, corresponding to more complex phenomena. In order to properly accomplish this task, I tried to invalidate Gallagher's more radical claims. I first outlined his theory, and then I raised a few problems, beginning by showing that he makes a straw man out of the theorist's view of interaction. Afterward I tried to flush out the inherent tensions between the meaning of our actions and interactions, and the dynamical systems approach, by arguing that the latter, due to its reductionist and metaphorical nature, cannot account for the former. Section III mostly dealt with possible responses to my arguments and, by tackling those, I argued that, even if we were to accept that DSP, NPH, and, overarchingly, the notion of “affordance” can make up for the tensions pointed out, there still remain fundamental problems with the picture of interaction that the interactionist offers. Namely, the jump from realizing affordances by acting to perceiving affordances through an action-oriented perception is not a valid one,

⁴⁸ Markman, A. B., & Dietrich, E., “Extending the classical view of representation.”, *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 4(12)/2000, p. 475.

and that seeing others in terms of possibilities for acting is reductionist. I also pointed out that, by seeing mental states as being fundamentally interwoven, we provide a model that can elude the interactionist's challenges.

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MEANINGFUL HUMAN-MACHINE INTERACTION: SOME SUGGESTIONS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF AUGMENTED INTELLIGENCE

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ABSTRACT. In this article I will address the issue of the meaning of human-machine interaction as it is configured today in the light of substantial results achieved in the design and the manufacture of Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems. My starting point is a refined solution for meaningful AI recently suggested by Froese and Taguchi from the perspective of so-called augmented intelligence. Interpreted as a kind of human-machine interaction, augmented intelligence distinguishes itself by the fact that it merges the interacting poles into a new hybrid entity. After having clarified the technical and the methodological background of my proposal, I will discuss a case of study of so-called bio-synthetic augmentation, where hybridisation overlaps with the cyborgisation of the human body.

Keywords: Human-Machine Interaction; Augmented Intelligence; Meaning; Cyborg Body; Bio-integrated Interfaces.

1. A very brief overview of contemporary research and innovation in the field of Human-Machine Interaction

Human-Machine Interaction (HMI) is a well-established field of Contemporary Research and Innovation studies. It is attracting more and more the attention of academic scholars, developers, manufacturers and the general public as well due to the strong impact that the new generation of intelligent or smart machines is having on nearly all aspects of everyday human life, at both the individual and the

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societal level. During the last two decades, interaction theorists have deeply inquired the principles of HMI. According to Müller, for example, psychological principles play a pivotal role in the interactions human beings have with machines, above all with intelligent machines.¹ Here, interaction seems to crucially rely on a process of goal-attribution performed by the human designer and/or user. A process of goal-attribution performed by the human designer and/or user, who ascribes purposive behaviour to intelligent machines. These letters, accordingly, appear as embodying an autonomous kink of agency. Goal-attribution is a psychic process that runs in most cases unconsciously. A psychic process that runs in most cases unconsciously – it pertains to both the individual and the social mind. It pertains to both the individual and the social mind. Its phenomenology grounds on a lived experience of resistance that intelligent machines (are intended to) oppose to the realisation of individual and collective human actions. Following this view, HMI would imply a plurality of and a contrast among different behavioural goals – the goals of the human designer and/or user and those attributed to intelligent machines.

However, as stated by Müller himself, psychological principles, such as the principle of goal-attribution, are not able to explain all the aspects of human-machine interaction, at least where machines are intelligent or smart devices.² Here, advanced engineering principles too are required. In this direction, during the last two decades significant progress has been made in both the design and the manufacture of Artificial Intelligence (AI) systems that emulate some aspects of intelligent behaviour. Autonomy is maybe the core property of today AI systems. In this context, autonomy is usually presented as a human-independent ability of resource acquisition, remarkably data acquisition.³ Well-known examples of autonomous AI systems are self-driven cars, virtual assistants, collaborative robots and intelligent drones – these letters represent an all-pervasive presence in the current debate on potentially injurious autonomous technology.⁴ Since the end of the '90s more nature-inspired AI systems have been designed by scholars working in unconventional areas and/or

¹ V.C. Müller, "Interaction and Resistance: The Recognition of Intentions in New Human-Computer Interaction", in A. Esposito et al. (Eds.), *Towards Autonomous, Adaptive, and Context-Aware Multimodal Interfaces: Theoretical and Practical Issues*, Springer, Berlin, 2011, pp. 1-7.

² V.C. Müller, "Autonomous Cognitive Systems in Real-World Environments: Less Control, More Flexibility and Better Interaction", in *Cognitive Computation*, vol. 4/2012, pp. 212-215.

³ Royal Academy of Engineering, "Innovation in Autonomous Systems", in <https://www.raeng.org.uk/publications/reports/innovation-in-autonomous-systems>, access 17 April 2020. Here, data overlap with discrete pieces of information that represent (discrete) states of the world by means of the association with numerical values.

⁴ S. Omohundro, "Autonomous Technology and the Greater Human Good", in *Journal of Experimental & Theoretical Artificial Intelligence*, vol. 26, n. 3/2014, pp. 303-315.

fields of AI, such as Artificial Life and Cognitive Computing.⁵ This line of research is producing innovation, especially in the applied sectors of Big Data, Collaborative and Soft Robotics, Incorporable Interfaces and Intelligent Sensor Networks.⁶

Considering both conventional and unconventional AI, the point to highlight for the purpose of the present article is the limited control exercised by the human designer and user, who cannot influence and predict the behaviour of the AI system, at least not completely. Think for instance at data-driven autonomous AI systems based on techniques of Machine Learning, e.g., on Deep Neural Networks: they can generate and improve automatically – that is to say, by the use of data – the algorithms they compute. The restriction of the space for human control is crucial for the occurrence of interaction, in a sense relevant for HMI. I suggest connoting this sense as “participatory”. It implies, indeed, (the conceptual elaboration of) a behavioural coupling, where the human designer and/or user and the machine participate in a shared conduct characterised by multiple and potentially conflicting goals.

2. Structure of the article

In this article I will address the issue of the meaning of human-machine interaction as it is configured today in the light of substantial results achieved in the design and the manufacture of AI systems. My starting point is a refined solution for meaningful AI recently suggested by Froese and Taguchi from the perspective of so-called augmented intelligence.⁷ Interpreted as a kind of human-machine interaction, augmented intelligence distinguishes itself by the fact that it merges the interacting poles into a new hybrid entity. After having clarified the technical and the methodological background of my proposal (§§ 3-4), I will present and discuss according to an open-problem modality a case of study of so-called bio-synthetic augmentation, where hybridisation overlaps with the cyborgisation of the human body (§§ 5-6). § 7 will be devoted to conclusions.

⁵ A. Adamatzky, “East-West Paths to Unconventional Computing”, in *Progress in Biophysics and Molecular Biology*, vol. 131/2017, pp. 469-493.

⁶ K. Rozenberg, T. Bäck and J.N. Kok (Eds.), *Handbook of Natural Computing*, Springer, Berlin-Heidelberg, 2012.

⁷ T. Froese and S. Taguchi, “The Problem of Meaning in AI and Robotics: Still with us after All These Year”, in *Philosophies*, vol. 4/2019, pp. 539-560.

3. Augmentation: towards a new paradigm for HMI

In a co-authored paper dating back to 2019 Froese and Taguchi reconstructed in some details the history of foundational studies on AI. This historiographical effort is intended as finalised to focus the attention of the scientific community on the lack of suitable solutions for (issues related to) the so-called meaningful AI. Meaningful AI consists in very specific theories, usually collected with the prospect of providing answers to a foundational problem known as the grounding problem.⁸ In its most general version, the grounding problem concerns the topic of reference of symbolic and sub-symbolic languages. For example, machine languages are composed by number series that, it is usually maintained, refer to (discrete) states of the world.⁹ The alleged referential character of machine languages may be taken as a challenging example of what one more abstractly would connote as the semantic function of language, the function of meaning something. However, how do languages like machine languages get their meaning?

Since the '90s the importance of embodiment and enaction as unavoidable pre-conditions for as unavoidable pre-conditions for the generation of meaning has been stressed by a group of philosophers of AI and of AI scholars.¹⁰ They attempted to contrast the disembodied and mentalistic approach pursued by the first generation of theorists and developers of AI. From a technical point of view, the alternative approach pursued focuses on building robots that are able to mimic the natural ability of organisms to enact patterns of information through body-related motor skills.¹¹ More recent studies have investigated the conceptual grounding of these technical works aiming at reproducing embodiment and enaction in artificial systems.¹²

However, as Froese and Taguchi observed,

⁸ M. Taddeo and L. Floridi, "Solving the Symbol Grounding Problem: A Critical Review of Fifteen Years of Research", in *Journal of Experimental & Theoretical Artificial Intelligence*, vol. 17, n. 4/2005, pp. 419-445.

⁹ S. Harnad, "The Symbol Grounding Problem", in *Physica D*, vol. 42/1990, pp. 335-346.

¹⁰ H.L. Dreyfus, *What Computers Can't Do*. New York, MIT Press, New York (NY), 1972; R. Brooks, "Intelligence Without Reason", in J.P. Mylopoulos and R. Reiter (Eds.), *IJCAI' 91: Proceedings of the 12th International Joint Conference on Artificial intelligence*, Kaufmann, San Francisco (CA) 1991, pp. 569-595.

¹¹ To this purpose, a particular class of architectures named subsumption architectures was designed and fed by behaviour language groups. See: R. Brook, "Elephants Don't Play Chess", in *Robotics and Autonomous Systems*, vol. 6/1990, pp. 3-15.

¹² R. Pfeifer and J. Bongard, *How the Body Shapes the Way We Think. A New View of Intelligence*, MIT Press, Cambridge (MA), 2007; T. Froese and T. Ziemke, "Enactive Artificial Intelligence: Investigating the Systemic Organization of Life and Mind", in *Artificial Intelligence*, vol. 173/2009, pp. 466-500.

even the enactive approach, which has made a substantial effort to account for value and meaning in a non-representational manner, ultimately leaves it equally mysterious how the subjective, i.e. value, meaning, intention, purpose, etc., as such, on its own terms, could make a difference for the movements of an agent, if it is assumed that its internal and external activity is already completely governed by purely dynamical laws.¹³

The researchers highlight a naturalistic bias in the conceptual grounding of the research programme of embodied and enactive AI. The naturalistic bias would consist in the attempt of explaining meaning, with its unavoidable subjective dimension, as an entirely natural phenomenon. This happens by assuming that the behaviour of an embodied agent is «completely governed by purely dynamical laws» – namely by the set of natural laws that rule how a system develops or alters over time. Starting from this evidence, Froese and Taguchi stressed the need to draw up a new agenda for embodied and enactive AI. They have specifically suggested a shift in perspective from duplicating human and more in general biological abilities to augmenting them by means of pushing the participatory interaction between human beings and intelligent machines at a closer level, namely the level of hybridisation. To quote the researchers:

One failsafe way of practically solving the problem of meaning in AI and robotics is to make sure that there is always a human somewhere in the behavioral loop. At least in the near future, if the nature– strategy is on the right track, researchers interested in using a synthetic approach to generate technological advances based on meaning would be better served shifting their focus from duplicating human understanding in artificial systems, to directly empowering humans by extending their existing subjective capacities by designing better interfaces.¹⁴

The hybridisation described by Froese and Taguchi captures the state-of-the-art in the research and innovation practices related to the topic of augmentation.¹⁵ “Augmentation” is a term coined by Douglas Engelbart during the ‘60s. Engelbart envisioned a new theoretical framework for AI, where centrality is given to human subjectivity improved by AI systems.¹⁶ Augmentation brings into question the polarisation of the interacting poles distinctive of contemporary HMI. This happens

¹³ T. Froese and S. Taguchi, “The Problem of Meaning”, *cit.*, p. 541.

¹⁴ *Ivi*, p. 549.

¹⁵ H. Hassani et al., “Artificial Intelligence (AI) or Intelligence Augmentation (IA): What is the Future?”, in *AI*, vol. 1/2020, pp. 143-155.

¹⁶ D. Engelbart, “Augmenting Human Intellect: A Conceptual Framework”, in *Summary Report – Stanford Research Institute*, 1962, 1024.

in two complementary directions: the first one, known as human-in-the-loop augmentation, is characterised by the insertion of human cognitive and/or behavioural skills into AI systems. Human-in-the-loop augmentation is producing innovation above all in the world of smart services.¹⁷ The second direction is the so-called bio-synthetic augmentation. In bio-synthetic augmentation human bodily skills are improved, enhanced by AI systems. Bio-synthetic augmentation requires the design and manufacture of advanced interfaces, for example bio-integrated interfaces that proved high degrees of compatibility with the organic body.¹⁸ Froese and Taguchi's proposal may be interpreted as an attempt of conceptualising augmentation as a kind of meaningful AI, looking at human subjectivity as a plastic horizon of meaningfulness that contains the autonomous information processing of intelligent machines or, alternatively, it is contained in it.

4. An integrative methodology for studying augmented intelligence

As seen, Froese and Taguchi's proposal aims at overcoming some limitations of the research programme of embodied and enactive AI. Following the researchers, a new conception of artificial systems and their interaction with the human designer and/or user is needed, a conception that goes in the direction of thematising hybrid systems able to augment human natural skills. From a methodological point of view, Froese and Taguchi suggest a trans-sectorial framework for studying augmented intelligence as a kind of meaningful AI. They envision a methodology where differential methods, i.e., methods typically used to describe dynamical phenomena like behavioural dynamics from an impersonal ("third-person") perspective, are combined with phenomenological methods that investigate experience from a first-person point of view focusing on the aspect of meaning, namely on meaningful experience. In the previous paragraph we saw how foundational studies on embodied and enactive AI usually opt for a conceptual approach that avoids reference to extra- or super-natural realms. Drawing the attention on subjectivity as a nature-independent realm, Froese and Taguchi contrast this view as biased by naturalistic assumptions. The methodology they promote stands out for integrating the first-person perspective into the impersonal account pursued by embodied and enactive AI theorists.

¹⁷ N. Zheng et al., "Hybrid-Augmented Intelligence: Collaboration and Cognition", in *Frontiers of Information Technology & Electronic Engineering*, vol. 18, n. 2/2017, pp. 153-179.

¹⁸ T. Froese, "Bio-Machine Hybrid Technology: A Theoretical Assessment and Some Suggestions for Improved Design", in *Philosophy of Technology*, vol. 27/2014, pp. 539-560.

A particularly relevant point made by Froese and Taguchi concerns the concept of nature that they attempt to formulate anew. As put by the researchers,

the assumption of state-determinism sits in tension with other commitments of the enactive approach that have received less attention in the literature, namely its insistence on the groundlessness and the interdependence of the subjective and the objective, which makes it possible to metaphorically conceive of action as “laying down a path in walking”. We therefore propose that it is time to step back for a moment and ask ourselves whether the problem of this failure of naturalizing meaning perhaps not only derives from a faulty concept of mind, but rather from an inadequate concept of nature [...] We then sketch an alternative concept of nature, one that places limits on its scope, and which we therefore believe has a chance of accounting for the possibility that meaning makes a difference in a material world.

According to Froese and Taguchi, reconceptualising nature is a useful strategy for eluding the naturalistic bias that underpins the research programme of embodied and enactive AI. In the remaining part of this article, I will attempt to problematise the subjective dimension of meaning distinctive of bio-synthetic augmentation by virtue of a phenomenological toolkit. To this purpose, I will introduce and discuss according to an open-problem modality a case study that I consider of particular interest as it is one of the few examples of advanced clinical translation of a bio-integrated interface accompanied by a systematic tracking of the user experience. The case at stake is that of the implantation of artificial corneal extracellular matrices (ECMs) capable of regenerating the damaged organ in patients suffering from blindness induced by the irreversible loss of optical quality of the cornea.

5. A case study: bio-integrated artificial corneal ECMs

The cornea is the protective frontal part of the human eye responsible for transmitting and refracting incident light rays that are focused on the retina by the lens, i.e., the natural lens of the eye. The irreversible loss of optical quality of the cornea, namely the loss of its transparency due to disease or damage, is the second cause of blindness in humans and is typically addressed either with corneal transplantation or with the use of synthetic prostheses. However, the gap between the availability and demand of the transplantable organ, on the one hand, and the complex implantation procedures as well as the frequent post-operative complications, on the other hand, have highlighted the need to pursue new therapeutic approaches, attempted, above all, in the field of regenerative medicine.

Towards this end, a research group active for over a decade in Sweden, Canada and the United States first developed in the laboratory and then tested on animals and humans a corneal metaplast, consisting of bio-integrated artificial ECMs.¹⁹ Once implanted in the eye, the artificial ECMs have the ability to regenerate the damaged organ, emulating the functions of the natural ECMs, which constitute the part of the tissues not composed of cells. Like the natural ones, artificial ECMs are made of a biopolymer (recombinant collagen of human origin). Unlike natural ECMs, however, they are devoid of cellular filling to ensure the repopulation by the cells of the natural organ and thus prevent reactions of rejection. As the results of the aforementioned study suggest, the bio-integrated artificial ECMs, which were first tested on animal subjects and then implanted in a group of ten human subjects, were shown to be stably incorporated by the patients in the long term (two years of follow-up), leading to an improvement in the pre-anormal visual capacity in six out of ten patients tested as well as to the regeneration of the epithelium, nerves, stroma and tear film in all the subjects involved in the study.

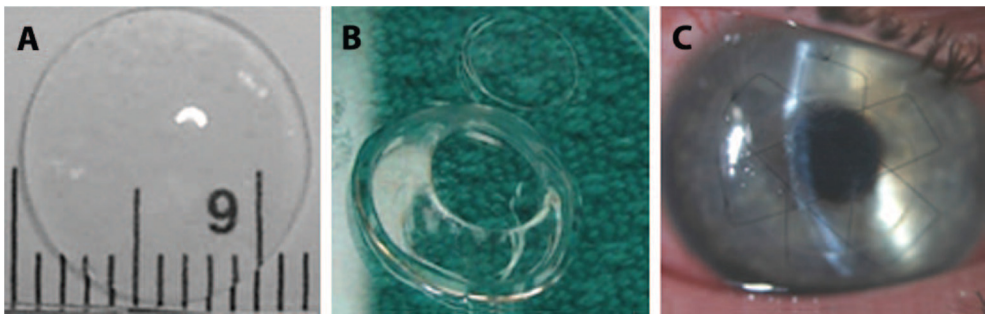


Fig. 1 (A-C): Fabricated and implanted corneal ECMs.
See: M. Fagerhol et al., *A Biosynthetic Alternative*, cit. p. 2.

In 2018 another research group based at the Institute of Genetic Medicine of Newcastle University succeeded for the first time in producing perfectly functional artificial human corneas by using an advanced 3D bio-printing technique.²⁰ The step forwards compared to the production of corneal metaplastm concerns the fabrication of entire bio-integrated corneal structures. To this end, the research team first constructed a model of an adult human cornea using a rotating Scheimpflug

¹⁹ M. Fagerholm et al., "A Biosynthetic Alternative to Human Donor Tissue for Inducing Corneal Regeneration: 24-Month Follow-Up of a Phase 1 Clinical Study", in *Science Translational Medicine*, vol. 2, n. 46/2010, pp. 1-8.

²⁰ A. Isaacson, S. Swioklo, C.J. Connon, "3D Bioprinting of a Corneal Stroma Equivalent", in *Experimental Eye Research*, vol. 173/2018, pp. 188-193.

camera equipped with a keratoscope (Placido's disc). The model obtained was utilised by the researchers as a basis to reproduce the microarchitecture of the natural organ through a 3D printing process that uses a bio-ink composed of the combination of two biopolymers (collagen and alginate) and of corneal stroma cells from a healthy donor. After the 3D printing of the corneal microstructures, the research group induced a self-assembly process of the tissue by exploiting the natural ability proper of specialised fibroblasts residing in the corneal stroma to produce components of the ECM. The clinical translation phase of the device is still in progress.²¹ Further contributions to the development of bio-printing techniques have stemmed from numerous research groups and companies specialised in bio-ophthalmology.²²

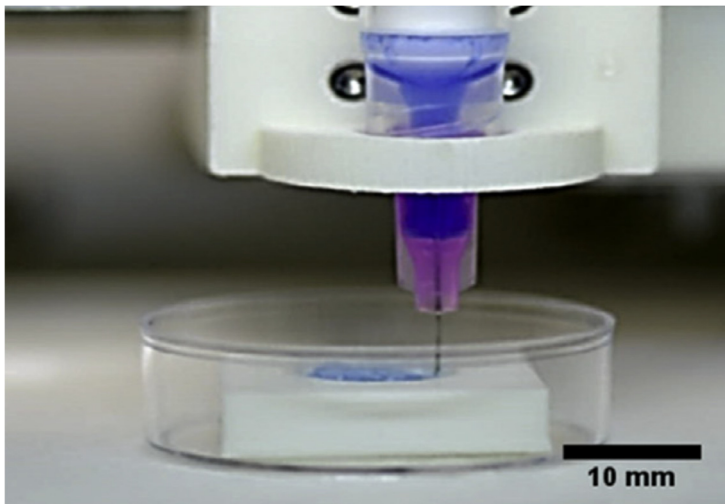


Fig. 2: View of the 3D bioprinting process of artificial human corneas.
See: A. Isaacson, S. Swioklo, C.J. Connon, *3D Bioprinting*, cit., p. 192.

6. An open-problem oriented discussion of the case study

As a case study of bio-synthetic augmentation, bio-integrated artificial corneal ECMs and their most recent evolutions may be inquired under the lens of the interaction-based approach to meaningful AI stressed by Froese and Taguchi.

²¹ Newcastle University, "First 3D-printed Human Corneas", in *Science Daily*, <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2018/05/180529223312>, access 9 May 2019.

²² B. Zhang et al., "3D Bioprinting for Artificial Cornea: Challenges and Perspectives", in *Medical Engineering & Physics*, vol. 71/2019, pp. 68-78.

In this direction, there are at least two couples of concepts that offer suitable interpretative lines, if approached in accordance with the methodology exposed in § 4. The first couple (Couple 1) consists of the concepts of dynamics and statics, whereas the second couple (Couple 2) embraces the concepts of passivity and activity. An extensive analysis of these four concepts cannot be provided here. Accordingly, with no claim of being exhaustive, I limit myself to outline a discussion of the case study of bio-integrated artificial corneal ECMs that centralises open problems associated with the interpretative lines furnished by Couple 1 and Couple 2.

- Couple 1 (dynamics and statics). The application of this conceptual couple crosscuts the contemporary scenario of applied natural and human sciences. On the other hand, the concepts of dynamics and statics have been widely discussed within the phenomenological movement since its very beginning due to the work of the founder of classical phenomenology, Edmund Husserl. Husserl showed how, interpreted as a subjective process, the constitution of meaning has both dynamical and statical aspects.²³ The distinction between dynamical and statical constitution is not a fixed one. It can be traced in relation to a criterium of time-(in)dependency: dynamical constitution is a time-dependent process, differently from statical constitution, where time has no corresponding values. Patients who received the implantation of bio-integrated artificial ECMs experience up to three functional states regarding their (potential or actual) visual behaviour, namely the anormal state, the restored normal state and the augmented state. In this case, therefore, the subjective constitution of meaning associated with vision is a multi-, inter- and trans-conditional process: constitution might reveal peculiarities in each functional state, as well as in the passage among different states and in the unity emerging from these passages.²⁴ Accordingly, here, either dynamical constitution or statical constitution are involved. The following questions exemplify a group of problems that concern the concepts of dynamics and statics as they are used to interpret the visual behaviour performed by implanted patients.
 - How does the technologically augmented body work as a dynamical generator of meaning? How does it work as a static generator?

²³ E. Husserl, *Analyses Concerning Passive and Active Synthesis: Lectures on Transcendental Logic*, translated by A.J. Steinbock, Kluwer, Dordrecht, 2001.

²⁴ M. Properzi, "Il modello corporeo: un'indagine sulla normatività dell'incorporamento di dispositivi biosintetici", in *Filosofia Morale/Moral Philosophy*, vol. 1/2022, pp. 105-126.

- Is there a relevant sense according to which subjective constitutive processes underlying augmented vision differentiate from processes of (a)normal visual behaviour?
 - What is the relationship between functional augmentation and semantical augmentation with regard to their corresponding dynamical and statical aspects?
- Couple 2 (passivity and activity). The general remarks made about Couple 1 apply to this couple of concepts too. Also in this case, there is no fixed distinction between passive constitution and active constitution. Here, the criterium of distinction refers to the constitutive modality, which may be receptive or spontaneous with regard to the way meanings are captured and mutually organised. Patients subjected to bio-synthetic augmentation perform passive constitution as a hyper-structured process. Hyper-structuration is due to the interweaving of visual and proprioceptive data derived from the restored oculomotion with mnemonic and imaginative data produced by a kind of vision-related fading memory and by mental imagery, respectively.²⁵ Mnemonic data concern a sense of lacking-of that is felt by patients in the anormal state of blindness, a sense that contrasts with the overflow of visual images elicited by the restored and over all the augmented functional state. On the other hand, active constitution, such as that performed in active visual attention, is a hypo-structured process. Hypo-structuration affects the subject-relatedness of lived experience, i.e., its quality of being related to the constitutive activity of the human subject. In augmented vision, indeed, meanings (as actively constituted) generate from the hybridisation of two interacting active poles, namely the implanted patients and the artificial ECMs integrated in the diseased or damaged eye. Analogously to Couple 1, Couple 2 has associated a group of problems that may be approached by means of sample questions. Here, the focus is on the role played by the concepts of passivity and activity in meaningful experience associated with bio-synthetically augmented intelligence.
- How does the technologically augmented body work as a passive generator of meaning? How does it work as an active generator?
 - Is there a relevant sense according to which hyper- and hypo-structured subjective constitutive processes underlying augmented vision differentiate from processes of (a)normal visual behaviour?

²⁵ M. Properzi, "Body Model and Biosynthetic Devices: Interpretating Technological Incorporation with the Help of Edmund Husserl's Genetic Phenomenology", in *Agathos*, vol. 13, n. 1/2022, pp. 41-60.

- What is the relationship between functional augmentation and semantical augmentation with regard to their corresponding passive and active aspects?

7. Conclusion

In this article I attempted to problematise augmented intelligence as a kind of meaningful HMI. The starting point of my investigation was the recent anti-naturalistic proposal developed by Froese and Taguchi. The researchers stressed the role of human subjectivity as a plastic horizon of meaningfulness that may augment the performance of intelligent machines or be augmented by it. The methodology introduced by Froese and Taguchi combines third-person differential methods with first-person phenomenological methods. The prospect, here, is improving the understanding of meaning in the context of the interaction human beings have with intelligent machines. On this methodological basis, I discussed a case of study of so-called bio-synthetic augmentation, where hybridisation overlaps with the enhancement of human bodily skills. In so doing, centrality was given to a modality of discussion focused on open problems, with the prospect of paving the way to further investigations on the subject matter.

INTERACTIONS AS SOURCE OF THE CHANGE OF BEHAVIOR IN ADDICTION AND RECOVERY FROM ADDICTION. AN EXPLORATORY STUDY

CLAUDIA VARGA*, ION COPOERU**

ABSTRACT. Based on the findings about the importance of social support network in the success of treatment and long term recovery, this article will provide an insight of the successful elements in addiction individual and group counseling interaction through which addicts manage to overcome the denial of addiction, to accept the recovery program, to go through the stages of recovery, and to identify appropriate research methods for understanding the phenomenon of interaction in recovery from addictions. This exploratory study will attempt to identify an innovative perspective of the aspects pertaining to the recovery from addiction which are susceptible to be disclosed primarily by using methods inspired by the analysis of interactions. The method used in research is qualitative focus group with addictions counsellors and people in recovery, working in a counseling center. Using the application of ELAN software to annotate and transcribe interactions from the video and audio recordings, it will situate the research on addiction and recovery from addiction in the larger field of investigations on communication processes in human interactions in various cultural, social and professional contexts.

Key words: stages of recovery, social support, interactions, group, counselor, peer support, motivation to change, self-efficacy, tools for change, stages of change model

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Introduction

Recovery from addiction has been a huge interest for researchers, especially since many methods and models of recovery are presented and marketed in contemporary society. (Best, Lubman, 2012) Recovery has been largely embraced as the main goal of the treatment of addiction.

The social support network resources are decisive for the success of the treatment and recovery of the persons with addiction. Studies have shown that recognition by a peer or a consistent relationship with a service provider or sibling (Pettersen et al., 2019) are instrumental for achieving and maintaining stable recovery. These findings are usually based on semi-structured interviews with a limited number of participants. While recovery service providers are aware of the extent in which the direct social interactions among them, on one side, and between them and counselors, on the other side, are an exceptionally important resource, there are virtually no scientific investigations capable to document how interactions are contributing to the recovery of persons with addictions.

Our aim is to situate the research on addiction and recovery from addiction in the larger field of investigations on communication processes in human interactions in various cultural, social and professional contexts (Kendon, 2004; McNeil, 2000; Goodwin, 1981; Katila and Raudaskoski, 2020).

This exploratory study will attempt to identify an innovative perspective of the aspects pertaining to the recovery from addiction which are susceptible to be disclosed primarily by using linguistic and informatics tools inspired by the analysis of interactions, more precisely by using the Eudico Linguistic ANnotator (ELAN)¹ software to annotate and transcribe the video and audio recordings. (Coletta et al.; Fournel, 2018; see also Wittenburg, 2006). The specific annotations are any of the sentence, word, a comment, translation or a description of any feature observed in the media, and will provide the basis of the analysis.

Treating addiction in an interactive environment

The approach to addiction in philosophy comes as a natural tendency when we talk about spiritual pursuits, understanding emotions, the dependence of the dependent person to fully understand himself, the search for meaning in life,

¹ ELAN (Version 6.4) [Computer software]. (2022). Nijmegen: Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics. The Language Archive. Retrieved from <https://archive.mpi.nl/tla/elan>

building human relationships based on the goals of satisfying daily life. Particular attention was paid to psychology, philosophy, but especially to theology in the study of “passions,” of the “passionate” nature as precursors of addiction. Difficult and paradoxical concepts such as free will, self-control, desires and freedom have also come to the attention of philosophers like Wallace, Watson, Mele (see Foddy, 2010) and have consumed sufficient resources.

Addictions have been treated similar to mental illnesses, with a strong character of blame, the sick people being considered possessed by evil spirits (Miller & Toft, 1990). Seen in terms of altered consciousness, the treatment was mainly aimed at closing in asylums, sanatoriums, removal from the community of “failures”, where the person went through a strong sense of alienation, depersonalization, deculturalization. At the beginning of the twentieth century, we had a real subculture of the “non-conformists” that is still preserved today. Addiction framed as a pathology of those with weak brains (or weak genes) has just as much potential to stigmatize and create marginalized populations. Parents become a kind of “little lepers of society” and children become condemned.

The Minnesota rehabilitation model (Montague and Fairholm, 2020) has as its forerunner the perspective of the Palo Alto school of the 40s and 50s, which offered a new paradigm of therapy, going beyond exclusively medical, psychiatric, medication-based treatment, or exclusively intrapsychic therapy, such as in psychoanalysis, towards the change of the social environment in which the individual operates. The authors laid the foundations of the interactionist perspective, through which the person’s behavior and the way he communicates must be seen in a social context, from a much more “non-rigorous” perspective. The basic preoccupations of the school are: the theory of communication, which is the basis of the whole scientific approach, the methodology of change and the therapeutic practice (see Lesenciuc, 2017).

The basic elements of the approach are: adopting the concept of addiction as a disease, multidisciplinary team, using the group method, planning individualized treatment, using a clinical adaptation of the 12 Steps, supporting the person through individual counseling, family involvement (counseling, support groups) and the use of Community methods, such as “Anonymous” groups. (Woydylo, 1997)

The Minnesota model is now considered to be the most effective model of therapy and has been studied since the 1950’s (Cook, 1988), with American society being strongly oriented toward revolutionary pragmatism. Special departments for treatment and research have been set up (NIIDA, SAMHSA, etc.). In 1998, 90% of private treatment centers used the 12-step abstinence method.

Defining interaction in the context of the research

The vision we start from is that individual personality and social constructs are the result of the process of interaction. Without going into the description and debate of what “social facts” mean, we turn our attention to the analysis of conversations, the way two people relate (the utterance relates to what the other has said) through the conversation. Spoken language cannot be considered only an instrument, but is related to behavior and interpreted / examined in this context.

As a starting definition that we had for interaction was when there is a response from the other side, in real time. Support groups is the frame for this interaction. The way we describe the interaction in the vision of this study leads us to Goffman’s writings from (1955) and (1957) (“*Alienation from interaction*”) and we will take into account the interaction that took place within the research group and see how that the participants engaged in a complex system of collaboration with each other, allowing the way they behaved to be guided by the requirements of the interaction system in which they entered. Thus, the behavior of a newcomer in a peer group can be analyzed in terms of how it works in the interaction system and is shaped by older members (the power of the example of those with a longer period of abstinence), without no matter what his intentions were or to discover certain traits of his personality.

In recovering from addictions, the effectiveness of groups is reflected in the degree of change that occurs in people with addictions and which has a significant impact on their well-being (conflict management skills, prevention of resumption of consumption, increased self-confidence, self-control, self-efficacy, reasoning control, involvement in enjoyable activities, etc.) (Pooler, 2014). Self-efficacy has been considered by some authors (Bandura, 1986) to be closely related to the beliefs that people have about their abilities. These may be better predictors of change than what they actually know or how they have worked before.

The method of therapy from an interactionist perspective – as an engine of change in addictions

In the present research, this perspective sheds light on the importance of the context and communication provided by the peer community and the therapeutic counseling framework, as a conductive and effective environment for recovery, through the roles that community members take. Systems theory and the idea of homeostasis, both for the family context and further to the group context can bring

important study indicators. Communication, and further change, are seen beyond static entities, but are included in the “semantics of context”. (Lesenciuc, 2017)

“Communication” no longer has as its object of study language or message, but also concerns verbal language (configurations and meanings, syntactic and semantic) and nonverbal language: “from the perspective of pragmatics, all behavior, not just speech, represent communication and the whole communication - even communication cues in an impersonal context that affects behavior” (Watzlawick et al., 1967: 23). The perspective of the “invisible college” on communication has its origins in von Bertalanffy’s general theory of systems (1956) and Gestalt psychology, respectively. (Ibid.)

Studies on the community in recovery have as their essence the principles of unconditional love, mutual help manifested in all the gestures and behaviors through which the person is received, oriented, the way they interact with him, etc. determines this acceptance, the renunciation of the “I want everything” symptom that potentiates judgment, that is, the consumption of alcohol / drugs indefinitely. Experimental studies (Zernig, 2013) highlight the importance of social interaction, but also the fact that aversive social interactions and social isolation are factors that contribute to drug use and multiple relapses (Venniro, 2018). Carrying on these findings, the treatment of addiction through the community reinforcement approach capitalizes on the voluntary social contact with the social reinforcement factors: the support group and positive work environments (Stitze, 2011 and Peele, 1990). There is a strong emphasis on the power of peer change and the connection between addicts, especially since the recognition of emotions is largely independent of biological or ethnic factors (Gallagher, 2013). Addiction is the only disease in which self-diagnosis is necessary for effective treatment.

What makes a recovering community different from the rest of society and brings success is the objective definition of addiction, and especially by placing the individual at the center of recovery, by empowering the addict to re-describe and reinterpret their addiction experience. (Copoeru, 2018).

“You go out on all sides, examine each individual piece, throw away what is useless, rehabilitate the useful, and put the moral self back on track.” (Satel, 2014)

In the process of change that occurs at the individual level, we ask ourselves: Where, when and how does that moment of “amazement” occur? Is it an emotion? A feeling? A state of awakening and wakefulness? In recovery this awareness is what William James calls the spiritual experience or personality change resulting from the application of the recovery program. “Most of our feelings are” what the psychologist William James called “instructive experiences “that occur slowly over

time. Those close to the person in recovery, see the transformation long before they become aware of it. Eventually, he will find that he has changed profoundly in the way he reacts to life, and that he could not have caused such a change on his own. "What is happening in a few months now, in rare cases could have happened after years and years is self-discipline". (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2000).

Recovery is a social process leading to a successful change in social identity. The stronger this identification, the better the chances of recovery. It has also been defined as a conversion (Tiebout, 1944). The more connected a person is to others, the more likely they are to be noticed, confronted, and helped to see the proportions of reality. As former users, if they come to identify more strongly with recovery-oriented groups, and less strongly with using groups, their likelihood of sustained recovery increases. (Best 2016)².

The group is a laboratory of life, modeled on the "Johari Window" model. You use the group's mirror, to share experiences, to give hope, to be a leader, to teach others. In the counseling process, it takes the form of a routine structured with exercises and steps to follow, organized for newcomers, to move from denial to a systematic recognition of the effects of the disease and the exercise of recovery skills. Alibrandi (1985) identifies 100 activities (or "tools") employed by AA members to support day-to-day abstinence.

"Peer-based recovery support is the process of giving and receiving nonprofessional, non-clinical assistance to achieve long-term recovery from severe alcohol and/or other drug-related problems. This support is provided by people who are experientially credentialed to assist others in initiating recovery, maintaining recovery, and enhancing the quality of personal and family life in long-term recovery." (White, 2009)

The development of this model was supported by the success (the strongest empirical evidence based) of the so-called "Anonymous" groups, especially Alcoholics Anonymous, which in the early 2000s had over 2.1 million people in recovery³, using the support group method (Alcoholics Anonymous, 2000). Studies have shown since the 1970s that the "Community Reinforcement Approach (CRA)" type of therapy performed much better than detox hospitals, with the basics: the ability to cope with everyday reality, people, workplace and self-esteem, confront the negative values of the user's environment, focus on all social environments as causative factors or

² The success of this method has had implications for therapeutic approaches like Social identity model of recovery (SIMOR). (Best, 2016)

³ 100,766 groups in 150 countries.

as a solution to addiction. (Peele, 1990). All this has best approached in interactions and contexts natural settings, not in the treatment settings⁴. These communities have functions both as a therapeutic environment and as a way to reintegrate the participant into society.

Methodology of the research

This paper attempt to articulate contributions from the language sciences, psychology and educational sciences to address, in a strongly interactionist perspective. The methodological point of view gives us the opportunity to problematize the group dynamic of people with addictions and the way it functions in order for the newcomer to feel accepted, respected and to be open, without defenses.

Research objectives:

- A. To understand the therapeutic elements of group and individual counseling interactions, through which addicts manage to overcome the denial of addiction.
- B. To understand what motivates addicts to accept the recovery program.
- C. To understand the interactions that facilitates the newcomer to relate to other people in recovery.

The method: *Qualitative focus group research*

The research method will be data-driven (inductive + abductive) starting from the corpus of data received through a descriptive-empirical approach. Addiction counselors and volunteers will contribute their own experience and observations on the effectiveness of recovery methods, the tools used in counseling, and the types of interactions that motivate change.

The particularity and innovative of this study (as there are no specific studies of interaction in recovery group setting), is how we used the method and the tools in a specific setting, bringing together the counselors and people in recovery and providing the opportunity to act as a group. Most of the studies target either counselors, or people with addictions, so that the data to be as homogeneous as possible. We assumed a risk of not having a homogeneous group, as participants have specific roles in the recovering community. In classical psycho-therapy the

⁴ Social Identity Model of Recovery (Best, 2016)

therapist is usually taking the role of the expert and never share personal experience. In Minnesota Model, one of the major advantages is the counselor as a peer, the person with addiction in recovery being a counselor and the professional counselor being in recovery⁵.

Data collection techniques and data analysis method: data collection was taken from group interview, by video recording of the focus group and participatory neutral observation. To annotate and transcribe the video and audio recordings we used ELAN software. We used qualitative content analysis from interactions in the group interview. The names of participants are anonymous. All the participants agreed and signed the “Informed consent form to participate in the focus group interview”.

Research tools:

1. Interview guide with open-ended questions and
2. Participatory observation guide

The interview guide consists of 16 questions. During the group interview we’ve responded to 7 questions. Those are:

1. What is the decisive factor for which a dependent person would address or address the center? What brings those with dependency to seek help?
2. What are the most important elements of direct interaction at first contact?
3. In direct interaction what makes you or what are the elements that lead to gaining trust in the counselor?
4. What do you think are some of the elements of direct interaction that embarrassed you or you felt embarrassed?
5. How would you describe the direct interaction in the support group for a newcomer? What is your perspective?
6. How easy or difficult is it to adopt an identity - “Am I an alcoholic / addicted to recovery?”
7. What are three things that help in support groups?

The participatory observation guide had the following themes: the interactions of the participants with the researcher, the interactions of the participants among them, the overall dynamic of the group, communication patterns, the transitions of roles.

⁵ The focus is on creating a collaborative alliance that shifts the focus of recovery from the treatment professional to the person seeking and experiencing recovery (White, 2002)

Participants: 4 addiction counselors (3 social workers, 1 psychotherapist) and 3 volunteers (addicts in recovery - 1 drug and alcohol addict - 5 years abstinence, 1 gambling addict - 5 years abstinence, 1 drug addict - 4 years abstinence).

Subject selection criteria:

- a. A good knowledge of the Minnesota intervention model.
- b. Experience in helping dependent people (either as a counselor or as a volunteer).
- c. Personal experience in support groups of at least 2 years and knowledge of how the recovering community works.
- d. Withdrawal from any substance that changes mood for at least 2 years.

Research setting: The focus group took place within the White House Day Center, facilitated by 1 doctoral student and 2 researchers. Participants and 1 researcher set in a circle; the other 2 researchers were on the sides. The main researcher made a brief introduction to the topic, present the basic rules, and started to ask questions. Participants responded at free choice, without interruption. The group will lasted 2 hours and 5 minutes. The duration of the video recording was 02:03:24.999.

Topics of analysis

Preliminary remarks:

The group took place in a familiar setting to the participants, the support / therapy group room and the members knew each other and interacted with each other in different settings (peer support groups, counseling groups, individual counseling) and facilitated the communication. The participants engaged in the group mode without any problems, forming a support group from the beginning, as they spoke one by one, they did not interact. The researcher had a minimal intervention as a moderator and conducted the discussions freely for the members to choose when they speak. The theme was new and unique for the participants, which allowed a greater freedom and authenticity in verbal communication, thinking and conceptualization.

The researcher introduced the topic and 'invited' members to share based on their experience, not on their knowledge.

1. Initial stage of the group

'Organic communication = we can't help not to communicate'

The group started with an informal conversation among participant. After the introductory part from the researcher, the moment of silence was felt like a tension or a moment of 'negotiation', what is going to happen next? How are we going to proceed? The researcher used the time for quick 'group reading' (by observing each participant)⁶. The silence minute 03:52:692 until 04:10.538 was perceived like a long break in the subjective time, even as objective time it was less than 20 seconds. The pauses have different functions⁷, in this context was more related to manage turn-taking and is considered to be natural in spontaneous speech (Kosmala, 2019).

As a group dynamic all participants related very quickly from a personal point of view to the sharing, like the support group. The tone of their voice was low and serious and it was felt like one of the moments of tension (along the interview we identified as promoters of role change counselor - patient) as they were trying to get the group started. The counselor turned very quickly in the "peer mode", after the speech of the volunteers, as seen in Extras 1.

Tobi, Mary and Ana addressed the issue of "suffering" as the main factor in determining a person to seek help. Even from the beginning the counselor adopted the role as "she" (Ana) was a patient:

Extras 1⁸.

Time and duration of speech:	Who:	What was said:
03:51.461 – 03:52:692	Tobi (volunteer)	you know what // suffering ⁹
04:10.538 – 04:21.666	Mary (volunteer)	xxx what made me seek help // seek // the solution it was the pain // despair
04:36:948 – 05:05:487	Ana (counselor)	I ended up not knowing where I was going // or not knowing why // I came for volunteer purposes and: // I was guided to find out that I had other problems and I should have done therapy //

⁶ Even refusing to communicate is communication

⁷ To structure the speech, insecurity, within speech - as a way of enhancing speech or indefinite (ibid.)

⁸ The underlined sentences or words is used in extras, as for the reader to easily observe the ideas explained by the researcher in the text. Here is about „vulnerability” of the counselor.

⁹ Legend of transcription: // = pause in speech, ... = when I use part of the speech, : or :: = when the last letter is pronounced prolonged

Time and duration of speech:	Who:	What was said:
		and then I it was a bit exploratory // it was a curiosity I think because at that moment <u>I wasn't aware of all the pain that was buried in my back</u> // and then // about me that was the background

At the same time, from the very first minutes, the use of “vulnerability”¹⁰ has been observed, which has acted as a stimulating factor for the interaction and switch of perspectives between the counselor and the patient.

In Extras 2 we can see an interaction sync for the recovery volunteers:

Time and duration of speech:	Who:	What was said:
06:04.333 – 06:55.871	Bob (volunteer)	I would say despair because before everything I tried somehow ...

The different moments of laugh identified in the group as members were getting accommodated with the dynamics, it is identified as ‘release laugh’ (Ana – self-irony, 14:38, and other moments).

Laughing in the context of storytelling about certain humorous event: minute 21:30 until 31:28, when Tobi is sharing his first experience with the peer member, as he thought that the counselors paid him to tell him a ‘story’ and he can easily switch from one story to another, according to ‘the patient’.

Other moments of loud laughs decreased the tension and allowed the members to behave ore natural and authentic. In the last moments of the recording, one of the counselor’s expressions (02:03:24.277 – 02:03:24.999) ‘and we thank you uff’ shows the great tension that she kept during the group.

2. How the members related to the group - the counselor as a patient

The group negotiation was done as the model of the orchestra in communication¹¹, less in the way that we wanted to (the counselor as a patient is the

¹⁰ The term was introduced later in the speech of the counselors, see Extras 3, Lori and Ana.

¹¹ „Members of a culture participate in communication just as musicians participate in the orchestra; but the communication orchestra has no conductor, and the musicians have no scores. Their agreements are more or less harmonious because, when interpreting, they guide each other. The area they sing is for them a set of structural interrelationships.” (Lesenciuc, 2017, p. 212)

“surprise” result of this interaction) and the researcher had no intention to intervene and regulate the roles participant adopted and the way the group was going.

The counselor had a more difficult time to adjust and deal with the tension, as the volunteers were definitely more natural from the beginning, as they are more used to share their experience in groups. But, the vulnerability ‘forces’ you to react and to respond in the same way, creating the moment of fusion, the counselor feeling easy to share as the volunteer. In the history of addiction treatment, we recognize the so called “wounded healer” tradition (White, 2009).¹²

It happened in the first 6 minutes of the interaction, as the volunteers shared their own experience determined the others to speak of their own experience. This can be considered as an important factor of change for the newcomer (an addict who is for the first time in the group of peers). Other moments identified as vulnerability were from the counselors sharing their own ‘imperfections’ (see Extras 3), the stressed counselor’ (Question 4: raised intonation – as a way of dealing with tension, minute 36:58 – Diana, counselor, and ways to hide if she’s not in the best mood). Lori brings a very protective attitude, the groups start to laugh, and Ana is turning her head in the back while laughing.

Extras 3:

Time and duration of speech:	Who:	What was said:
34:05:888 – 38:06:944	Diana (counselor)	let’s get over the part of stereotypes or if someone has, for example, a different sexual orientation // and it depends on how much we also feel that we can get over this idea and look at man only as a man beyond sexual orientation or not that holds us back and us and maybe I feel like I could or couldn’t as a counselor go further // sure it would be ideal <u>to recognize our own limits</u> (laughs) ahead of time and possibly talk... ...maybe sometimes we convey to them indirectly from our face that:: I’m waiting for that hour to pass because I still have I don’t know how many things to do until four when I have to go home... ...the problems or the moments when the person in front of us touches the patch that we put on a <u>wound of ours that is not healed</u> and then yes:: we are also willing or not to enter the subject that one in detail because we may feel like we have no inner and we may or may not want to work on that wound at that moment and then

¹² For more than 275 years, individuals and families recovering from severe alcohol and other drug problems have provided peer-based recovery support (P-BRS) to sustain one another and to help those still suffering.

Time and duration of speech:	Who:	What was said:
		maybe we just sweep it under the rug and move on to the next exercise”
38:15:444 – 39:15:666	Lori (counselor)	...yeah:: you say something there ah (laughing in the background) the thing with <u>trust</u> no:: in the sense that yes:: that’s about the <u>vulnerability</u> of each of us and this part of self-knowledge before entering the counseling process is very important because that’s how you know what your vulnerabilities are... ...I don’t know if this is the thing that (xxx) with trust as well as with the ability to go into the depth of a therapy you know that:: the trust part is somehow before these things..
39:46:888 – 42:31:611	Ana (counselor)	for me, when you ask for help, it’s important for the person to be available when I ask him for help, when he’s fighting inside me, when I’m hurting, when I’m breaking // when I’ve already tried everything I can to:: adjust myself and so on and it’s not working // and then I send help...
01:51:06.970 – 01:53:06.555	Ana (counselor)	...vulnerability, the courage of others to show themselves vulnerable, I think that:: eh// I think it helps me because it’s clear to me, maybe not to others either eh ///pfuu I’m comfortable or not interested in being around perfect people...

The reflection on the counselor side followed with a few exchanges of speech between Lori and Diana as a moment of understanding and explaining. Lori being more of a counselor in this moment, as in the counseling group. Ana brings justification for the “here and now” availability of the counselor, as she needs that “the man should be available when I ask him for help when it screams in me when it hurts when I break” (39:46). Later, Ana, defines the vulnerability of the person to be known by others, as an important element of the group, as “everyone is in the same boat”, not as people who are cured. The “trust” element is also viewed as preliminary to the self-disclosure of the group members.

Minutes 39:47 until 43:09, dialogues between counselors Lori and Ana about the vulnerability of the counselor (Ana is involved through head movements, either agreeing either not, to what the two of the counselors are debating), opens the door and normalizes, until the moment when the volunteer Mary intervenes and corrects that interaction: 43:09 “delicate situations” and she turns to talk about her own need to be heard and for people to answer to her needs “here and now”, also she concluded in defense of the counselors: “because you are human too noo” (laughing).

The participants identified several elements that makes them feel comfortable and determine the trust in the counselor (see Extras 4): active listening, not being caught in cliches, being available here and now, authenticity, feedback, firmness (“no longer in your terms”). Mary described very well: “they reached me” (minute 52:44) while she described the crises that brought her back into recovery after a harsh relapse, and Tobi: “I even cried” (minute 30:52), at the first support group interaction.

Extras 4

Time and duration of speech:	Who:	What was said:
43:07.000 - 45:05.777	Lori (volunteer)	...in the beginning really <u>we are quite vulnerable and sensitive</u> at least I would have been // at a no: or over five minutes...
45:19.338 – 48:09.166	Tobi (volunteer)	...I think it has to be a <u>firm</u> one because that tells the addict ok you came asking for help the help can be yes it is <u>no longer in your terms</u> because this was one thing for me:... ...does all this matter to the other person, the <u>compassion</u> , the <u>feedback</u> , the <u>feeling that I’m not being lied to</u> , the <u>confidence</u> is sure // and this can move something, that is, to be born, something was born, and then I know in my head, maybe <u>there’s a solution</u> , a chance for me that it’s not I could see that it was possible, and that’s (hehe) what counted”
49:51:888 – 52:48.111	Lori (volunteer)	... I continued to use without sleep for about seventy-two hours and:: I think that the fact that:: at that moment <u>I sent a message</u> to my former counselor means that i received something from there, however //lol I don’t see any other way because <u>I was no longer me</u> I wasn’t anymore // and:: I think it was very hard // I don’t know I don’t know <u>I said that grace was put into words</u> that again I was on the tendency of self-punishment you don’t deserve it you will see that you don’t deserve it you’re dying now, so it’s over and done:: my surprise was still to have an answer from beyondand somehow it reached me again even though I was no longer there // and I managed to stop consumption: at that moment (xxx) about two weeks to be able to leave the house at leastI came somewhere around five (xxx) with my mother by the hand // very, very hard to pack again ... I can only be grateful that she managed to it gets to me in those moments // so: // (longer pause) yeah:

In the third question there were identified certain issues that the volunteers regarded as being obstacles and difficulties in the relationship. Bob is referring to the moment when the counselor showed him the treatment plan (minute 54:25), as the paperwork involved in the counseling. He explains that he felt that like a breakup in the relationship (using hand gestures too). The moment

of tension, was again dealt with laughter by part of the group members, while Jane and Diana kept a steel nonverbal reaction. The researcher intervened later with the comment about the paper work that is not convenient for the counselor either (minute 55:39) and Mary (55:27.111 – 55:33.527) concluded in self-irony: ‘ do you know what file I have then heh heh’ (laughs out loud).

3. Addressing method: from the client’s / counselor’s perspective

As a way of structuring the speech and adopting a certain role, we identified 6 moments of pointing out the counselor’s perspective – Diana (10:10) “from my point of view or actually from the counselor’s perspective (laughs)” and Lori continues (11:38.434) “also from the counselor’s perspective”. Jane (21:55:249 – 22:51:782) “from the counselor’s perspective ...” summarizing the importance of empathy, active-listening, paraphrasing with the client. Lori again, (33:26:999– 34:02:888, 3 times) about how the counselor is trying to help. Diana as she turns to speak repeats: “from the counselor’s perspective” (34:05: 888) about not judging the client and using the stereotypes. Lori comes back to the counseling groups as she describes the importance of the “feeling safe to talk” as one of the factors in promoting change (01:48:54.200).

The first moment “from the client’s perspective” (Tobi, 14:47:000) when everyone starts laughing, as a statement and change of perspectives.

It is very interesting as the speaker states the perspective as they start to talk: “from the perspective of the support group” (Tobi, minute: 01:12:40.759 and Jane, 01:17:44.192). 2 moments “from the perspective of recovery” (Tobi: 01:46:18.166 – 01:48:45.055)

The statements about the roles, served to keep the role that they are engaged in, either as a way to protect from being too vulnerable, as defense mechanisms, mostly in the case of Lori and Diana (counselors).

4. Change – as seen from the perspective of the shifting roles

During the negotiation process, we identified an effort to be conform. We observe the interactionist behavior of conformity, as Gofman represented the social dramaturgy, and the roles adopted in the social context. The emphasis is on the relationship, not necessarily on the content of the communication. Interaction can be seen as the “stage” where the change occurs. The constant dance of the roles emerged in the group as members related more or less from the personal point of view.

Bob (01:39:52.500 – 01:42:43.277) reflects that for the people in recovery the groups setting needs to offer something different then what they were used to in the environment of active using: “..newcomer out there was sitting with some druggies and he comes here and finds other druggies who talk the same thing they were talking about and the others don’t think it’s a :: difference..”

Extras 5

Time and duration of speech:	Who:	What was said:
11:38:434 – 12:39:521	Lori (volunteer)	...also <u>from the counselor’s perspective</u> // I don’t get so many people sent to me // yes:: important for me in the first stage somehow the connection that I manage to make emotionally with the person // that is to manage to:: resonate a bit with him/her to feel it too: if I can almost say that in the first minutes the match is played somehow // and if I manage to connect emotionally with him/her this is it if not:: then:: I’m still trying to reformulate myself to enter on his frequency somehow so that // that there are people who come like that with a denial but most of the codependents not anyway // but some come so in expectation and I have to jump that piece somehow to overcome it so that’s how I feel for me so...

In addiction recovery the well-known phenomenon of “two hats”, the recovering person who is a counselor, has always been considered to be a great advantage, but less studied from the perspective of countertransference. In this study we are able to view the way direct interaction provided “the stage” for role change and for the counselors to wear different hats at different moments, switching them around as the moment allowed and served (functioned) for the connection with other participants.

The counselor in the role of the patient and switch back in the role of the counselor. Ana points even the element of empathy for her, both as a patient, and as a counselor (“that the man who comes to me to feel human first of all”):

Extras 6:

Time and duration of speech:	Who:	What was said:
12:47:086 - 14:34:521	Ana (counselor)	...I think that’s what attracted me // the fact that I felt floyd curious about me because there was a long time when someone didn’t // I don’t know if anyone had ever been interested in what’s with me

		<p>beyond why I do what I do, I do what I produce or anything else // and I was really curious and that brought me the challenge somehow with that kept me and <u>from the shoes of the counselor</u> I think // I think i have to believe that the man can // even if he I don't think he cares about that, it seems to me more important <u>that the man who comes to me to feel human first of all</u> // no matter what minuses he did // but to /// be able to at least give him the idea the hope at the beginning that it will come out and that part of humanity does and that I think was the most general feedback received and I remember that Alexandra knows no // we were together with a lady who came back from the hallway and // a lady who was diagnosed with schizophrenia and came and just wanted to thank me for being the only place where <u>she was treated as a human being or with respect</u> or something like that after she was placed and hospitalized and humiliated // and I think that // that I think we have very authentic here // that makes a difference...</p>
<p>14:38-086 – 14:44.369</p>	<p>Ana (counsellor)</p>	<p>I hope I am (xxxxx) on the other side that I talked on the principal (the other counselor, Lori, laughs loudly in the background) huuuuuuu</p>

Bob (volunteer) is even expressing his frustration about the role shift inside the peer groups (01:39:52.500 – 01:42:43.277) “in recovery I don’t know, I consider myself a // policeman there or a teacher or // all kinds of hats // not // because I know that he helps me too and:...”.

One more evidence of role shift was the interaction about the perspective of codependents (family members of the addicts) as they assume the identity in recovery: Ana (01:28:56.693 – 01:30:27.777) sharing the experience as a family member, but also as a counselor perspective. Tobi is responding to that, as the great help for him as an addict (in the role of the codependent), as the codependents find a meaning in their suffering: “from the other perspective, the following idea may arise, my man drank it and I suffer from it // well why // because I didn’t do anything to him // and the way they manage to cope with a sense of suffering helped me as an addict to see // see that it’s not that simple // this helped me”.

The dynamic of change

The analysis of interactions suggests a dynamic of change which could be summarized as it follows¹³:

Recovery is seen not as a personal attribute that can be observed and measured (Best & Lubman, 2016), but rather as a socially mediated process, facilitated and structured by changes in group membership and resulting in the internalization of a new social identity, being an addict and a codependent in our case. This is happening in the first moments of interactions. People that are still in denial (they are just not ready in the present moment), may perceive this direct interaction as too powerful and only raises the defense mechanism, as seen in this research in the addressing method (from the counselor's perspective etc.). The change is made by changing the role in a context of determined direct interaction, as seen in all moments 'from the perspective of the counselor'.

The novelty of the interaction and the research method, both counselors and volunteers (as ex-patients), offered a new perspective on both sides, such a result not being possible in normal setting, as Lori concluded (56:53.444 – 56:57.944): 'you should know that all this discussion is good (laughs) that I learned a lot today', and is confirmed by the facial gestures of the rest of the counselors.

The format of the peer-support group is setting the scene for initial contact with recovery-oriented identity ('I am Mary, I am an addict'), as the effectiveness¹⁴ of 'assertive linkage' approaches was proved, in the ways in which the initiation of group engagement can occur for excluded individuals and shows to the role of the group in building resilience by promoting engagement and a sense of belonging (Jones & Jetten, 2011). The nonverbal communication evidenced the connection, through gestures, head movement, facial expressions and body gestures during the interaction.

In support groups, as in our research group, we can see how the role shift works in organizing the action for motivation, mobilization to continue, openness to express feelings of the new comers – this is the magic that happens and produces the

¹³ This attempt to model the interaction in a therapy group for persons with addictions is a kind of "free improvisation" based on some "motives" from the works of Alfred Schutz (Schutz 1943, see also Copoeru 2013)

Following Schutz, we do not begin the description with a pre-fabricated definition of interaction and of its outcomes. We describe the verbal and co-verbal actions of the agents who lives "naively" in the social world among their fellows. The point of view of the researcher is the same as the one of the ordinary people which are engaged in an interaction.

¹⁴ Testing this approach, both Timko, DeBenedetti, and Billow (2006) and Manning et al. (2012) have demonstrated the benefits of using peers to support active engagement in groups.

change. The group offers: direct interaction, real, open allowing you to vulnerability, freedom without rules, receptive, anticipation of change, mutual and equal help. People start to identify themselves in terms of recovery, the adopt the social identity of “us in recovery” (Best, 2016) leads to more behavioral change, even adopting strategies to avoid relapse.

In our focus group, in the interaction of the participants, we noted the “healthy synergism” ((White, 2009) as the participants adopted easily either side, has conducted the conclusion that the professional dimension of help is greatly influenced by the peer recovery movement. Authors have identified this as a “natural antithesis between the philosophy of the support groups and professional health care” (ibid.). Further research can focus on comparative efficiency of each approach can be addressed.

The readiness to change and engaging in behaviors to sustain change is very much determined either by a crisis in life, as our participants identified in the first question, either through engagement with a recovery-oriented group (like the 12-step meetings) or through encouragement and enthusiasm from friends¹⁵. In our case, this phenomenon was evidenced by the *enmeshment of the roles*.

Conclusions

Studies have shown that recognition by a peer or a consistent relationship with a service provider or sibling (Pettersen and al 2019) are instrumental for achieving and maintaining stable recovery in the treatment of addiction. While these findings have been usually based on semi-structured interviews with a limited number of participants, we attempted in this paper to problematize the group dynamic of people with addictions and the way it functions in a therapeutic setting (Minnesota model) in order for the newcomer to feel accepted, respected and to be open, without defenses.

Data collection was taken from group interview, by video recording of the focus group and participatory neutral observation. To annotate and transcribe the video and audio recordings we used ELAN software.

During the negotiation process in the group, we identified an effort of each individual to conform to the group. In accordance with Gofman’s idea of social dramaturgy, the roles have been adopted in the social context. Interaction appeared thus as the “stage” where the change occurs. The constant dance of the roles emerged in the group as members related more or less from the personal point of view.

¹⁵ SIMOR model of change

The outcome of our exploratory study may contribute to the identification of the therapeutic elements of group and individual counseling interaction through which addicts manage to overcome the denial of addiction, to accept the recovery program, to go through the stages of recovery, and to identify appropriate research methods for understanding the phenomenon of interaction in recovery from addictions.

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WHY WAS ST GREGORY OF NYSSA NEVER CONDEMNED FOR HIS DOCTRINE OF APOKATASTASIS?*

ILARIA L.E. RAMELLI**

ABSTRACT. This article will first point out that St Gregory of Nyssa supported the doctrine of apokatastasis or universal restoration as grounded in Christ and in defence of Christian “orthodoxy” against Arian tendencies—as Origen, his great inspirer, had done against “Gnosticism”. In light of this, the reason why Gregory’s doctrine of apokatastasis was never condemned by the Church (differently from the case of Origen) will be asked, and several potential answers, which reinforce one another, will be offered. Finally, the essay will highlight the role of Gregory as a touchstone of orthodoxy.

Keywords: St Gregory of Nyssa, Origen, St Maximus the Confessor, Patriarch Germanus I of Constantinople, Apokatastasis, Christocentrism, Orthodoxy, Purgatory, St Basil, St Naucratius, St Theosebia

Apokatastasis in Defence of Christian Orthodoxy in Origen’s and Gregory of Nyssa’s Christology

Both Origen and St Gregory of Nyssa—one of his most insightful followers—supported the doctrine of apokatastasis or universal restoration, within a context in which Christian soteriology, based primarily on Scripture, espoused Christian

* This project has benefitted from an Initiative of Excellence (KUL, related to the Professorship of Patristics and Church History I was awarded). For the works by Gregory of Nyssa, I used the Brill GNO series, *Gregory Nysseni Opera*, ed. Werner Jaeger et alii; for *De anima et resurrectione* and the scholia and glosses to it, I used the edition and commentary by I.L.E. Ramelli, *Gregorio di Nissa Sull’Anima e la Resurrezione*, Milan 2007. For Photius: *Photii Bibliotheca*, ed. I. Bekker, Berlin 1824-1825, and *Bibliothèque*, R. Henry, Paris 1959–1977.

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Platonism.¹ This trend will still continue in the last Western Patristic Platonist, Eriugena (who knew Origen and Greek Patristic well, including Gregory and Ps. Dionysius), who, after the model of Origen, joined the doctrine of apokatastasis with the third Neoplatonic movement of ἐπιστροφή.² In both Origen and Gregory, apokatastasis is Christocentric and grounded in Scripture.

It is important to point out that, as has been convincingly argued, both Origen and Gregory supported the theory of apokatastasis as an anti-heretical doctrine, respectively against “Gnostic” determinism, praedestinastionism and dualism (in the case of Origen, especially in Book 3 of *De principiis*) and against “Arian” subordinationism (in the case of Gregory of Nyssa, especially in *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius*: see below), and as a theory endowed with strong Christological foundations.³ Later, this line—namely, supporting apokatastasis within an anti-heretical agenda—was to be followed by St Augustine in his anti-Manichaean polemic.⁴ Thus, both Origen and St Gregory of Nyssa supported the theory of apokatastasis as an anti-heretical doctrine, respectively against “Gnosticism” and “Arianism”, and provided it with a strong Christological foundation.

Gregory, as mentioned, argued for the doctrine of apokatastasis against “Arian” and “neo-Arian” subordinationism. In his *In Illud: Tunc et Ipse Filius*, his commentary on 1 Corinthians 15:28, Gregory’s anti-subordinationism in the Trinitarian area is connected to the argument for the eventual apokatastasis of all creatures, including even the devil (a totalising form of apokatastasis that is expressed in Gregory’s *Oratio Catechetica* as well). In this short exegetical work, Gregory addresses the issue of the eventual submission of the Son to the Father—as foretold by St Paul in 1Cor 15:28—and, deriving each argument from Origen, as I recently demonstrated extensively elsewhere,⁵ he claims that the Son’s eschatological submission cannot be interpreted as a sign of inferiority, as was contended by the “neo-Arians”, but it indicates the submission of all humanity—the “body of

¹ Argument in I.L.E. Ramelli, *Christian Soteriology and Christian Platonism: Origen, Gregory of Nyssa, and the Biblical and Philosophical Basis of the Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, *Vigiliae Christianae* 61, 2007, 313-356.

² See the following footnote.

³ Argued thoroughly by I.L.E. Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis: A Critical Assessment from the New Testament to Eriugena*, *Vigiliae Christianae Supplements* 120, Leiden 2013; Origen’s Anti-Subordinationism and Its Heritage in the Nicene and Cappadocian Line, *Vigiliae Christianae* 65, 2011, 21-49; The Father in the Son, the Son in the Father in the Gospel of John: Sources and Reception of Dynamic Unity in Middle and Neoplatonism, “Pagan” and Christian, *Journal of the Bible and Its Reception* 7, 2020, 31-66.

⁴ As is demonstrated in I.L.E. Ramelli, *Origen in Augustine: A Paradoxical Reception*, *Numen* 60, 2013, 280-307.

⁵ Ramelli, *Anti-subordinationism*.

Christ”—to God in the end, so that God will be “all in all” (1Cor 15:28). Gregory thus bases his theory of apokatastasis in his defence of orthodox Trinitarian doctrine against “Arian” subordinationism (which was already contrasted by Origen himself ante litteram), just as Origen based it on his defence of “orthodox” Christian doctrine against “Gnostic” predestinationism.⁶ For both of these Patristic philosophers, the final apokatastasis will really be “the gift of God”, through Jesus Christ, and “the victory of God”.⁷

Now, if Origen and Gregory of Nyssa supported the theory of apokatastasis as a doctrine grounded in Scripture, and in defence of Christian “orthodoxy” (against “Gnosticism” and “Arianism” respectively), this contributes to explain the reason why Gregory’s doctrine of apokatastasis was never condemned by the Church (although Origen is assumed to have been condemned for both this doctrine and the so-called pre-existence of souls, which Justinian connected with the doctrine of metempsychosis—in fact, Origen probably never supported either the theory of transmigration of souls or their disembodied pre-existence⁸).

There are many factors, in addition to the general philosophico-theological reason outlined in the previous paragraph (and valid if we assume that theologians after Gregory grasped what I have noted, i.e. that he argued for his doctrine of apokatastasis in an anti-heretical, Christological context). I will endeavour to point out some of what I deem the most important reasons why his doctrine of apokatastasis was never condemned by the Church.

First Reason: Gregory’s Loci on Apokatastasis Later Understood as References to the Purgatory and Object of Glosses

One reason may easily reside in the interpretation of Gregory’s references to the doctrine of apokatastasis or final restoration as references to the purgatory (a later doctrine, with some grounds in ancient texts⁹). In fact, Origen, Gregory Nyssen

⁶ I use Origen’s own terminology: he does use the category of “heterodoxy” as opposed to “orthodoxy”.

⁷ I draw the former expression from Paul and Origen (χάρισμα τοῦ θεοῦ, θεοῦ τὸ δῶρον), and the latter, felicitous expression from H. Pietras, *L’escatologia della Chiesa*, Rome 2006, 104, who applies it to Gregory of Nyssa’s doctrine of apokatastasis: “the victory of God will be all-encompassing” (“la vittoria di Dio sarà totale”).

⁸ Argument in my Gregory of Nyssa’s Purported Criticism of Origen’s Purported Doctrine of the Preexistence of Souls, in: *Lovers of the Soul and Lovers of the Body: Philosophical and Religious Perspectives in Late Antiquity*, eds. S. S. Griffin and I.L.E. Ramelli, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022, 277-308.

⁹ Documentation in I.L.E. Ramelli, Origen, Bardaisan, and the Origin of Universal Salvation, *Harvard Theological Review* 102, 2009, 135-168.

and Gregory Nazianzen did not really distinguish hell from purgatory: in a way, they rather considered hell as what we call “purgatory”, deeming it temporary. Nevertheless, the so-called condemnation of apokatastasis in 543 and in the Council of Constantinople from 553—which is tampered with and at any rate does not mention Gregory of Nyssa as a supporter of this doctrine—led readers to some embarrassment at the presence of this doctrine in St Gregory, who, after the first Council of Constantinople (381), was regarded as a model of orthodoxy.

The embarrassment raised by Gregory’s theory of apokatastasis emerges, for example, from the glosses apposed to his *De anima et resurrectione* or *On the Soul and the Resurrection*, a dialogue that is modelled on Plato’s dialogue *Phaedo* (in reference to the immortality of the soul), but is Christianised (and therefore supports the resurrection and restoration), and contains important expressions of the theory of apokatastasis¹⁰—as many others of Gregory’s works do. In other works as well, for instance, textual variants omitting all references to the doctrine of apokatastasis testify to the embarrassment of later readers before St Gregory’s theory.

Here, I will offer some of the most significant examples from *De anima*,¹¹ from short glosses or variants to long scholia, beginning with a gloss—a marginal comment—to Gregory’s *An. et res.* 89CD. Gregory in his text says: “If, thanks to our solicitude in the present life, or thanks to the purification by fire in the next one, our soul will be able to liberate itself from irrational passions, then there will be nothing that can impede it to contemplate the Good”, which is God. Eternal contemplation of God, the supreme Good, is eternal blessedness. Now, the Byzantine scholiast, who read this passage and the whole dialogue by Gregory, was probably offended by this expression of the doctrine of apokatastasis, in the reference to otherworldly purification, which will enable sinners to finally contemplate God. Codex A in a marginal note, instead of κάθαρσις (“purification”) reports the variant reading πύρωσις (“being burnt by fire”). Clearly, the former reading, by Gregory himself, points to the purificatory function of punishments in the next world, supported before him by Bardaisan of Edessa, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen himself. The latter reading, instead, that of the variant, rules out the purifying aim of otherworldly suffering and insists on a merely retroactive punishment.

¹⁰ See I.L.E. Ramelli, Gregory of Nyssa on the Soul (and the Restoration): From Plato to Origen, in: Exploring Gregory of Nyssa: Historical and Philosophical Perspectives, eds. A. Marmodoro and N. McLynn, Oxford 2018, 110-141.

¹¹ In the commented edition of the dialogue by Ramelli, *Gregorio Sull’anima*, many of such very interesting and telling glosses are reported. Codex A corresponds to codex Uffenbachianus. For a complete *conspectus codicum*, see the introduction by Andreas Spira and Ekkehard Mühlberg to their edition of *De anima et resurrectione* in GNO 3.3, Leiden 2008.

Moreover, in *An. et res.* 92, probably in reference to Gregory's above-mentioned claims about the purification by fire in the next world, which will eventually allow sinners to contemplate God, *cod.* A reports a lengthy scholium, which I translate in the following block quotation. Gregory's words on the eternal contemplation of God are declared in this marginal note to be applicable not to all, but only to some people, namely those whom the later doctrine will locate in purgatory and who will eventually enter beatitude after purification (those who are in hell, instead, will not have any opportunity to be purified and then enjoy eternal contemplation):

Do not think that the Author (Gregory of Nyssa) said this (*sc.* that they will finally contemplate God) concerning all human beings [ἐπὶ πάντων], but only concerning those in whom there are only small, rare traces [λείμματα] of the life that is subject to passions [μικρά τινα τῆς ἐμπάθους ζωῆς]: they deserve to be forgiven, because of the frailty of the flesh [διὰ τὴν σαρκικὴν ἀσθένειαν]. It is from such leftovers that Gregory says that the souls will be purified [καθαίρεσθαι], as is maintained also by other Fathers [ἄλλοις τισὶ τῶν Πατέρων], including Dionysius the Areopagite and Diadochus of Photice.

Indeed, if we do not interpret Gregory's words in this way, we shall make it evident that Gregory not only says the opposite of what all the other teachers [πᾶσι τοῖς ἄλλοις διδάσκαλοις] say, but he would contradict even himself [ἐαυτῷ τὰ ἐναντία λέγειν]. For he has stated beforehand that the fruition [ἀπόλαυσιν] of the goods is inaccessible to sinners and unreachable [ἄβατον καὶ ἀπαρόδευτον τοῖς ἁμαρτωλοῖς]. Moreover, it is clear that he would also be at odds with the divine words [θεῖοις ῥήμασιν, *sc.* those of the Bible], which declare that, in the case of these people, punishment will have no end [ἀπέραντον τὴν κόλασιν].¹²

Regarding the contradiction that the scholiast thinks of finding within Gregory's texts, in fact Gregory maintains that sinners will be punished, but therapeutically, so that they will reject evil and return voluntarily to God. The fruition of the goods is inaccessible to sinners as long as they are sinners, in Gregory's own view, but when they convert to God, the supreme Good, they are no longer sinners.

In *An. et res.* 104, Gregory is arguing that the doctrine of apokatastasis is grounded in 1 Cor 15:24-28, a text that already Origen had used in support of this theory (both buttressed it through the "theology of freedom", as in Gregory's case

¹² This is one interpretation of the adjective αἰώνιος in the Bible, but it is not necessarily the correct one; see below the next point ("second reason"). The use of ἀπέραντον by the scholiast does not reflect accurately the Biblical usage.

is also clear in the following locus¹³): “whatever is free will come to be in virtue. Now, the divine nature is the source of all virtues. As a consequence, in this nature will come to be those who have freed themselves from evilness/vice [κακία], that, as the Apostle [sc. St Paul] says, ‘God will be all in all’.¹⁴ This declaration, indeed, seems to me to confirm with all evidence the theory previously established,¹⁵ in that it affirms that God will eventually be both ‘all’ and ‘in all’”.

Now, with respect to this passage by Gregory, *cod. A* reports a scholium, which intends to rectify the interpretation of 1 Cor 15:28, denying that it refers to *apokatastasis*: “Those who will free themselves [ἀπηλλαγμένοι] from vice will be those who can no longer do anything evil [μηδὲν ἐνεργεῖν τι κακὸν δυνάμενοι],¹⁶ but not all will be free from punishment [οὐ πάντες ἔξω κολάσεως] as long as they live, or will enjoy the Kingdom of Heavens [τῆς βασιλείας τῶν οὐρανῶν ἀπολαύσουσιν]. Read what follows and you will learn the meaning of Paul’s sentence, ‘God will be all in all’ [τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσι Θεός], and remember what has been said concerning evilness [κακίας].” That some people, or many people, will be punished in the present life and especially in the other world was supported by Gregory himself, in *De anima* and elsewhere—so, on this point the scholium is not at odds with his ideas—but what the scholiast maintains, that not all will be eventually blessed and enjoy the Kingdom, does contradict Gregory’s theory. For Gregory explicitly asserted that “no creature of God will fall out of the Kingdom of God” (*Tunc et Ipse* 14 Downing) and even the devil will be converted by Christ.¹⁷

At the end of *An. et res.* 104, Gregory, on the basis of the former reference to 1 Cor 15:28, claims that Scripture, by foreseeing that God will be “all in all”, teaches “the total vanishing of evilness”. This very argument stems directly from Origen, but what is most relevant here is that a scholium in *cod. A* shows again the preoccupation with Gregory’s doctrine of *apokatastasis* and attempts to show that the vanishing of evil and the presence of God “all in all” does not mean universal salvation: “Therefore, (according to Gregory, God will be) in demons and sinners [ἐν δαίμοσιν καὶ ἐν ἁμαρτωλοῖς ἀνθρώποις] as well. And where will justice [τὸ δίκαιον] be, if these also will inherit the Good, as the just will do? Now, someone could say: But this will not happen in the same way [οὐχ ὁμοίως], but very differently [λίαν διαφορώτερον]. For where shall we put the torments that are due as a punishment [τὰ τῆς

¹³ An issue of *Modern Theology* devoted to Origen (2022) includes an investigation into Origen’s and Gregory’s theology of freedom and the latter’s dependence on Origen’s.

¹⁴ 1Cor 15:28.

¹⁵ Namely, the doctrine of *apokatastasis*.

¹⁶ Namely, in the other world nobody will be able to do evil. This is what Gregory refers to, according to the scholiast, and not to the liberation of all from evil by free choice (what Gregory is explaining).

¹⁷ Ramelli, *Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, 372-440.

κολάσεως ἐπιτίμια], the inextinguishable fire [πῦρ ἄσβεστον], the never-dying worm [ἀτελεύτητον σκώληκα], and the like? Indeed, I think that the division into two [διχοτόμησιν] will be nothing else than being severed from God [τὸ κευωρίσθαι Θεοῦ]. Therefore, it is certainly the case that God will be glorified and worshipped by all, but for some this will happen through the enjoyment of the Kingdom, while for others while being punished. For, if we do not concede this, we shall show that the master (St Gregory) contradicts both the divine Scriptures and the other Fathers [τῇ θείᾳ Γραφῇ καὶ τοῖς ἄλλοις Πατράσι μαχησόμενον], and even himself [καὶ μὴν καὶ ἑαυτῷ], since elsewhere he explicitly teaches eternal punishment [κόλασιν αἰωνίαν], the impossibility for sinners to enjoy the goods [τὰ ἀγαθὰ] reserved for the just. But why are we saying ‘elsewhere’? In the present dialogue as well, as we have realised above, either we must understand what has been said earlier according to the interpretation we mentioned, or we must suppose that such sentences have been written by some interpolators [παρανετέθη ταῦτα ὑπὸ παραχαρακτῶν τινων] who do not believe the truth, or the master (St Gregory) will evidently seem to utter contradictory absurdities [ἀλλόκοτος ὁ διδάσκαλος φανεῖται]—which is intolerable even to state [εἰπεῖν ἄτοπον].”

The charge of contradicting other Patristic authors and even himself, levelled here against Gregory in case his words are interpreted as a reference to the doctrine of apokatastasis, is the same as is found in the scholium to *An. et res.* 92, examined above. This suggests that the author, or the source of inspiration, is the same.

In *An. et res.* 136, Gregory cites Phil 2:10–11 as another important scriptural prop of the theory of apokatastasis (along with 1 Cor 15:28): “This is what the Apostle states rather clearly, expressing the eventual universal harmony with the Good:¹⁸ ‘Every knee will bend before Christ, those of heavenly, earthly, and infernal creatures, and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father’, designating with the ‘horns’ the angels and celestial beings, and signifying by means of the rest the intellectual creatures that come after the angels, namely us, who will all be engaging in one great feast characterised by harmony”. At this point, cod. A reports the following scholium, written again by a reader who was worried about Gregory’s doctrine of apokatastasis and intended to show that Gregory did not in fact support such a theory. In reference to Gregory’s description of the common eschatological feast of humans and angels alike, when humans will return to their state of ἰσαγγελία, the scholiast, vexed, comments: “What does he (St Gregory) say that the future feast [ἐορτήν] of the immaterial angels and human creatures will consist in? That all will unanimously recognise [συμφόνως ὁμολογεῖν]

¹⁸ Namely, God. See I.L.E. Ramelli, Harmony between *arkhē* and *telos* in Patristic Platonism and the Imagery of Astronomical Harmony Applied to the Apokatastasis Theory, *International Journal of the Platonic Tradition* 7, 2013, 1-49.

the existence of God [εἶναι θεόν]. Therefore, regarding the acknowledgment of God's existence [τὴν θεογνωσίαν], all—sinners and righteous people—will agree [ὁμογνωμονήσουσιν], but they will certainly not be found in the same state [μῶς καταστάσεως] (otherwise, where would justice [τὸ δίκαιον] be?), but some will enjoy the Kingdom of Heavens, whereas the others will be excluded [ἐκτός] from it, as the Apostle states”.

Note here again the objection from “justice” [τὸ δίκαιον], which is the same objection, even with the same expression (τὸ δίκαιον), as is found in the scholium to *An. et res.* 104, analysed above. The scholiast, towards the end of the present scholium to *An. et res.* 136, remarks that some people will be excluded from the divine Kingdom: this flatly contradicts, once again, what Gregory expressly states in *Tunc et Ipse* 14 Downing: “No creature of God will fall out of the Kingdom of God” (μηδενὸς τῶν παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ γεγονότων τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀποπίπτοντος).

There are other scholia, which express anxiety about Gregory's theory of universal restoration and try to argue that Gregory's declarations concerning apokatastasis in fact refer to purgatory, and not to universal restoration. Some glosses overtly denounce Origen's doctrine of the fall and apokatastasis; this is why it was vital to prove that Gregory, instead, never embraced the theory of universal restoration. At *An. et res.* 100, in which Gregory affirms that otherworldly punishment, especially fire, will purify sinners, a marginal scholium in cod. A observes: “It is necessary to interpret both this sentence and the following ones on the basis of the exegetical criterion that we have expounded earlier, in reference to the discussion of the vanishing of evilness [περὶ τῆς ἀφανισθείσης κακίας]. Please, read both carefully”. The scholiast is clearly concerned with Gregory's theory of the otherworldly suffering not as a mere punishment of past sins, but as a purification, which will have an end and will bring about the “vanishing of evilness/vice/sin”. This is clearly one of the premises for the doctrine of apokatastasis.

Towards the end of *An. et res.* 96, Gregory argues that the divinity knows itself and immediately loves itself, since satiety (κόρος) cannot apply to what is eminently good and beautiful, as God is. Now, a scholium in cod. A does not pay full attention to the context—the Godhead's own knowledge and love for itself—but, attracted by the word κόρος, begins to speak of the fall of the souls: not God's love, but the souls' love of God. The scholiast, then, begins to blame Origen's theory that certain souls began to feel satiety (κόρος) and fell, opposing to it the theory that the saints will never know satiety in their love of God: “The saints' loving attitude [ἀγαπητικὴ σχέσις] towards God knows no satiety [κόρον]. Thus, Origen's inventions [ἀναπλασθεῖς] are nonsense [λῆρος], namely the satiety of intellectual creatures [τῶν νοῶν κόρος], their fall [κατάπτωσις] because of it, and their being called back [ἀνάκλησις], on the basis of which Origen constructs the famous doctrine [τὸ

πολυθύλλητον δόγμα] of the preexistence and restoration of the souls [τῆς τῶν ψυχῶν προϋπάρξεως τε καὶ ἀποκαταστάσεως], carried around by an incessant movement [ἀσάτω φορᾷ περιφερομένων]—eager as he was to mix up the Greek myths with the Church’s truth [τὰ Ἑλληνικὰ μυθεύματα τῆ ἐκκλησιαστικῆ ἀληθείᾳ].” The scholiast does not take into account that Origen himself theorised that from the eventual apokatastasis there will be no new fall, because—as Paul claimed—“love never falls”,¹⁹ so the saints’ love will never be spoiled again by satiety or anything else. Indeed, after arguing that rational creatures will always keep their free will, but the Cross of Christ is so effective as to be sufficient to save all rational creatures in all aeons, Origen goes on to observe:

What is the factor that in the future aeons will prevent the freedom of will from falling again into sin? The Apostle tells us this quite pithily, when he states: “Love never falls.” This is why love is greater than faith and hope, because it is the only one which will prevent all sin. For, if the soul has reached such a degree of perfection as to love God with all its heart, with all its mind, and with all its forces, and its neighbour as much as itself, what room will be left for sin? . . . Love will prevent every creature from falling, when God will be “all in all.” . . . So great is the power of love that it attracts every being to itself . . . especially in that God has been the first to give us reasons for love, since he has not spared his only child, but he offered him for all of us.²⁰

The Pauline claim that “love never falls (out)” was so pivotal that Origen often hammered it home and based his argument on it also in *Comm. in Cant.* prol. 2.45. Origen was probably also mindful of Clement’s claim that “love does not allow one to sin” (*Strom.* 4.113.1), which in turn rested on Paul. Origen’s claim that charity-love will never fall out (πίπτει, ἐκπίπτει), thereby impeding any further fall from the blessedness of apokatastasis, seems to me to ground Gregory of Nyssa’s above-mentioned declaration that “no creature of God will fall out of the Kingdom of God”, with the use of ἀποπίπτοντος that echoes Origen’s and Paul’s statement (μηδενὸς τῶν παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ γεγονότων τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀποπίπτοντος, *Tunc et Ipse* 14 Downing).

¹⁹ 1Cor 13:8.

²⁰ “Quod autem sit quod in futuris saeculis teneat arbitrii libertatem ne rursus corruat in peccatum, breui nos sermone apostolus docet, dicens: ‘Caritas numquam cadit’ [ἡ ἀγάπη οὐδέποτε (ἐκ)πίπτει]. Idcirco enim et fide et spe maior caritas dicitur quia sola erit per quam delinqui ultra non poterit. Si enim in id anima perfectionis ascenderit ut ex toto corde suo et ex tota mente sua et ex totis uiribus suis diligat Deum et proximum suum tamquam se ipsam, ubi erat peccati locum? ... Caritas omnem creaturam continebit a lapsu, tunc cum erit Deus omnia in omnibus. ... Tanta caritatis uis est ut ad se omnia trahat..., maxime cum caritatis causas prior nobis dederit Deus qui unico Filio suo non pepercit, sed pro nobis omnibus tradidit” (*Comm. in Rom.* 5.10.195-226).

Second Reason: Patriarch Germanus Explained Away Gregory's Loci on Apokatastasis as "Heretic" Interpolations

Gregory's doctrine of apokatastasis was explained away by Germanus I, the Patriarch of Constantinople in 715-30, as a series of interpolations by heretics, so as to avoid attributing this doctrine to Gregory.

Patriarch Germanus, the son of a senatorial official, educated in a monastery, was involved in the controversy concerning iconoclasm (he was forced to resign in 730 from the patriarchate because he refused to embrace iconoclasm) and in that over Monotheletism and Ditheletism. Germanus, once he was created patriarchal bishop of Constantinople in 715, convened a synod to support Ditheletism. Such a controversy also produced an excellent victim: St Maximus the Confessor, who, as I shall argue below, represents an important factor in the consideration of Gregory's doctrine of apokatastasis as "orthodox" and acceptable to the Church. The Council of Nicaea in 787 praised Germanus, who became a saint in Greek and Latin Christianity. Being regarded very highly, his opinion on Gregory of Nyssa was influential.

His judgment on Gregory's philosophy and terminology of time and eschatology is especially relevant to the present research. Gregory of Nyssa in this respect is in line with Origen, who saw the final apokatastasis as the end of all aeons, when no one will be in an aeon (αἰών) any more, but God will be "all in all."²¹ Therefore, the "aeonian" (αἰώνιος) death, the "aeonian" (αἰώνιος) punishment, and the "aeonian" (αἰώνιον) fire mentioned in the New Testament are not understood by Gregory as "eternal" (as the late Augustine does, mainly considering the meaning of *aeternus* in Latin²²), but as pertaining to the world to come and lasting for a while.²³

Probably also because of this crucial linguistic misunderstanding, in the eighth century Germanus of Constantinople, convinced as he was that Gregory with "aeonian" (αἰώνιος) meant "eternal", since he also found the doctrine of apokatastasis unequivocally supported throughout Gregory's works and was unable to explain

²¹ Argument in I.L.E. Ramelli, Αἰώνιος and αἰών in Origen and Gregory of Nyssa, *Studia Patristica* 47, 2010, 57-62 and: Gregory and Evagrius, *Studia Patristica* 101, 2021, 177-206; H. Boersma, Overcoming Time and Space: Gregory of Nyssa's Anagogical Theology, *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, 20, 2012, 575-612: esp. 579-584.

²² Argument in Ramelli, Origen in Augustine, 280-307.

²³ This is the same meaning that underlies the last line of the Credal formula that is still recited today: "the life of the world to come", which translates Greek "aeonian" life. It is not translated "life eternal". But life is also called *aīdios*, which means "eternal, everlasting" proper, while death for humans is never called *aīdios* in Scripture (and also by Origen, Nyssen and many others, as demonstrated in I.L.E. Ramelli and D. Konstan, *Terms for Eternity. Αἰώνιος and αἰίδιος in Classical and Christian Authors*, Piscataway, NJ 2007; new ed. 2013, reviewed by C. O'Brien, *The Classical Review* 60.2, 2010, 390-391), so it is never explicitly said to be eternal / everlasting.

away this apparent contradiction, thought that Gregory's manuscripts had been interpolated by Origenists, as we shall see in two paragraphs. However, Gregory, like Origen and other Fathers, does not understand "aeonian" (αἰώνιος) punishment or perdition, or "aeonian" (αἰώνιον) fire, as "eternal" proper, but rather as lasting for an indefinite period, depending on each single case, in the world to come.

This was understood well by another opponent of universal restoration, Severus, bishop of Antioch (512–518). He easily recognised the presence of the doctrine of apokatastasis in Gregory and personally countered it: Severus "does not accept what is said by St Gregory, bishop of Nyssa, concerning apokatastasis" (τῷ ἐν ἁγίοις Γρηγορίῳ, τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ Νύσσης, τὰ εἰρημμένα περὶ ἀποκαταστάσεως οὐκ ἀποδέχεται).²⁴ Severus even used Origenism—a very blurred notion at that time—as a charge against an opponent, as is confirmed by the sixth-century Byzantine theologian Gobar: "Severus (of Antioch) wanted to blame St. Isidore, but he did not have any ground for this; thus, he falsely accused him of Origenism [φήμην αὐτῷ περιπλάττει Ὀριγενιασμοῦ]."²⁵ Severus' Letter 98 provides a refutation of the doctrine of apokatastasis,²⁶ arguing among else that one's sins are not measured on the basis of their duration (which would make eternal punishment impossible and unjust), but on the basis of the sinner's intention, which, in his view, is not limited, so that otherworldly punishment will have to be infinite as well.

Some "heretics", since "they know the loftiness of Gregory's teaching and the abundance of his writings and are aware of his respected conception of the faith, spread among all humans", inserted the passages on apokatastasis into Gregory's own works, "full of the light of salvation". Indeed, those heretics who "cherish the foolish doctrine [λῆρος] of the restoration [ἀποκατάστασις] of the race of the demons and of humans who are damned to an unending punishment" inserted in "the pure and perfectly sound spring of Gregory's writings the inform, obscure, and pernicious products of Origen's dreams, surreptitiously ascribing this foolish heresy to a man who is famous for his virtue and doctrine". Such interpolators, "sometimes by faked additions, sometimes by their constant efforts to pervert orthodox thinking, have attempted to falsify many of Gregory's works, which were beyond reproach".²⁷

²⁴ Phot. *Bibl. cod.* 232, p. 291b Bekker.

²⁵ Ap. Phot. *Bibl. cod.* 232, p. 291b Bekker.

²⁶ I. Torrance, *The Correspondence of Severus and Sergius*, Piscataway, NJ, 2011. On Severus see P. Allen–R. Hayward, *Severus of Antioch*, London 2004.

²⁷ So Photius, *Bibl. cod.* 232, p. 291b Bekker.

Photius comments that against such falsifiers, “Germanus, the defender of the true faith, directed the sword, sharpened with truth, and left his enemies mortally injured”. Photius quotes from a lost work of Germanus of Constantinople, the Ἀνταποδοτικός, or *On Retribution*, whose aim was to demonstrate that the works of Gregory of Nyssa were “pure from the stain of Origenism”, Ὀριγενείου λώβης.²⁸ Here Germanus, after criticising the doctrine of the restoration of the demons and of human sinners after a limited punishment (μετά τινὰς ποιναὶς ὠρισμένας), produced against it “the words of the Lord, the preaching of the apostles, and the testimony of the prophets, which clearly expound that, just as the ineffable beatitude of the just is eternal [αἰώνιος], so is also the punishment of sinners infinite [ἀτελεύτητος] and unbearable”. Again, αἰώνιος is mistaken as meaning “eternal” and a synonym of ἀτελεύτητος. It is clear that in the development of the debate on apokatastasis the meanings of the different nuances that the two terms, αἰώνιος and αἰδῖος, bore was completely lost.²⁹ Thus, Germanus intended to “rescue” Gregory from the charge of supporting the Origenian doctrine of apokatastasis.

In Gregory *An. et res.* 97, a gloss in Codex B reports the philological strategy of Germanus with respect to Gregory’s doctrine of apokatastasis in this work.³⁰ It is a strategy based on expunction: “Blessed Germanus expunged as spurious [νόθα] a part of the preceding words, marking them with an obelos [ὠβέλισε].” Indeed, Germanus considered the following words of Gregory in *De anima*, which express universal apokatastasis, as a posterior addition: “The soul is necessarily attracted by the divine, which is akin to it. For it is necessary that in all respects and in all ways God can have what is proper to God. If the soul is light and has no superfluous burdens on itself, without any carnal annoyance that afflicts it, then it can easily and happily get close to what attracts it,” namely God, the supreme Good. And if a soul is charged with sins, as Gregory goes on to explain, it will be purified and will reach the Divine all the same. Now, Germanus saw that this argument amounts to the doctrine of apokatastasis and therefore denied that Gregory wrote this passage (as well as many others). In his view, this section was inserted later by “heretics”. More generally, in Germanus’ view, all the loci that support the doctrine of universal restoration in Gregory’s *De anima* are heretical interpolations.

²⁸ Photius *Bibl. Cod.* 232-233, p. 291b-292b Bekker, CPG 8022.

²⁹ For their differentiation in the Bible and earlier authors, see Ilaria L.E. Ramelli, “Time and Eternity”, in *The Routledge Handbook to Early Christian Philosophy*, ed. Mark Edwards, Oxford: Routledge, 2021, 41-54.

³⁰ Codex B corresponds to Codex Hasselmanianus.

If people thought that the passages on apokatastasis in Gregory's oeuvre were not written by Gregory himself, but by later, "heretical" interpolators, this can well represent another reason why Gregory of Nyssa was never condemned as an assertor of the theory of universal restoration.

Other thinkers, instead, easily recognised the presence of the doctrine of apokatastasis in Gregory—without endeavouring to deny it by means of an interpolation theory or other strategies—and did not accept such doctrine, such as the above-mentioned Severus of Antioch and, in the sixth century, the monk Barsanuphius of Gaza. Barsanuphius acknowledged that Gregory clearly taught apokatastasis, without trying to deny this: "Gregory of Nyssa himself speaks clearly of apokatastasis" (περὶ ἀποκαταστάσεως σαφῶς λέγει ὁ αὐτὸς Γρηγόριος ὁ Νύσσης).

Therefore, Barsanuphius faced a big problem when confronted by this fact and, at the same time, by the veneration of Gregory as a saint of the orthodox church.³¹ The same attitude emerges from the correspondence of Barsanuphius and John of Gaza, a collection of letters in which the two ascetics of the desert of Gaza reply to many questions. In Letter 600, a monk asks Barsanuphius what his position is about Origen, Didymus, and Evagrius's *Kephalaia Gnostica*, especially about the doctrines of the preexistence of souls³² and apokatastasis. Barsanuphius and John, in their responses, entirely oppose such theories (600; 601). Barsanuphius' Letter 604 reveals how he resolved the conundrum above—namely, that Gregory supported the doctrine of apokatastasis and nevertheless was a saint. A monk asks Barsanuphius the reason why Origen's doctrine, especially that of apokatastasis, was supported by orthodox authors, and even saints, such as the Cappadocians (meaning Gregory of Nyssa primarily, but including Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus).³³

Now, Barsanuphius, far from attempting to deny that Gregory and the other Cappadocians supported the doctrine of apokatastasis (as Germanus and some scholiasts to *De anima* did), simply observes that even saints can have a limited understanding of the mysteries of God and can sometimes be wrong. Therefore, neither the monk nor Barsanuphius, who rejected the doctrine of apokatastasis, thought that Gregory did not actually believe in apokatastasis and that his works were

³¹ *C. opin. Orig.* PG 86.891–902.

³² It has been argued that Origen in fact did not support the preexistence of disembodied souls in rational beings once created substantially: I.L.E. Ramelli, Origen, in: *A History of Mind and Body in Late Antiquity*, eds S. Cartwright and A. Marmodoro, Cambridge 2018, 245-266; further in Origen on the Unity of Soul and Body in the Earthly Life and Afterwards and His Impact on Gregory of Nyssa, in: *The Unity of Soul and Body in Patristic and Byzantine Thought*, ed. J. Ulrich, A. Usacheva, and A. Bhayro, Leiden 2021, 38-77.

³³ On the presence of this doctrine in the three of them, see Ramelli, *Apokatastasis*, 344-461, and further for Basil, Basil and Apokatastasis: New Findings, *Journal of Early Christian History* 4.2, 2014, 116-136.

interpolated by heretics in order to have people deem him a supporter of universal restoration. He gave another solution, which classified the doctrine of apokatastasis as wrong, but he fully recognised the sanctity of Gregory as well as that of the two other Cappadocians (who also seem to have supported the doctrine of apokatastasis, although in a more limited scope and more prudently³⁴).

Third Reason: Maximus the Confessor Explicitly Accepted Gregory's Theory of Apokatastasis

Another reason for the lack of any condemnation of Gregory's doctrine of apokatastasis may lie in the fact that his doctrine of apokatastasis was declared to be acceptable by the Byzantine theologian St Maximus the Confessor (580-662). He lived after Justinian's so-called condemnation of apokatastasis. Given the authority of Maximus, his endorsement appears to be a strong reason why Gregory was never condemned.

Maximus based his thought on philosophical sources—never mentioned, but known directly or indirectly—and *patristic* philosophical sources, including Clement, Origen, the Cappadocians, Evagrius, Nemesius, and Ps.Dionysius. Maximus exerted a great impact on later Byzantine thought, and even in the West, thanks to Eriugena. This is why his influence in regarding Gregory as orthodox was remarkable. His most important and influential doctrines reside in theology—the concept of God and divine activity and works, from the Cappadocians and Dionysius—and Christology—diergetism and dithelietism, concerning the double energy and double will of Christ. The latter doctrine led to Maximus' trial and death, but it was soon ratified at the Sixth Ecumenical Council. Maximus rejected the theory of the preexistence of disembodied souls and their embodiment as a punishment due to sin: both doctrines were already refuted by Origen. Maximus' concept of the Logos and of *logoi* has a Plotinian and Origenian background. The role of divine will in creation, the knowledge of God and divine mysteries and the value of silence, as well as the allegorico-spiritual exegesis of Scripture, all maintained by Maximus, are all in line with Origen's thought and praxis.

Maximus' notion of evil, soteriology and eschatology, with the theory of the fall, the providential nature of death, the Origenian and Plotinian tenet that the end will be similar to the beginning—with the (Origenian) addition that the end will be superior to the beginning thanks to the passage from image to likeness (a Biblical and Platonist tenet: likeness to God/assimilation to God)—are all elements to which

³⁴ See the reference to the relevant arguments in the preceding note.

Origen had subscribed and which ground the doctrine of apokatastasis, which Maximus seems to have adopted, although with prudence (by means of strategies such as the veil of silence, the attribution to another person, and the like³⁵). Maximus' use of Plato's theodicy formula "God is not responsible" for evil, his interpretation of 1Cor 15:28, and the voluntary nature of the submission to God are other concepts that go back to Origen, the latter being related to his aforementioned theology of freedom. Maximus supported the free use of the *logos* by rational creatures; divine Providence, its omnipresence, and its explicit aim individuated as apokatastasis; a philosophy of history culminating in the "eighth day" of apokatastasis; the different use of ἄϊδιος and αἰώνιος, which corrects many misunderstandings of his philosophical theology and allows for the doctrine of apokatastasis; the role of Christ in the final deification or θέωσις, "a rest in perpetual movement" (στάσις ἀεκίνητον, I suspect inspired by Gregory of Nyssa's theory of epektasis), which will eternally (ἄϊδίως) take place around the Same the One and the Only (περὶ τὸ ταυτόν καὶ ἓν καὶ μόνον). It is frequently repeated that Maximus refuted Origen on many occasions, although in fact he refuted *Origenism* more than Origen himself; he was probably educated in an Origenistic monastery. It is significant that among Maximus' criticisms of Origenistic doctrines—again, not of Origen's own theories—that of apokatastasis is *never* included. Particularly the form of apokatastasis supported by St Gregory was overtly endorsed by St Maximus.

Maximus expresses explicitly his view of the eventual apokatastasis in *Questiones et dubia* 19. He is commenting on the notion of apokatastasis as is found in Gregory of Nyssa and is likely anxious to keep his distance from conceptions of restoration such as those of the "Isochrystoi" or of Bar Sudhaili, which ended up with coinciding with pantheism, and therefore were not acceptable to the Church. Thus, Maximus claims that the Church knows and therefore accepts three kinds of apokatastasis (which, I observe, were *all* supported by Origen and Gregory as well):

- the restoration of an individual to his or her original condition thanks to virtue (ethical apokatastasis, posited already by Philo of Alexandria³⁶ and inherited by Origen and his followers, including Gregory of Nyssa and Evagrius);
- the restoration of humanity in the resurrection, which is a restoration to incorruptibility and immortality (this derives directly from Gregory of Nyssa's repeated equation between resurrection and restoration, ἀνάστασις and ἀποκατάστασις³⁷);

³⁵ Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, 738-757.

³⁶ Argument in I.L.E. Ramelli, Philo's Doctrine of Apokatastasis: Philosophical Sources, Exegetical Strategies, and Patristic Aftermath, *The Studia Philonica Annual* 26, 2014, 29-55.

³⁷ Examined in Ramelli, *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, 372-440; further: Gregory of Nyssa on the Soul (and the Restoration), 110-141.

– the restoration for which Maximus expressly invokes Gregory of Nyssa as its upholder: ἡ τῶν ψυχικῶν δυνάμεων τῆ ἁμαρτίᾳ ὑποπεσοῦσῶν εἰς ὅπερ ἐκτίσθησαν πάλιν ἀποκατάστασις, “the apokatastasis of the faculties of the soul to the state in which they were before being jeopardised by sin”. This spiritual restoration, too, like the resurrection of the body, will be universal, and will take place at the end of all aeons—as Origen maintained. This is St Maximus’ reflection on this kind of apokatastasis, which he accepts precisely because it was recorded by St Gregory of Nyssa:

For, just as the whole of human nature in the resurrection must have back the incorruptibility of the flesh in the time we hope for, so also the subverted faculties of the soul, during a long succession of aeons, will have to lose all memories of evilness [κακία] found in it. Then the soul, after crossing all aeons without finding rest, will arrive at God, who has no limit, and thus, by virtue of knowledge of, if not yet of participation in, the goods, will recover its faculties and be restored to its original state [εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀποκαταστῆναι]. And the Creator will be manifested to it—the Creator, who is not responsible [ἀναίτιος] for sin.

This is Gregory’s doctrine of apokatastasis (expressed through Gregory’s phrase, εἰς τὸ ἀρχαῖον ἀποκαταστῆναι), which Maximus claims to be acceptable, like the two other preceding forms of apokatastasis accepted by the Church. According to Maximus’ “Gregorian” theory, souls that had their faculties subverted by sin will have them restored to their original condition, which existed before their contamination with evil, and are purified from evil in such a way as to have not even memories of evil left. Therefore, they will not fail to eventually adhere to the Good, who is God. Plato’s theodicy, which is here evoked in his words from the *Republic’s* Myth of Er, θεὸς ἀναίτιος, “God is not responsible” for evil, was abundantly used by Gregory of Nyssa in building up his own theology of freedom, which depended in turn on that of Origen, and in both Origen and Gregory theodicy and the theology of freedom are closely related to their doctrine of apokatastasis.³⁸ In fact, exactly for the sake of theodicy, in order to defend “the justice of God” (*Dei iustitiam*—as Rufinus understood very well), Origen built his whole philosophy of history and his theory of apokatastasis.³⁹

The close link between resurrection and restoration that Maximus posits here derives from Origen and Gregory, who inspired Evagrius in turn, just as the idea that the resurrection of human bodies is only a part of the general resurrection

³⁸ Documentation above, n. 14.

³⁹ As is argued by Ramelli, Origen, Bardaisan, 135-168, and *The Christian Doctrine of Apokatastasis*, 137-215.

and transformation of the whole universe, and that the restoration of the faculties of the soul will eliminate the effects of sin. Evagrius will expand on this.⁴⁰

It is not to be ruled out that Maximus realised what I have observed at the beginning of this essay: namely, that Gregory, like Origen, supported the theory of apokatastasis in defence of Christian orthodoxy. This is why he has no problems in adopting and teaching the doctrine of apokatastasis in the form in which Gregory had taught it.

Fourth Reason: Gregory Exiled by Arianising “Heretics”, His Orthodox Contribution to the Council of Constantinople, and His Proclamation as a Touchstone of Orthodoxy

Another factor, of “political” or “church-political” nature, in the lack of any ecclesiastical condemnation of Gregory and his doctrine of apokatastasis is in all probability the exile that Gregory sustained at the hands of “heretics”—the “Arian” or “neo-Arian” party still active in his day and supported by the Roman emperor, Valens. This reinforced Gregory’s reputation as an orthodox thinker, indeed one of the principal theologians of the Council of Constantinople, which, as we shall see later in this paragraph, declared Gregory a model of orthodoxy.

Gregory was falsely incriminated by the Arian party, exiled for this, and returned home later triumphalistically. This enhanced his reputation as orthodox theologian. Indeed, in 375/6, Gregory was accused by Demosthenes, the Arian vicar of Pontus, of having unduly spent ecclesiastical finances and having been created bishop not regularly. As a consequence, Gregory was deposed by a synod of “Arian” bishops, belonging to the party of Emperor Valens,⁴¹ and was exiled. After two years (376-378), after the death of Valens himself in the Battle of Hadrianople, Gratian became the only emperor of both the Eastern and Western Roman Empire. He was no Arian, but a Nicene, and was a friend and disciple of St Ambrose (in turn a follower of Origen in many respects). One of the first official actions he decided was the revocation of all the penalties, decreed by Valens, against the Nicene leaders.⁴² Gregory was one of them.

⁴⁰ Argument in my *Origen and Evagrius*, in *Oxford Handbook of Dionysius the Areopagite*, eds. M. Edwards, D. Pallis, and G. Steiris, Oxford: OUP, 2022, 94-108.

⁴¹ See Basil, *Epp.* 225, 231, 232, 237 and 239.

⁴² Socrates *HE* 5.2; Sozomen *HE* 7.1; Theodoret *HE* 5.2; *Cod.Theod.* 16.5.5.

In the summer or autumn of the year 378, Gregory then returned to Nyssa: his Letter 6, which most probably refers to his return from the exile,⁴³ shows the local people's love and enthusiasm towards him. The letter addresses Bishop Ablabius, perhaps the same person to whom Gregory's work *To Ablabius That There Are Not Three Gods* is dedicated. In sections 8-11, Gregory reports that, when he finally entered Nyssa with his carriage, "the people appeared suddenly" and "they thronged around us so closely that it was not easy to disembark from the carriage".⁴⁴ Once "we had with difficulty persuaded them to allow us a chance to descend and to let our mules pass through, we were pressed on every side by the crowd all around us, so much so that their excessive affection all but made us faint". Besides being received by the people in a triumph, Gregory was also received by the consecrated virgins, perhaps led by Gregory's own sister Theosebia, who probably was a presbyter and was responsible for the χορός (literally, "choir") of consecrated virgins that existed at Nyssa. Indeed, among those who welcomed Gregory was "the choir of the virgins," who greeted him at the entrance of the church of Nyssa with lanterns in their hands (section 10), like those of the wise virgins of the gospel parable and those of the final hymn of Methodius' *Symposium*, both works with which Gregory was familiar. "We saw a stream of fire coursing into the church, for the choir of virgins was processing in line into the entrance of the church, carrying tapers of wax in their hands, kindling the whole to a splendour with their blaze". Then Gregory entered and "rejoiced" and, after finishing the prayers, wrote the letter to Ablabius. The terms with which Gregory describes the scene with the women in the church may be interpreted to mean both a monastic choir and a group of virgins; since there are no details in the letter concerning psalmody or songs, "the choir of the virgins" here may be identifiable with the group of consecrated virgins of the church of Nyssa. They lived near the church, which they did not abandon to meet Gregory, and were probably led by Theosebia, presbyter of the church of Nyssa, colleague and ὁμότιμος of their bishop, who lived in Nyssa close to him (which is implied by Gregory Nazianzen, when he speaks of Gregory's and Theosebia's "living together", συζῆσαι⁴⁵).

Gregory himself speaks of his exile as due to heresiarchs: he denounces the intrigues of the chiefs (ἐπιστατοῦντες) of heresy, who chased him out of his episcopal see and Cappadocia (*Macr. GNO VIII/1, 387*). But his return was more than a great success.

⁴³ It might also refer to Gregory's return from his captivity in Sebasteia in 380.

⁴⁴ Trans. A. Silvas, *Gregory of Nyssa: The Letters*, Leiden 2007, 131-142.

⁴⁵ See I.L.E. Ramelli, Theosebia: A Presbyter of the Catholic Church?, *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 26, 2010, 79-102.

Besides being a victim of the heretics, Gregory was indicated by the Council of Constantinople—in which he played a core role regarding the dogmatic definitions of *ousia* and *hypostasis* in the Trinity and as anti-“Arian”—and Emperor Theodosius to be the touchstone of orthodoxy. He was listed together with Helladius and Otreius among the normative orthodox bishops for the diocese of Pontus: it was proclaimed that all those who were in agreement with Gregory’s doctrine were orthodox. This proclamation, which seems to stem directly from the Second Ecumenical Council, was immediately ratified by Theodosius in July 381 in his edict, *Episcopis tradi* (*Cod. Theod.* 16.1.3). Gregory himself attributed much importance to this conciliar-imperial decision, so as to state that, owing to it, he was on a par with bishop Helladius of Caesarea, his own metropolitan: in his first letter to Flavian, bishop of Antioch, Gregory remarks that “the Council bestowed the same ecclesiastical honour [κατὰ τὴν ἱεροσύνην τὸ ἀξίωμα, ἴση] and the same privilege to both [μία γέγονεν ἀμφοτέροις ἡ προνομία],⁴⁶ or rather the same solicitude for the rectification of the common belief [μᾶλλον δὲ ἡ φροντίς τῶν κοινῶν διορθώσεως].”⁴⁷

Thus, Gregory was proclaimed and regarded as an anti-heretical bishop and the criterion of orthodoxy. These two connected factors—his exile by heretics and his contribution to the Ecumenical Council, which decreed his proclamation, ratified by the Emperor, as a canon of orthodoxy—also concurred to the lack of any condemnation of Gregory.

Fifth Reason: Gregory, His Family, and His Friends as Saints, and Conclusions

Gregory—unlike Origen—was a saint himself, he celebrated famous saints (such as the Forty Martyrs of Sebaste in homilies, and his sister Macrina, including her miracles in *Vita Macrinae*), and was the brother and son of saints, and the friend of saints. This is probably another reason why Gregory was not condemned by the Church, especially for his doctrine of apokatastasis. He was the son of St Emmelia and the brother of many siblings, who were proclaimed saints: St Macrina, St Basil of Caesarea, St Theosebia, St Peter of Sebaste, St Naucratus... St Gregory Nazianzen, who was a friend of Basil and Gregory of Nyssa and became a saint himself, praised Gregory and his family as “a host of saints”. His Epigram 164, section 161, celebrates the extraordinary family of Gregory of Nyssa and exalts St Emmelia, his mother, and her children: “three of her (Emmelia’s) sons were illustrious priests/bishops; a daughter of hers was a colleague of a priest/bishop, and the rest of her children like a host of

⁴⁶ Sc. to both Helladius and Gregory.

⁴⁷ *Epist.* 1, GNO 8/2.3-12: esp. 11-12.

saints” (τρεις μὲν τῆσδε ἱερῆς ἀγκαλῆες, ἢ δ' ἱερῆος σύζυγος, οἱ δὲ πέλας ὡς στρατὸς εὐαγέων). The first three siblings mentioned by Gregory Nazianzen are St Basil, St Gregory himself, and St Peter, who were priests and bishops; the daughter who was the “colleague of a priest/bishop” is Theosebia, whom in his Letter 197 as well, Gregory Nazianzen calls again “colleague of a priest/bishop” (ἱερεύς) and of equal dignity (ὁμότιμος). St Theosebia had the same dignity as St Gregory had.

Not only his friend Nazianzen, but Gregory of Nyssa himself praised his siblings who became saints, especially St Macrina and St Naucratus, St Peter, and of course St Basil—whose theological work Gregory continued—besides his mother, St Emmelia.⁴⁸ Gregory describes with admiration that Macrina lived together with her former slaves in her monastery, sharing her ascetic life with them. Gregory, full of veneration, in *Vita Macrinae* GNO 8.1.377.25–378.5 recounts how Macrina convinced Emmelia to join her ascetic community and live together with their own former slaves, now made “of equal dignity” (ὁμότιμοι) with their former owners. Emmelia accepted and renounced being served by her former slaves: she “gave up the services performed by her slaves” (καταλιποῦσαν τὰς ἐκ τῶν ὑποχειρίων θεραπείας).

St Gregory also exalts his brother St Naucratus for adopting “a life without possessions” (ἀκτήμονα βίον),⁴⁹ when he embraced an ascetic lifestyle, and for the “renunciation of possessions” (ἀκτημοσύνη).⁵⁰ Naucratus allowed one of his former slaves, Chrysaphius, to follow him, not in order to be served by him, but to share “the same choice of life with him”, namely ascetic life. Far from being served by his ex-slave, Naucratus made himself a servant of people in need: as Gregory reports with admiration, Naucratus “served with his own hands some old people who lived together with poverty and illness”.⁵¹

St Macrina is extolled by Gregory principally—and with increasing importance—first in a letter, then in *Vita Macrinae*,⁵² the bio-hagiography dedicated to her, and finally in the dialogue *De anima et resurrectione*. Here, she plays the role of Plato’s Socrates in the *Phaedo*, of which *De anima et resurrectione* is the Christian remake (both Socrates and Macrina philosophise just before dying), and of the priestess Diotima in Plato’s *Symposium*.⁵³ Besides being the main character of the dialogue *De anima*, and being

⁴⁸ Analysis in my *Social Justice and the Legitimacy of Slavery: The Role of Philosophical Asceticism from Ancient Judaism to Late Antiquity*, Oxford 2016, 190-211.

⁴⁹ *Vita Macrinae* GNO 8/1. 378.17.

⁵⁰ *Vita Macrinae* GNO 8/1. 382.12.

⁵¹ *Vita Macrinae* GNO 8/1. 379.6–7.

⁵² Investigation in my *The Life of Macrina and The Life of Evagrius: Erotic Motifs and Asceticism*, in *Novel Saints. Ancient Novelistic Heroism in Late Antiquity and Early Medieval Hagiography*, ed. K. De Temmerman, Turnhout: Brepols, 2023.

⁵³ See my *Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima e la resurrezione*, Milan: Bompiani - Catholic University, 2007.

the protagonist of the bio-hagiography *De vita Macrinae*, Macrina appears for the first time in Gregory's Letter 19 to John.⁵⁴ Sections 6-10 are devoted to her, who had recently passed away: the letter seems to have been composed less than a year after her death. She is presented here as a professor/master (διδάσκαλος) of Gregory, exactly as she is addressed in *De anima*. In the letter, at the beginning of section 6, she is styled τοῦ βίου διδάσκαλος, "teacher of my (Gregory's) way of life"; in *De anima* she is called by Gregory διδάσκαλος and presented as a teacher of Christian philosophy. According to Gregory's letter, she was also "a mother in place of our mother" for Gregory, and had "confidence towards God", παρρησία, the same trait that was attributed to Theosebia, their common sister, by Nazianzen.⁵⁵ By means of her παρρησία, Macrina elicited "assurance" in Gregory Nyssen (as Theosebia did to "pious women" according to Gregory Nazianzen). She lived as "exiled" in Pontus (at Annisa) with a "choir of virgins", the same expression as Gregory uses in his Letter 6 to designate the consecrated virgins at Nyssa, probably led by another of his sisters, St Theosebia, a deaconess or likely a presbyter.⁵⁶ St Macrina and her nuns were all dedicated to ἰσαγγελία (Letter 19.8), an important ideal for Gregory: the perfect Christian philosopher is "equal to the angels". The following works devoted to Macrina will expand more on her and will exalt her life (the *Vita*) and her teaching of Christian philosophy, mainly Origen's ideas (*De anima*).⁵⁷

St Basil is extolled by Gregory in prefaces to his own works, orations, and the like. For instance, Gregory, continuing Basil's *Heaëmeron*, at the beginning of his *De hominis opificio*—devoted to their common brother Peter, who was made the bishop of Sebaste and a saint⁵⁸—utters incalculable praises of Basil and his works, especially in comparison to his own work. After high praises of St Peter himself as full of virtues, Gregory proffers a real exaltation of Basil, his model for the present work, and whose work Gregory is continuing:

Basil, our father and common teacher,⁵⁹ thanks to contemplation, has made the sublime order of the universe easy to grasp to the majority of people... I am very far from being able even only of admiring Basil in a worthy way; however, I had the idea of adding what was lacking in the thought of that great thinker, not in order to adulterate his labour through falsifications—it would not be allowed to offend his outstanding mouth, which I deem the true author of my own discourses—

⁵⁴ GNO 8./2.62-68.

⁵⁵ Documentation in Ramelli, Theosebia.

⁵⁶ See previous note.

⁵⁷ See Ramelli, Gregory of Nyssa on the Soul (and the Restoration), 110-141; The Life of Macrina.

⁵⁸ The dedication reads as follows: "To his Brother Peter, Servant of Christ, Gregory the Bishop of Nyssa".

⁵⁹ Note here the same characterisation as Gregory offers for Macrina: father and teacher (Basil) = mother and teacher (Macrina).

but so that the glory of the master may not seem lacking in his disciples. For, if Basil's *Hexaëmeron* were defective with respect to the speculation concerning the human being, and none of his former disciples were engaged in filling this gap, some blame would reasonably have a grasp against his great glory, as though Basil had not wished to produce in his hearers an intelligent and perspicacious disposition. Now, instead, I dare set out—within the limits of my own capacities—to explain what is missing in Basil, and if in my discussion there should be anything worthy of his teaching, this will have to be entirely considered as a merit of my teacher (Basil); if, instead, my treatment should not reach the level of that excellent speculation, Basil himself will be exempt from that charge, namely that of giving the impression of not wanting to infuse in the disciples any degree of ability, and will escape any blame, whereas I would seem liable to the attacks of those who always peer at the occasion for criticising other people, as though, in the narrowness of my heart, I had no sufficient room and capacity to receive the wisdom of our professor (Basil)...

In *De anima et resurrectione*, the main protagonist is Macrina (and indeed one title of this dialogue is Τὰ Μακρίνια, *Macrina's Arguments*), but the occasion of the dialogue between Macrina and Gregory is the recent death of Basil, their common brother. This dialogue will be shortly followed by Macrina's own death. The first part of the dialogue is indeed the debate between Gregory and Macrina concerning the death of a person, especially a beloved and great brother. The contrast is between *pathos*, represented by Gregory, and *logos*, represented by Macrina:

Basil, great among the saints, had passed on from human life to God, so there was a common reason for grief for the Churches, and, while his sister and master (Macrina) was still alive, I was going to share with her the loss of our brother. And my soul was profoundly grieving, afflicted beyond measure for this loss, and I was looking for someone who could keep me company in weeping, who could be oppressed by grief to the same extent as I was. Once we were before one another, the master (Macrina), presenting herself to my eyes, elicited even stronger sorrow in me: for she also was by then prey to the deadly illness. But, as the experts in horse racing, after allowing me to be carried around by the impetus of grief for some time, then she endeavoured to bridle by means of her reasoning, as through a kind of brake, and to correct, the emotion that was upsetting my soul. And she immediately adduced the famous claim by the Apostle (St Paul) that one should not be afflicted thinking of those who have fallen asleep in death: for such grief is typical of those people alone who have no hope for resurrection.

And, while my heart was still all boiling with sorrow, I said: How is it possible among human beings to obtain such a result? For a natural aversion to death is innate in everyone; those who see people die cannot easily endure such a sight, and those towards whom death comes try hard to avoid it, as far as possible ... We see that all human solicitude aims at this: that we may remain alive...

But why—the master (Macrina) asked—why, why does the experience of death seem to you sorrowful to the highest degree per se? In order to accuse or calumny it, indeed, it is not enough to have recourse to the habit of those who avail themselves of reason least of all ... Perhaps such a fear upsets and torments your mind, as though the soul were not intended to endure eternally, but should come to an end itself, along with the dissolution of the body.

Then, since I had not yet succeeded in recovering my rational clarity after that grievous turmoil, I replied in a manner that was perhaps too arrogant, without considering carefully what was said. For I stated that the divine words look similar to prescriptions, in that they force us to believe that the soul endures eternally, but we are not led to this thesis by any rational argument...

Macrina rejoined: Leave the vain reasonings that are not ours (sc. not Christian), in which the inventor of falsehood (sc. the devil) brings together deceitful conjectures in plausible appearance to the damage of truth. You rather consider the following: this way of thinking concerning the soul means nothing else than being hostilely disposed to virtue and look merely at the present pleasure, without hopes for the life that extends into eternity—the only life thanks to which virtue will overcome.⁶⁰

Thus, Gregory's status as a saint, that of his mother, siblings, and friends as saints, and his praise of them, together with the other reasons I have adduced earlier, contributed to the absence of any condemnation of Gregory's thought, especially his doctrine of apokatastasis.

These five factors, which I have pointed out and outlined in the present essay, together with Gregory's support of apokatastasis within an anti-heretical context (as I pointed out in the first section), are arguably the main reasons why Gregory's doctrine of apokatastasis was considered acceptable to the Church and was never condemned in any Council or Synod. There can be other reasons as well. Even Justinian's so-called condemnation of Origen in 543 and 553 was not directed in any way against Gregory of Nyssa. On the contrary, as we have seen, Gregory was indicated by the Council of Constantinople and Emperor Theodosius as a touchstone of Christian orthodoxy.

⁶⁰ *An. et res.* 12-17, sections 1-2 Ramelli (*Gregorio di Nissa sull'anima*). The last sentence by Macrina means that virtue will triumph completely only in the otherworldly life, in which full justice and the appropriate reward will reign. In the present life, virtue is not rewarded, or not entirely, given the injustice and corruption that often reign here, but in the Kingdom of God virtue will certainly overcome.

LES DROITS HUMAINS AU PRISME DES PARTICULARISMES CULTURELS : QUELLE ALTERNATIVE ?

ESSODINA BAMAZE N'GANI*

ABSTRACT. Human Rights through the Lens of Cultural Particularities: What Alternative? While the proclaimed universality of human rights is a guarantee of security and protection for every human being, its implementation faces several cultural roadblocks. This paper clearly posits that the transcendent aspect of universality creates legal foreignness. We postulate that this foreignness is the source of particularistic hatred against the universality of human rights. In the light of this hypothesis, which is illustrated by excisions, this study recommends a translation of the universal language of human rights into local cultural contexts. Such a translation constitutes an effective antidote to any particularistic approach, because we believe that it creates space for shared responsibility towards universality. In this regard, this paper intends to rethink the very foundation of the universality of human rights as rooted in order to eventually demonstrates the relevance of its translation into local cultural contexts. The transcendent vision of human rights (and law in general) is therefore complemented by their taking root perception by the societies they seek to govern. Otherwise, these rights will always be perceived as extraneous values at the endogenous level of cultures. Hence their ineffectiveness.

Keywords: Human rights, universality, cultural particularism, excisions, ineffectiveness, translation, rootedness.

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Introduction

L'affirmation des droits humains comme l'étalon du juste (à une échelle stato-centrée) et d'un monde juste (à l'échelle de la société-monde) nous est devenue familière. En effet, plus aucun gouvernement en quelque contrée de cette terre n'ose agir contre les intérêts du citoyen sans se faire huer au nom des droits humains. Plus aucune personne (dépositaire de l'autorité ou de la force publique) n'ose commettre une bavure quelconque sans un rappel à l'ordre au motif de l'exigence de respect des droits humains. Ce contexte, pour le moins, nous semble donc propice à l'évidence d'une fertilité normative des droits humains. Pour en parler avec une onction scientifique, invoquons ici un mot de Bertrand Badie, expert des relations internationales :

les États ne peuvent plus ne rien faire face à un génocide en Afrique, à l'oppression d'une minorité au Timor ou à un massacre dans les Territoires occupés palestiniens ; plus encore, chacun d'entre eux ne peut plus être indifférent aux pressions qui s'exercent sur lui, qu'il s'agisse d'une pétition en faveur d'un prisonnier politique en Chine, de la dénonciation des exécutions capitales aux États-Unis, ou des effets d'images d'arrestations arbitraires ici, de déclenchement de pronunciamientos là-bas. La nouveauté est forte : les droits de l'homme s'attaquent à la souveraineté des États¹.

D'après les termes de cette invocation, il en résulte une diplomatie qu'atteste Bertrand Badie à travers son livre, *La diplomatie des droits de l'homme*, laquelle pour notre part érige les droits humains² en une valeur *nec plus ultra*. À cette diplomatie s'adjoint l'argument de la ratification de plus en plus croissante par les États des différentes conventions de sauvegarde des droits humains³. En

¹ B. Badie, *La diplomatie des droits de l'homme. Entre éthique et volonté de puissance*, Paris, Fayard, 2002, p. 9-10.

² Nous préférons « droits humains » à « droits de l'homme » par égard pour les revendications féministes pointant « l'homme » des droits de l'homme comme un reliquat du patriarcat.

³ Si pour certains la tendance à la régionalisation des droits de l'homme que rendent manifeste *La Charte africaine des droits de l'homme et des peuples* (1986), *La Charte asiatique des droits de l'homme* (1986), etc., réduit la normativité des droits de l'homme, pour nous cette régionalisation participe d'une réelle universalisation des droits humains. Car en réalité, c'est au fond le souci de mettre en exergue l'apport spécifique de ces différentes régions du monde à l'édification des droits de l'homme comme patrimoine commun de l'humanité qui est mu à travers cette régionalisation (et non pas le souci de contester les droits de l'homme). C'est dans cette mue par exemple qu'E.-M. Mbonda souligne l'apport bien spécifique de *La Charte africaine des droits de l'homme et des peuples* : « La Charte africaine des droits de l'homme et des peuples, en s'inspirant de ces différentes traditions [...] combine donc les dispositions des textes internationaux avec ses propres données culturelles, économiques, sociales [...] La Charte africaine est le seul instrument qui

d'autres termes, une espèce de revitalisation de la formule joyeuse grecque, « *eurêka ! eurêka !* », signifiant dans le présent de notre propos que l'humanité a ainsi trouvé le socle commun de son existence.

Pour autant, bien que leur *aura* se répande sans cesse, et ce jusque dans les contrées jadis hostiles à leur fertilité normative, toute affirmation de l'universalité des droits humains sous ces mêmes auspices n'invite nullement à une adhésion naïvement enchantée. La raison en est qu'à mesure que la ratification des conventions de sauvegarde des droits humains va croissante, se dévoilent des rapports centrifuges à leur égard. On en a pour preuve que la manière dont certains groupes de population au Burkina Faso, à l'occasion d'une rencontre de sensibilisation contre les mutilations sexuelles féminines⁴ initiée par l'ONG Mwangaza, affirmèrent leur conception des droits humains : « Tout ça, c'est des trucs de Blancs. Le Blanc veut nous faire quitter nos coutumes pour adopter les siennes »⁵. Ici clairement, ferment d'un particularisme, cette affirmation rend tacitement compte de la manière dont l'identité culturelle particularisée fait obstruction à l'élan universaliste des droits humains. De la sorte, la pratique des excisions⁶, d'expression

affirme la notion, de plus en plus admise aujourd'hui, de l'indivisibilité des droits de l'homme, conciliant ainsi ce que l'on appelle les droits de la première génération avec ceux de la seconde génération », in E.-M. Mbonda, *Une décolonisation de la pensée. Études de philosophie afrocentrique*, Paris, Sorbonne Université Presses, 2021, p. 275-277.

⁴ Le choix porté sur la pratique des excisions peut mobiliser deux critiques à notre égard : a) certains nous diraient éventuellement que pour combattre une pratique comme celle des excisions il faut penser à l'éducation en vue d'un changement de mentalités, une déconstruction des clichés et stéréotypes liés au sexe féminin et davantage un changement dans la perception masculine de la sexualité féminine. Bref, autant de dispositions à envisager pour espérer combattre cette mutilation au point où il s'avère impossible de combattre la pratique des excisions dans le cadre restreint d'un papier de ce type ; b) d'autres nous diraient éventuellement, et ce à la suite d'A. Sen critiquant J. Rawls, que pour combattre les injustices on n'a pas besoin de s'entendre sur les principes de justice. Comme réponse à chacun des deux camps, nous faisons valoir que ce choix porté sur les excisions n'a d'autre visée que celle de servir d'illustration à la fois à l'hypothèse de l'extranéité juridique des droits humains comme frein à leur mise en œuvre pratique et à l'idée d'une insuffisance de l'approche *top-down* s'agissant du respect des droits humains. Car autrement le sous-titre de la présente contribution aurait été « Quelle alternative face aux excisions ? ».

⁵ Propos rapporté par H. Prolongeau, *Victoire sur l'excision. Pierre Foldes, le chirurgien qui redonne l'espoir aux femmes mutilées*, Paris, Albin Michel, 2006, p. 122-123.

⁶ L'écriture de ce mot au pluriel n'a d'autre finalité que celle de rendre compte de la nature variée de cette pratique que le discours général écrit volontiers au singulier alors que l'usage singulier (excision) ne désigne spécifiquement qu'une seule forme de la pratique, en l'occurrence la forme la moins sévère. De ce fait, retrouvons ce que représente chacune de ces formes à travers ce passage : « Trois grands type d'excision sont pratiqués dans le monde : - la "sunna" ou circoncision vraie, forme la moins sévère qui consiste à couper le capuchon du clitoris ; - la clitoridectomie, ou ablation du clitoris et des petites lèvres qui est la forme la plus répandue ; - l'infibulation ou circoncision pharaonique,

culturelle⁷, constitue un test assez efficace de notre volonté et de notre souhait de surmonter l'opposition entre l'universalisme juridique et le particularisme culturel ; et ce, à la faveur d'une nouvelle alternative prompte à fleurir l'effectivité⁸ des droits humains *erga omnes*. Cela, nous semble-t-il, impose à tout le moins le besoin d'un espace d'agir collectif ou, reprenant une expression de Christoph Eberhard, « une nouvelle éthique de l'agir collectif »⁹, en vue de la sauvegarde et de l'effectivité des droits humains.

Livré à ce défi, les lignes suivantes aspirent à frayer la trajectoire d'un pluralisme responsable au-delà de l'universalisme et du relativisme. Ce disant, la présente contribution fait le pari de la traduction du langage universel des droits humains à l'échelle locale de chaque groupe culturel comme condition *sine qua non* de leur effectivité. Le faire, et au besoin efficacement, commande de se pencher en premier, sur le constat de l'ineffectivité des droits humains suivant une approche *top-down*. L'exemple de la lutte contre les excisions, dans le sillage, exprime avec

forme la plus sévère, qui se caractérise par une clitoridectomie complétée par l'avivement de l'intérieur des grandes lèvres qui sont ensuite rapprochées et cousues avec du fil ou des épines d'acacia, les jambes sont alors attachées, imposant une immobilisation d'une quarantaine de jours jusqu'à cicatrisation. Il ne reste alors qu'un petit orifice permettant l'écoulement de l'urine et du sang menstruel », L. Porgès, « Un thème sensible : l'excision en Afrique et dans les pays d'immigration africaine », in *Afrique contemporaine*, N° 196, 2000, p. 49. Signalons tout de même que nous ferons usage quelque fois du singulier, au fil de notre texte, quand il sera question de la forme qui correspond à celle au singulier. Comme par exemple le cadre de cette pratique au Burkina Faso où il ne s'agit nullement de la clitoridectomie encore moins de l'infibulation.

⁷ « Ce ne serait pas facile de cesser la pratique de l'excision en tant que fait culturel », confie un chef coutumier à Toucountouna (Bénin). Propos rapporté par M. Ouassa Kouaro et M. Kouagre, « Excision : un rituel de la féminité chez les Tangamba de Tanguiéta ou une violation du droit des femmes », in *Revue Perspectives & Sociétés*, vol. 7, n° 1, 2016, p. 153.

⁸ Dans le cadre étroit de cet article nous ne ménagerons pas une place pour les débats, presqu'inextinguibles, autour de la notion d'effectivité en droit. Nous partirons pour la circonstance d'une lecture de P. Amselek. Ce dernier dans son ouvrage : *Perspectives critiques d'une réflexion épistémologique sur la théorie du droit*, Paris, LGDJ, 1964, p. 340, indique deux horizons : l'effectivité statuée par les normes juridiques et l'analyse de l'effectivité des règles de droit. De ce double horizon, le premier versant est une interrogation sur le contenu d'une norme juridique au sens où cette interrogation engage la prise en compte d'une situation effective par la règle de droit tandis que dans le second versant, il s'agit d'un questionnement de l'impact ou mieux de l'effet de la règle de droit sur le fait. Le but de notre propos, on en conviendra, vise ultimement le second versant de cette distinction. Partant de cette précision, nous souscrivons entièrement à l'acception classique dominante de la notion d'effectivité en droit, savoir : « L'ineffectivité d'une norme repose, dès lors, soit sur la conformité des comportements suivis par ses destinataires ou par les autorités chargées de sa mise en œuvre, soit sur la sanction prononcée contre ceux qui ne respectent pas la règle », Y. Leroy, « La notion d'effectivité du droit », in *Droit et société*, vol. 3, n° 79, 2011, p. 717.

⁹ C. Eberhard, « Au-delà de l'universalisme et du relativisme. L'horizon d'un pluralisme responsable », in *Anthropologie et Sociétés*, vol. 33, 2009, n° 3, p. 80.

clarté les limites de cette approche verticale de la norme des droits humains tout en encerclant de lumière la pertinence d'un regard philosophique se servant des faits¹⁰. D'après cela, et rompant avec une posture philosophique *ex principiis*, l'analyse précipite ensuite notre marche à pas de géant vers un exemple concret à partir duquel nous formaliserons l'idée de traduction des droits humains en tirant des leçons en faveur de l'enracinement des droits humains dans chaque espace culturel comme horizon incontournable d'une véritable promotion de ces droits. De cette façon, l'enjeu de la réflexion portant sur l'articulation entre l'universalisme juridique et le particularisme culturel se laisse appréhender ici sans la moindre ambiguïté : la traduction du langage universel des droits humains dans chaque culture locale comme voie royale d'accès à l'effectivité des droits humains grâce à leur enracinement subséquent.

Un constat : l'ineffectivité des droits humains « par le haut »

La thèse ici défendue part du constat, fortifié par les positions d'éminents penseurs, que la règle de droit dans son ensemble entretient un incessant va-et-vient entre effectivité et ineffectivité. Tel que le souligne avec raison Jean Carbonnier : « Toute règle de droit est vouée à osciller entre l'application et l'inapplication. Les sociologues préfèrent dire effectivité et ineffectivité »¹¹. Nous en déduisons par conséquent un incessant va-et-vient, dans le sens duquel d'éminentes figures de la discipline juridique ou disciplines apparentées concluent un intéressement pour l'ineffectivité : « L'effectivité, prise elle-même, n'a pas d'histoire. C'est l'ineffectivité qui est sociologiquement la plus intéressante »¹², souligne Jean Carbonnier. Mais alors, qu'est-ce que l'ineffectivité ?

Nous partirons, pour répondre, de son contraire. C'est-à-dire l'effectivité. Suivant les termes employés par Gérard Cornu dans son *Vocabulaire juridique*, l'effectivité se comprend comme le « caractère d'une règle de droit qui est appliquée réellement »¹³.

¹⁰ Nous prêtons ici allégeance à la démarche philosophique élaborée par A. Renaut, procédant *ex datis*, pour « identifier » les ressorts de l'ineffectivité des droits humains ; « évaluer » ce que rend manifeste cette ineffectivité ; « jauger » pour finir la piste de solution appropriée. Ce schéma ternaire, « identifier, évaluer et jauger » forment dans la pensée de A. Renaut les trois dimensions de l'acte de juger. Lire à cet effet, A. Renaut, G. Lauvau, *La Conflictualisation du monde au XXI^e siècle. Une approche philosophique des violences collectives*, Paris, Odile Jacob, 2020, p. 21.

¹¹ J. Carbonnier, *Droit et passion du droit sous la V^e République*, Paris, Flammarion, 2022[1996], p. 103.

¹² J. Carbonnier, *Flexible droit. Pour une sociologie du droit sans rigueur*, Paris, LGDJ, 2014[2001], p. 137.

¹³ G. Cornu, *Vocabulaire juridique*, Paris, PUF, 6^e éd., 2004, p. 339.

Cela dit, nous pourrions en dégager le sens du mot ineffectivité *a contrario* : l'ineffectivité désignera de ce point de vue, le caractère d'une règle de droit qui n'est pas appliquée réellement ou, pour parler avec plus de teneur scientifique, l'ineffectivité désignera la situation des « [...] règles du droit écrit qu'il est donné de n'exister que sur le papier, et d'être conceptuellement sans avoir jamais été matériellement »¹⁴. Exister sur le papier sans être matériellement voulant signifier dans le cercle étroit de la présente analyse la ratification par les États d'Afrique subsaharienne des différentes déclarations et différents textes portant la cause des droits humains sans le respect de ces droits dans les faits. Un tel propos peut bien heurter des sensibilités en raison du fait que la conception assez généralement répandue¹⁵ affirme l'effectivité des droits humains du simple fait de leur adoption par les États¹⁶.

Cette conception, inspirée par le caractère obligatoire de la norme juridique, entérine le propos de Hans Kelsen d'après qui le mot « norme », du latin *norma*, « (...) désigne – quoique non exclusivement, mais en premier lieu – un commandement, un ordre, une prescription »¹⁷. Si l'on admet que le commandement Si l'on admet que le commandement implique obéissance, l'on nous saura gré d'affirmer qu'avec la norme juridique, doit advenir un changement dans l'attitude ou le comportement humain. Ce pourquoi le philosophe autrichien n'a pas manqué de préciser que : « (...) la "norme" signifie que quelque chose doit être ou avoir lieu » ou que « Ce qui est ordonné ou prescrit est en premier lieu un comportement humain déterminé »¹⁸. Conformément à cette logique, affirmer le caractère normatif des droits humains signifie qu'un comportement statué comme obligatoire de par leur contenu doit être. Comme le note encore Hans Kelsen : « La norme statue un devoir-être »¹⁹. Plus concrètement, l'affirmation des droits humains comme une norme, implique la « liberté » de tout un chacun, l'« égalité » de tous, et le respect de la « dignité » de chaque personne, contenus dans l'article premier de la *Déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme* de 1948, sous la formule dorénavant proverbiale : « Tous les hommes naissent libres et égaux en dignité et en droit ».

¹⁴ Jean Carbonnier, *Flexible droit*, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

¹⁵ On pourrait déduire cette conception de la formule « [...] des États dits "voyous" [...] » dont on use à l'échelle internationale pour désigner les États peinant à mettre en œuvre les idéaux formels de l'État de droit, la démocratie et les droits humains. Lire à ce sujet : E-M. Mbonda, *op. cit.*, p. 267.

¹⁶ Cela d'autant plus que, à la suite de Kelsen, la conception dominante de l'effectivité de la norme de droit est celle d'après laquelle la norme est soit observée soit appliquée (l'application désignant la sanction) : « La validité d'une norme consiste en ce qu'elle est effectivement observée et, dans le cas contraire, appliquée », in H. Kelsen, *Théorie générale des normes*, Paris, PUF, 1996[1979], p. 4.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁹ H. Kelsen, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

Or, de cette façon purement formelle de concevoir la norme, et singulièrement celle des droits humains, il ne s'ensuit pas *ipso facto* le respect de leur contenu. Plus encore, cet échec du formalisme juridique à pouvoir entraîner le respect des droits humains est bien celui du droit dogmatique. À en croire l'éminent Jean Carbonnier : « Le droit dogmatique considère qu'il y a règle de droit véritable dès qu'un texte émanant de l'organe constitutionnellement compétent a été régulièrement promulgué »²⁰. Même si pour les tenants de ce droit dit « dogmatique », il apparaît de toute évidence que « Le destin du Droit, c'est de demeurer partiellement ineffectif »²¹, on pourrait en ce qui nous concerne leur faire un grief en insistant sur le fait que cette « ineffektivité partielle » n'en est pas une en soi ; mais une ineffektivité dont le statut, essentiellement transitoire de notre point de vue, consiste à faire progresser le droit en fonction des progrès et des nouvelles exigences de la société à l'instar de cet adage latin : *mutata lex non perit*²².

Conservant donc à nos yeux le statut de « transition » vers une effectivité elle-même fonction de la dynamique de chaque société, l'ineffectivité partielle ne saurait de nulle manière être évoquée pour servir de blocus à notre argument de l'ineffectivité des droits humains. À ce stade, l'ineffectivité des droits humains « par le haut » pourrait trouver son terrain fertile dans la lutte contre les excisions. Entre autres exemples, la loi constitutionnellement promulguée au Burkina Faso en 1996 et la pratique toujours actuelle des excisions dans ce pays :

est puni d'un emprisonnement de six mois à trois ans et d'une amende de 150 000 à 900 000 francs ou de l'une de ces deux peines seulement, quiconque porte ou tente de porter atteinte à l'intégrité de l'organe génital de la femme par ablation totale, par excision, par infibulation, par insensibilisation ou par tout autre moyen. Si la mort en résulte, la peine est un emprisonnement de cinq à dix ans²³.

²⁰ J. Carbonnier, *Flexible droit*, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

²¹ D. de Béchillon, *Qu'est-ce qu'une règle de Droit ?*, Paris, Odile Jacob, 1997, p. 61.

²² En français : « Le droit qui n'évolue pas meurt ».

²³ Loi du 13 novembre 1996. Cette loi n'est en réalité que la matérialisation des dispositions contenues dans les différents instruments de sauvegarde des droits humains des femmes, instruments ratifiés par presque tous les États d'Afrique subsaharienne (y compris donc le Burkina Faso). Comme par exemple la *Déclaration sur l'élimination de la violence à l'égard des femmes* (1993) bien antérieure à cette loi du Burkina Faso et dont l'article 4, même partiellement évoqué, donne injonction aux États partie prenante : « Les Etats devraient condamner la violence à l'égard des femmes et ne pas invoquer de considérations de coutume, de tradition ou de religion pour se soustraire à l'obligation de l'éliminer. Les Etats devraient mettre en œuvre sans retard, par tous les moyens appropriés, une politique visant à éliminer la violence à l'égard des femmes [...] ». Cette vue liminaire de cet article 4 de ladite Déclaration clarifie le contexte de mise en œuvre de la loi du 13 novembre 1996. Ce contexte clarifie également la perspective de l'ineffectivité « par le haut » en raison du fait que la matérialisation de l'article 4 à travers la Loi de 1996, bien appliquée dans ce pays, ne produit pas l'effet recherché, à savoir : l'arrêt de la pratique de l'excision au Burkina Faso.

En un sens, et reprenant le fil initial de notre propos, la vision dogmatique du droit scelle l'ineffectivité des droits humains s'agissant de la lutte contre les excisions. Peut-être, les partisans de ce droit dogmatique nous objecteraient certainement que la promulgation d'une loi par l'organe constitutionnellement compétent en est une chose et que son application en est une autre. Logique de détail pouvant les conduire à nous signaler que l'obstination de l'excision au Burkina Faso en dépit de la Loi du 13 novembre 1996 atteste plutôt qu'une tâche de gouvernants n'est pas remplie. Car, ici faut-il le rappeler, pour le droit dogmatique ainsi que pour ses partisans l'application des lois ressort uniquement de la tâche des gouvernants et n'entame en rien la définition de la règle de droit : « Peu importe que ce texte ne soit pas effectivement appliqué ; l'appliquer est une tâche de gouvernants. L'inapplication des lois atteste qu'une fonction gouvernementale n'est pas remplie : c'est un non-sens, quelque chose d'anormal et de condamnable »²⁴. Toutefois, à l'épreuve du vécu, dire que l'inapplication des lois atteste qu'une fonction gouvernementale n'est pas remplie et partant, leur jeter l'opprobre s'avère discutable à l'épreuve de la réalité. L'exemple du Burkina Faso et, par ricochet, son gouvernement, nous sert de preuve.

Seul pays internationalement loué pour son engagement en défaveur des excisions, le Burkina Faso, nous dit Isabelle Gillette-Faye²⁵, « [...] est toujours cité comme un exemple de l'approche holistique de la lutte contre l'excision, avec une application rigoureuse, sans équivalent, de la loi »²⁶. Cette rigueur dans l'application de la Loi du 13 novembre 1996, concrètement, s'observe à la fois à travers les sanctions de ces contrevenants et la pérennité de sa mise en œuvre par les différents gouvernants burkinabè : « En effet, il se passe rarement une année lors de laquelle des condamnations ne soient pas prononcées à l'encontre des exciseuses, de leurs complices et des familles impliquées dans l'excision d'une ou plusieurs victimes »²⁷. Et pourtant, en dépit de cette application rigoureuse de la loi

²⁴ Voir J. Carbonnier, *Flexible droit*, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

²⁵ Il est à noter qu'il s'agit de la Directrice générale de la Fédération nationale GAMS (Groupe pour l'abolition des mutilations sexuelles féminines, des mariages forcés et autres pratiques traditionnelles néfastes à la santé des femmes et des enfants), poste qu'elle occupe depuis 1990 jusqu'à ce jour. Aussi a-t-elle occupé le poste de cheffe de projet du Premier programme européen de lutte contre les mutilations génitales féminines en Europe. Elle est également une conférencière internationalement sollicitée. Le tout sanctionné par de nombreuses publications. Ce qui lui vaut présentement la reconnaissance internationale du titre d'Experte de l'UNICEF, de l'Agence intergouvernementale de la Francophonie, de la Commission européenne, du Conseil de l'Europe, de la Commission de l'immigration et du statut de réfugié du Canada (CISR), du HCR et du ministère des Affaires étrangères sur les Pratiques traditionnelles néfastes (PTN).

²⁶ I. Gillette-Faye, « État des lieux des mesures législatives contre les mutilations sexuelles féminines », in *Revue Droit et Cultures*, n° 79, vol. 1, 2020, p. 84.

²⁷ *Idem*.

(maintenue au fil du temps) faisant de ce pays la référence internationale dans le sens de cette lutte, le taux de l'excision y est encore de 67,6% pour les femmes de 15 à 49 ans et 11,3% pour les filles de 0 à 14 ans.

De ce point de vue, il nous est loisible de repérer dans la théorisation même du droit dogmatique l'explication de l'ineffectivité des droits humains, pourtant ratifiés par l'État du Burkina Faso. Deux arguments nous paraissent répondre à cette préoccupation. L'un consiste à dénoncer l'écart entre la norme (ou règle) de droit et les citoyens auxquels cette norme est censée être appliquée ; l'autre consiste à dévoiler la scission entre gouvernants et gouvernés débouchant sur un conflit entre l'autorité étatique et les citoyens, de plus en plus enclins à balayer du revers de la main tout ce qui leur tombe dessus émanant d'en haut²⁸. Dans le premier cas s'inscrit le vécu actuel du droit moderne dans les États postcoloniaux d'Afrique. Dans le contexte actuel de ces États, il semble y être question d'une cohabitation conflictuelle entre le droit tel que conçu par l'armature institutionnelle et les réalités vécues par les populations. De cette position conflictuelle découle la perception de la norme des droits humains par les citoyens « [...] comme pure et simple imposition du dehors..., comme une continuation du syndrome colonial »²⁹. Dans le second cas s'inscrivent les mouvements de contestation contre les décisions rendues par l'autorité judiciaire au nom de l'État : « *Les villageois allant parfois jusqu'à incendier les commissariats de police pour "libérer" les "mis en cause"* »³⁰, note Isabelle-Gillette Faye à propos du comportement des populations du Faso face à l'autorité judiciaire dans la lutte contre cette pratique mutilante.

Dans un esprit pareil, l'obstination de la pratique de l'excision se glisse comme un des signes tangibles du non-respect de la norme de droit, appelant pour la même cause le mot « ineffectivité » des droits humains. L'ineffectivité, bien entendu, au sens de l'existence de la norme sur le papier sans aucun effet sur les pratiques que cette norme est censée combattre dans sa formulation. Cela atteste de l'existence des limites d'une conception verticale de la norme juridique et mobilise les regards doctes vers la quête d'une nouvelle alternative en vue d'une réelle emprise de la norme des droits humains sur les faits. Cela dit, une question majeure demeure : comment procéder ?

²⁸ « Cette distance croissante prise par les citoyens à l'égard du politique est constitutive de cette crise de la représentation, de la démocratie représentative », souligne J. Commaille, *À quoi nous sert le droit ?*, Paris, Gallimard, 2015, p. 299. Dans ce contexte historique s'insère l'avènement d'une « société de défiance » que développe P. Rosanvallon, *La Contre-Démocratie. La politique à l'âge de la défiance*, Paris, Seuil, 2006.

²⁹ R. Panikkar, « La notion des droits de l'homme est-elle un concept occidental ? », in *Interculture*, vol. XVII, n° 1-2, Cahiers 82-83, 1984, p. 5.

³⁰ I. Gillette-Faye, *op.cit.*, p.84.

C'est ici qu'une démarche philosophique inscrivant la réflexion dans le réel peut révéler toutes les promesses de son utilité. Cela en raison du fait qu'une ébauche de réponse à notre préoccupation nous paraît clairement ressortir, non point de l'esprit à la manière kantienne dont l'esprit se dispose pour découvrir « les conditions subjectives » de la connaissance, mais plutôt du témoignage d'un Enquête au Mali :

Si nous ne faisons pas attention, nos valeurs et nos dignités seront transformées par les européens. Ce que je t'ai dit, c'est l'argent qui a amené tous les méfaits... l'argent qui a amené tous les méfaits. Sinon nous tous ici dans ce pays, toutes les personnes âgées ici connaissent les avantages de l'excision des filles. Mais si l'argent a été mis au-dessus de la pensée c'est ce qui amène les méfaits. C'est ce que je t'ai dit au début de cet entretien : Si nous ne faisons pas attention à nous-mêmes, nos dignités et nos valeurs seront transformées par l'Europe. Parce que l'excision fait partie de nos dignités. Nous nous reconnaissons à travers cela. Nous nous respectons à travers cela. Mais depuis l'apparition de l'argent dans cette situation, les gens ont dit que l'excision a des conséquences, que l'excision a des complications alors que c'est faux [...] Hééé...cette affaire d'argent...tout le monde sait que c'est l'Occident qui est venu avec de l'argent et leur a donné de l'argent ! C'est l'Occident qui nous dit encore que l'excision n'est pas bonne [...] ³¹.

Comme en atteste cet Enquête, l'hypothèse d'une extranéité des droits humains nous paraît constituer le *Cheval de Troie* qui gangrène leur mise en œuvre pratique. En ce sens, il pourrait sembler tentant de s'engouffrer dans la brèche ainsi ouverte pour essayer de repenser l'effectivité des droits humains autrement que par leur application verticale, c'est-à-dire autrement que par leur imposition suivant le modèle *top-down*. Tentant alors de faire valoir, précisément, que le fond résiduel des droits humains retentit jusqu'aux tréfonds de ces traditions. Sous le couvert de cette mise au point, avançons-le, l'universalité des droits humains constitue de notre propre chef un langage requérant une traduction à l'échelle locale de chaque communauté culturelle ³².

³¹ M. Dembélé, *Les pratiques culturelles des excisions et des infibulations à Bamako au Mali : La contribution de la dignité humaine au respect de l'intégrité physique des femmes*, Thèse de Doctorat en Sciences humaines appliquées, Université de Montréal, 2015, p. 247.

³² En vue d'éviter quelques malentendus que pourraient susciter notre argumentation relative à la traduction des droits humains dans les cultures locales alors que l'universalité des droits humains est, suivant la conception courante, perçue comme « désincarnée », tâchons de recourir subrepticement à la critique communautarienne du sujet de droit. Dans le milieu anglo-saxon où cette critique a le plus d'énergie, il est avancé que non seulement le droit mais le sujet de droit lui-même est déconnecté du réel. Cette déconnexion que les discours savants désignent par les termes « désencombré » ou « désincarné » entraîne « Le malaise de la modernité » développé par C. Taylor, *Le malaise de la*

Au sommet de cette trajectoire plane une expérience, non pas celle de la pensée à la Rawls, mais une expérience empiriquement fondée.

L'expérience de Philippe Richard au Nord-Est du Bénin comme traduction

Nous partons ici d'un exemple, celui de Philippe Richard, pour apporter une réponse à la hauteur de la tâche assignée. Alors expert et consultant en droits de l'homme des Nations Unies auprès des populations locales au Nord-Est du Bénin, Philippe Richard découvre avant tout que le mot droit au sens d'un corpus n'existait pas dans la langue bariba : « comment traduit-on "Droits de l'homme" en langue bariba ? Eclat de rire ! "On ne peut le faire !" nous dit-on ! "Mais comment cela est-ce possible ? Donnez-moi la traduction du mot "droit" et "homme", et nous allons bien trouver la traduction »³³. Et l'expert de poursuivre : « Le fait est qu'en langue bariba, le mot droit n'existait pas [...] Le mot droit, en tant que corpus, n'avait pas de traduction en langue bariba, parce que le concept même de corpus n'existait pas dans cette culture »³⁴.

Or, il se trouve que ce constat intervient à la fin d'un séminaire de cinq jours de formation avec des paysans Borgou, dont il était attendu à l'issue du séminaire qu'ils puissent s'ériger en porte-flambeau des droits de l'homme dans leur village. Dès lors, émerge une inquiétude dans l'esprit des formateurs :

comment des paysans du Borgou s'exprimant avec difficulté en langue française, allaient-ils pouvoir reformuler dans leur village avec le moins de déperdition possible le contenu d'un langage nouveau (les droits de l'homme) dont on ne pouvait obtenir la traduction immédiate en langue bariba ? N'étions-nous pas en train de faire le constat d'une situation d'inculture par rapport au langage des droits de l'homme ?³⁵.

modernité, Paris, Les Éditions du Cerf, 2008[1991]. C'est de ce malaise que nous déduisons ici la nécessité de « ré-enraciner » les droits humains (pareillement pour le droit) dans les communautés culturelles tout comme, E.-M. Mbonda constatant la crise des référents normatifs du droit et de l'État de droit (même dans les sociétés occidentales) lance cet appel : « Il est de plus en plus question de réconcilier le droit avec la réalité, de ré-enraciner le droit dans les cultures des peuples et de prendre au sérieux la pluralité des identités », in *Une décolonisation de la pensée, op. cit.*, p. 271.

³³ Ph. Richard, « Les principes simples d'humanité : un langage à vocation universelle posé dès l'origine, ou un fragment séparé d'une pensée conflictuelle ? A l'école des droits de l'homme dans la province du Borgou (Nord-Bénin) », in D. Maugeness et Th. Holo (dir.), *L'Afrique de l'Ouest et la tradition universelle des droits de l'homme*, Abidjan, CERAP, 2006, p. 81.

³⁴ *Idem.*

³⁵ *Idem.*

Au cœur de cette inquiétude, l'expert onusien envisage une autre piste de diffusion du contenu des droits de l'homme.

Ainsi, se rapprochant de plus près des populations locales et singulièrement de l'ethnie Bariba (dont les membres au pluriel se désignent « batonous »), il découvre une autre évidence : « Chez les batonous, comme dans de nombreuses autres sociétés africaines, les principes et les valeurs (contenu) sont souvent exprimés à partir de proverbes (contenant) »³⁶. De là lui vient l'idée de procéder à une collecte des proverbes à travers tout le village puis à leur explication. Aidé dans cette tâche par un fils du milieu, anthropologue, qui plus est, Philippe Richard voit poindre le fameux langage commun des droits de l'homme. En effet, quel ne fut son émerveillement ? Il résulta de cette nouvelle démarche une similitude entre le contenu de la *Déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme* en son article 1, avec le contenu d'un des proverbes du village ; respectivement : « Les hommes naissent libres et égaux en dignité et en droit », « A la naissance et à la mort, tous les hommes passent par le même trou ». Abstraction faite ici de la manière d'exprimer l'égalité dans le second cas, qui pourrait paraître d'une cruauté de discours, on peut même se demander laquelle de ces deux formulations traduit le mieux l'égalité réelle entre les êtres humains ?

Sans toutefois vouloir apporter une réponse qui pourrait porter notre marque de sympathie intellectuelle à l'endroit de l'égalité telle qu'exprimée par le proverbe, avouons simplement que ce résultat entraîna un changement collectif à l'endroit des droits de l'homme. Ainsi, d'une situation de sentiment d'inculture par rapport au langage des droits de l'homme, les batonous parvinrent au sentiment unanimement partagé de l'universalité de ces droits. Comme exemple, l'implication de cette population locale pour la promotion des droits de l'homme qui se trouva clairement visible à travers, d'une part, leur dénonciation auprès de la commission dirigée par l'expert de toutes les formes de violation dont elle était victime (soit individuellement ou à titre collectif) et, d'autre part, leur proposition d'une mise en place d'un comité de travailleurs parajuristes avec pour étiquette celle de « veilleur » des droits de l'homme³⁷. Très clairement, il en a pu émerger un changement de mentalités à l'égard de ces droits. Un changement pour lequel témoigne le propos de l'expert onusien : « Pour en avoir le cœur net, nous demandâmes à partir dans un village de brousse, Banikoara, pour assister à la reformulation [...] Quelques villageois prirent ensuite la parole, précisant ainsi leur compréhension de la causerie. Il en ressortait que l'écho indirect donné au concept de droits de l'homme provenait essentiellement du vécu de chacun : arrestations arbitraires par la

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

³⁷ Cf Ph. Richard, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

Brigade, brimades, corruption »³⁸. On comprend dès lors, l'intérêt d'une démarche visant à réinvestir le patrimoine culturel de chaque peuple. C'est qu'en procédant ainsi, c'est-à-dire à la façon dont Philippe Richard procéda avec l'ethnie Bariba, la compréhension de la traduction en son sens littéral d'« [...] une opération qui consiste à rendre un texte d'une langue dans une autre »³⁹, nous convenons volontiers, trouve par là sa concrétude.

Concrétude, justement parce que le travail de terrain effectué par Philippe Richard conduit l'ethnie Bariba à un décentrement ouvrant en fin de compte les membres de ce groupe ethnique au contenu du langage dit universel des droits humains. De cela, son travail à bon droit est une traduction en ce sens où : « [...] la traduction contribue à la tâche de réaliser l'humanité, et même mieux : elle s'y identifie. Justement parce que son travail est de s'opposer à "l'apartheid" pour ouvrir la tribu à l'entre-connaissance »⁴⁰. Concrétude également, parce que la démarche adoptée par cet expert onusien porte ostensiblement l'humanisme concret. En effet, l'affirmation de l'humanité fondatrice des droits humains a fini par se révéler abstraite, et donc inadaptée comme telle dans un contexte de prise de conscience aigüe du pluriel. À la faveur de cette prise de conscience s'est affirmée l'exigence d'une humanité concrète comme un horizon et une tâche commune à toutes les cultures ainsi qu'à tous les humains appartenant à des communautés spécifiques : « [...] je suis appelé à m'intéresser à ta communauté et toi à t'intéresser à la mienne et nous sommes appelés à construire et à tisser des rapports effectivement humains, et non pas des rapports abstraits [...] »⁴¹, souligne avec pertinence Jean-Toussaint Desanti.

De ce propos de Jean-Toussaint Desanti on avancera que l'acte de Philippe Richard restaure l'humanité concrète tant par sa propension à vouloir comprendre l'autre, donc ici l'ethnie Bariba, que par sa capacité à devenir l'hôte d'une communauté antérieurement hostile aux droits humains. En ce sens donc, sa démarche se peut légitimement être appréhendée comme une traduction en raison de son hospitalité. « Hospitalité », ce mot caractéristique de la traduction chez Souleymane Bachir Diagne⁴², s'impose comme le substrat de tout travail de traduction parce que fondant une « éthique de la réciprocité » dont nous pourrions saisir l'intérêt, d'un côté, comme « [...] une des réponses aux conséquences de la domination

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

³⁹ E.-M. Mbonda, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

⁴⁰ S. B. Diagne, *De langue à langue. L'hospitalité de la traduction*, Paris, Albin Michel, 2022, p. 166.

⁴¹ Cité par S. B. Diagne, *op. cit.*, p. 159.

⁴² Qui parle de « L'hospitalité de la traduction » comme l'indique le sous-titre de son récent livre *De langue à langue, op. cit.*

linguistique » donc ici en l'occurrence une des réponses aux conséquences de la domination culturelle et, de l'autre, « [...] une dimension du combat politique contre l'inégalité »⁴³.

Dans cet esprit, parce qu'il articule savamment les droits humains et la culture propre à une communauté spécifique, Philippe Richard célèbre la désunion du couple universalisme et domination tout en scellant en contrepoint le mariage entre droits humains et cultures (ou communauté culturelle). Il pourrait alors s'agir d'un miroir culturel des droits humains. Et dans pareil cas, son approche ne serait qu'une illustration brillante de l'idée que les droits humains sont un instrument humaniste de dialogue entre les cultures. En cela, ce qui s'affirme par son geste, c'est la force d'une mise en contact entre différents horizons culturels donnant ainsi lieu à une « traduction hospitalière ». En réalité, si comme le souligne Souleymane Bachir Diagne le travail de traduction comporte le risque potentiel d'une malveillance dans certains cas ou d'une véritable déclaration de guerre dans d'autre cas⁴⁴, le travail de Philippe Richard dont nous louons ici les mérites à titre de spécimen de la traduction s'impose à juste prix comme une traduction hospitalière.

Hospitalière parce qu'offrant par sa méthode la perspective bien réelle d'un dialogue entre le local et le global ou entre le global et le local. Significative d'une véritable *praxis* des droits humains, l'articulation entre le global et le local s'agissant de la promotion de ces droits a longtemps été éludée du champ de la réflexion et de l'action. Or, et ce tout à l'opposé, c'est cette articulation que Christoph Eberhard pose comme le fondement matriciel de tout nouveau paradigme juridique des droits de l'homme :

On a trop tendance à enfermer le "local" dans le "local" et à considérer que ce n'est que lui qui a quelque chose à apprendre du "global". On accepte parfois qu'il puisse être fructueux d'enrichir le "local" par le "local". Mais il faut aller plus loin. Il faut voir ce que le "global" peut apprendre du "local". Il suffit de bien vouloir apprendre et de se mettre à l'écoute⁴⁵.

Bien vouloir apprendre et se mettre à l'écoute, l'approche de Philippe Richard donne du poids à cette position sous un double signe : celui d'un réinvestissement du patrimoine culturel de chaque communauté et d'un établissement de repères communs entre le fondement des droits humains et le pôle culturel.

⁴³ Voir S. B. Diagne, *De langue à langue*, op. cit., p. 162.

⁴⁴ Nous renvoyons le lecteur aux pages 162 à 164 de son récent livre : *De langue à langue*, op. cit.

⁴⁵ C. Eberhard, *Droits de l'homme et dialogue interculturel*, Paris, Éditions des Écrivains, 2002, p. 306-307.

Concrétude de ce point de vue, mais bien plus encore, sa traduction du langage universel des droits humains que nous concevons pour notre part comme le réinvestissement du patrimoine culturel de chaque peuple, est rendue explicite par la découverte de l'égalité entre les êtres humains comme un *topos*. En effet, établissant l'équivalence entre « l'argumentation » et « la traduction interculturelle » à partir d'une lecture de Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Ernest-Marie Mbonda pose une préoccupation relative aux lieux communs, c'est-à-dire ces *topoi* (reprenant Aristote), appelés à servir de fondement à toute argumentation (et donc à toute traduction) : « Quel postulat, quel *topos* faut-il prendre comme point de départ pour le travail de l'argumentation, quand on sait que les savoirs différents reposent sur des postulats différents ? »⁴⁶.

Dans le sens de ce questionnement, l'égalité entre les humains à la lisière de la tâche de terrain accomplie par Philippe Richard, de même que la liberté et la dignité humaine, peuvent valablement nous servir de réponse au sens où ces trois valeurs se retrouvent explicitement ou implicitement formulées dans le fond résiduel de chaque culture⁴⁷. Ce qui, à notre sens, les érige en des *topoi* communs autour desquels, doit se mener toute activité de traduction du langage universel des droits humains. Prise en ce sens, la traduction du langage universel des droits humains dans les différentes aires culturelles constitue la réponse à la préoccupation très récente du philosophe Alain Renaut : « comment des “peuples qui ne sont pas maîtres de leur histoire” pourraient-ils se transformer en déterminant eux-mêmes leur devenir à partir de leurs propres inventions et de choix orientés par leurs valeurs ? »⁴⁸.

En outre, comme second intérêt consubstantiel à la démarche adoptée par Philippe Richard, nul doute que son approche aura eu pour grand mérite de faire avancer la connaissance d'une tradition⁴⁹, en y découvrant notamment le principe moderne de l'égalité de tous les êtres humains. La pertinence de son résultat se saisit dans la manière dont il parvient à détourner l'attention de toute une

⁴⁶ E.-M. Mbonda, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

⁴⁷ Pour ce qui est de la liberté et de la dignité humaine, ici envisagées comme des *topoi* communs, nous pouvons recourir à la Charte de Kouroukan Fougua du XIII^e siècle au Mali pour illustrer leur existence. Ainsi respectivement : « Chacun dispose désormais de sa personne, chacun est libre de ses actes, dans le respect des “interdits” des lois de sa patrie » ; « Toute vie humaine est une vie. Il est vrai qu'une vie apparaît à l'existence avant une autre vie, mais aucune vie n'est plus ancienne, plus respectable qu'une autre vie, de même qu'une vie n'est pas supérieure à une autre vie ». Cf UNESCO, « La Charte du Mandén, proclamée à Kouroukan Fougua », <https://ich.unesco.org/fr/RL/la-charte-du-manden-proclamee-a-kouroukan-fougua-00290?RL=00290>, consulté le 6 septembre 2021.

⁴⁸ A. Renaut, « Postface. Penser un nouvel humanisme après la colonisation », in E.-M. Mbonda, *Une décolonisation de la pensée, op. cit.*, p. 378.

⁴⁹ Que l'on aurait pu juger *a priori* d'incompatible avec les droits humains.

communauté à l'égard des formes sévères que prend aujourd'hui le repli communautaire, dès lors que des valeurs exogènes (à l'instar des droits humains) s'attaquent frontalement aux valeurs endogènes ; ces dernières érigées en normes sociales. Un exemple suffira : après le travail de terrain effectué par le consultant des Nations unies en complicité avec le jeune anthropologue du milieu, la population concernée, une fois réunie pour l'atelier de synthèse citait d'elle-même les multiples violations des droits humains dont elle était déjà victime sans se rendre compte qu'il s'agissait bien évidemment d'une violation de leurs droits humains. Comme il le témoigne lui-même :

Cet exercice donna des résultats surprenants. Comme dans la Bible, cette séquence de travail fut illustrée de mille et mille récits et scènes de la vie ordinaire, de paysans victimisés quotidiennement par tel ou tel fonctionnaire, gendarme, garde forestier, etc. La structuration du récit autour du langage des droits de l'homme devenait tout simplement "libératrice". L'exemple qui illustre le mieux cette réalité est celui de la découverte par certains participants – car il s'agissait véritablement d'une découverte – de l'interdiction des arrestations arbitraires, confirmée par l'article 51 du Code béninois de procédure pénale concernant les limites temporelles fixées à la garde à vue⁵⁰.

De cette aptitude à l'énumération, nous en dégageons et formulons la pertinence de l'idée d'une identification des batonous au contenu des droits humains. Autrement exprimé, c'est parce que les batonous découvrent une part de leur culture ou mieux se découvrent pleinement dans le contenu normatif des droits humains qu'ils parvinrent à cette énumération. En plus de cette énumération des violations quotidiennes des droits humains dont ils étaient déjà victimes sans en prendre conscience, les participants à l'atelier de travail organisé par Philippe Richard en viennent à établir une liste des utilités qu'ils reconnaissent *ipso facto* aux droits de l'homme :

Les droits de l'homme sont une invitation à : participer au processus de libération de l'homme et de la femme ; participer au processus d'établissement des conditions de la justice ; aider chaque femme et chaque homme à devenir l'acteur de son développement ; favoriser l'émergence d'une nouvelle culture politique, en associant à l'idée de "pouvoir politique" celle de "service"⁵¹.

Si, aux yeux de l'expert des droits de l'homme (Philippe Richard), l'établissement de cette liste par les membres de l'ethnie Bariba constitue une étape décisive dans la "leçon" des droits de l'homme, en raison principalement de

⁵⁰ Ph. Richard, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

« la reconnaissance et l'appropriation du concept » qui s'en dégagent, nous identifierons cette leçon en ce qui nous concerne au besoin d'enracinement. C'est-à-dire le besoin d'enraciner les droits humains dans chaque communauté culturelle en vue de concrétiser l'idée que ces droits dits « communs à l'humanité » nécessite la participation effective de tous à leur respect en tant que propriété collective. Comme la propriété collective, les droits humains appellent d'emblée « La participation aux biens collectifs » consistant « en un sentiment de propriété » que Simone Weil pose comme un besoin vital de l'âme humaine et au sujet de laquelle elle dit clairement que « [...] ce n'est pas seulement l'État qui doit fournir cette satisfaction, c'est toute espèce de collectivité »⁵². C'est donc en tant que propriété collective que tous les humains, membres de cultures différentes, sont appelés à participer au respect des droits humains. Et pour cela, il y a véritablement lieu de procéder à la manière de Philippe Richard qui initie la reformulation de leur langage à l'échelle d'un groupe culturel en les y enracinant.

Incontestablement, Simone Weil aura raison de souligner l'importance du besoin d'enracinement. Ce besoin, pour être assouvi, doit, comme elle le démontre avec raison, promouvoir une réelle participation de chaque individu à l'édification de la propriété de tous ; protégeant les uns du sentiment de l'humiliation, les autres des effets du déracinement qu'une démarche de surplomb tend inévitablement à engendrer. Évidemment, nous trouvons avec aisance, dans les sentiers de sa réflexion, les bases presque méconnues de ce que devrait être une véritable politique de promotion des droits humains. Comme elle l'énonce fort bien dès la deuxième partie de son ouvrage intitulé *L'enracinement. Prélude à une déclaration des devoirs envers l'être humain* : « L'enracinement est peut-être le besoin le plus important et le plus méconnu de l'âme humaine [...] »⁵³.

De la traduction à l'enracinement : gage d'effectivité des droits humains

La thèse selon laquelle les droits humains, indépendamment de leur armature politico-juridique, doivent s'enraciner dans chaque horizon culturel nécessite, pour être audible, le rappel d'une évidence : l'existence d'un droit positif en vigueur dans l'État à l'ombre duquel se déroulent des pratiques occultes relevant principalement de l'ordinaire des populations. Comme par exemple : la condamnation des excisions par la loi et son obstination au nom d'une allégeance

⁵² S. Weil, *L'enracinement. Prélude à une déclaration des devoirs envers l'être humain*, Paris : Les Éditions Gallimard, 2005[1949], p. 32. https://www.uqac.ca/Classiques_des_sciences_sociales/

⁵³ S. Weil, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

aux lois ancestrales. Cette évidence apporte ici un projecteur de lumière : le besoin d'enracinement. Envisagé comme un besoin essentiel de l'âme, si l'on en croit Simone Weil, l'enracinement traduit un état d'esprit plutôt qu'une disposition juridique. Enraciner, qu'est-ce à proprement parler ? Enraciner c'est, ordinairement parlant, prendre racine. C'est également fixer profondément une racine. Parlant d'une plante, enraciner c'est lui faire prendre racine. Davantage, fixer profondément ses racines sous le sol de manière à mettre la plante hors de portée de toute intempérie. Mais que dire donc, s'agissant des êtres humains ?

Appliqué au contexte d'analyse qui est ici le nôtre, enraciner revient à fixer dans l'esprit et le cœur des membres de toutes les contrées culturelles, le langage universel qui enveloppe l'extension mondiale des droits humains. Or, comme l'indique Simone Weil : « Un être humain a une racine par sa participation réelle, active et naturelle à l'existence d'une collectivité qui conserve vivants certains trésors du passé et certains pressentiments d'avenir »⁵⁴. On voit par cette formule que l'acte d'enracinement renferme une participation réelle, et non simplement figurative, de tout un chacun à l'édifice commun du langage dit « universel » des droits humains. C'est en gardant à l'esprit cette posture épistémologique qu'il convient à présent d'analyser, non seulement les enjeux, mais aussi la portée du travail de terrain effectué par l'expert onusien. En effet, dès lors que les droits humains à la suite du travail de collecte des proverbes et leur explication fécondent non seulement la proclamation de l'égalité entre tous les êtres humains chez les batonous, mais aussi et concomitamment le sentiment désormais ancré chez ces derniers d'une adéquation entre leur particularité culturelle et l'un des piliers du fondement de l'universalité des droits humains, il paraît important de penser cette approche entreprise par Philippe Richard comme le *parangon* de toute promotion véritable des droits humains. Nous nous proposons ici d'en inférer deux dimensions phares.

D'une part, l'universalité des droits humains est remise en cause par l'approche « par le haut » qui assure son extension mondiale. On peut mettre en avant l'hypothèse de l'extranéité juridique, initialement évoquée, qui recoupe l'essentiel des arguments mobilisés au plan endogène de l'ancrage des excisions : « les droits humains, ces trucs de Blancs » ; « les droits humains, cette affaire de Blancs », entend-on dire fréquemment sur le terrain. Comme antidote, l'approche « par le bas » visant principalement à faire prendre conscience par les membres de toute communauté culturelle de l'existence du fondement de cette universalité du sein des valeurs localement approuvées. Dans le cas de l'ethnie Bariba, c'est pareillement du refus de l'imposition « par le haut » qu'il s'agit en même temps que

⁵⁴ *Idem.*

d'une prééminence accordée à l'approche « par le bas ». Nous pouvons ici déduire cette prééminence d'une approche « par le bas » de l'engagement pris par les Batonous eux-mêmes à la suite du travail de l'expert onusien d'être les témoins élogieux de ces droits et de veiller eux-mêmes à leur respect par tous (y compris par l'autorité publique) dans le milieu.

En raison de cet engagement local et tenant compte de la mission assignée au parajuriste⁵⁵ dans la communauté culturelle concernée, une autre compréhension de l'effectivité de la norme de droit mérite d'être mise en relief : l'effectivité de la norme juridique ne désignera plus uniquement l'application réelle de celle-ci par les gouvernants (vision purement kelsénienne) mais une application réelle par les destinataires de cette norme. À l'instar du *batonou* devenant libre⁵⁶ après le travail effectué par Philippe Richard s'engage à assurer l'effectivité des droits humains dans son milieu. Dans un pareil esprit, postulons-nous, la libération des femmes *Mambara, Malinké, Tāṅāba*, etc., du joug des excisions n'interviendra qu'à la suite de leur propre sursaut. Comme il en a pu être dans le film *Moolaadé*⁵⁷ où l'apport d'un discours profanateur de l'excision par le jeune étudiant du village revenu de France ne manqua pas de susciter un sursaut féminin contre cette pratique. Là-dessus, une note de Laurence Porgès apporte tout l'éclairage nécessaire : « le jour où les femmes décideront qu'il n'y aura plus d'excision, il n'y en aura plus »⁵⁸.

Que certains esprits soient enclins à contester la capacité de ces femmes à pouvoir mettre un terme à cette pratique par elles-mêmes, peu importe ! L'essentiel pour nous en évoquant cette note consiste à redéfinir l'effectivité de la norme juridique en partant du sujet de droit lui-même en sa qualité de destinataire de la norme. En ce sens, les termes « Les États adoptent et mettent en œuvre les mesures appropriées en vue d'interdire toute exploitation des femmes [...] afin d'assurer la protection du droit de la femme au respect de sa dignité [...] » et « Les États interdisent et condamnent toutes les formes de pratiques néfastes qui affectent négativement les droits humains des femmes [...] », termes que nous

⁵⁵ « Tant que l'état de droit n'aura pas atteint le moindre village du continent africain, tant que le moindre paysan ne connaîtra pas ses droits, le parajuriste devra travailler sans relâche. Il devra surtout éduquer à la justice. L'éducation à la justice est un service rendu à l'objectif du développement. Le parajuriste rend ce service. Il est en tant que tel un agent du développement », affirme Monseigneur Assogba à l'occasion de la première session de formation des douze candidats à la fonction de parajuriste en novembre 1994. Cité par Ph. Richard, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

⁵⁶ « [...] libre d'agir, libre de se développer à son rythme, libre de comprendre le monde dans lequel il vit (tant sur le plan local que national ou international) », comme le disait Ph. Richard, *op. cit.*, p. 85.

⁵⁷ S. Ousmane, *Moolaadé*, 2004.

⁵⁸ L. Porgès, « Un thème sensible : l'excision en Afrique et dans les pays d'immigration africaine », *op. cit.*, p. 64.

extrayons des articles 3 et 5 du *Protocole à la Charte africaine des droits de l'homme et des peuples relatif aux droits des femmes*⁵⁹, peuvent être voisines des termes ci-après que nous formulons suivant notre trajectoire de l'effectivité : « chaque communauté culturelle doit s'impliquer activement dans la mise en œuvre pratique du référent normatif des droits humains » ; « Les hommes de chaque communauté culturelle doivent accompagner le processus étatique dans la mise en œuvre du respect de la dignité des femmes » ; « Les femmes de chaque communauté culturelle doivent participer pleinement à la réalisation concrète de leurs droits humains »⁶⁰, etc. Dans ce dessein touchant essentiellement à l'effectivité des droits humains « par le bas », un objectif majeur se pose et s'impose pour la réalisation de cette effectivité, à savoir : apprendre à toutes aux populations de chaque communauté culturelle à « parler dans l'action » le langage universel des droits humains, et à s'en servir comme outil d'analyse des différentes situations quotidiennes, productrices d'inégalités, d'injustices et de violences.

De cette proposition qui dénote effectivement de la nécessaire participation de tous au respect et à la promotion des droits humains, il ressort une nouvelle compréhension de l'universel fondant le discours d'expansion mondiale de ces droits. Mieux, il en va ici d'un besoin de l'universel pensé en termes de reconnaissance par tout le monde. Car autrement les batonous ne se seraient jamais engagés à la promotion des droits humains dans leur milieu sans une compréhension du fondement universel de ces droits comme entériné par leur patrimoine culturel. Disant cela, nous songeons par ailleurs à l'euphorie née chez eux, pressés qu'ils étaient tous à la fin de l'initiative entreprise par Philippe Richard de se porter garants du respect de leurs droits humains. Comme le témoigne leur comité constitué à la suite et dont la mission, pour rappel, consiste à « veiller » les droits

⁵⁹ Pour une lecture exhaustive du contenu de ces deux articles cités, se référer au *Protocole à la Charte africaine des droits de l'homme et des peuples relatif aux droits des femmes* (2003).

⁶⁰ Cette interpellation ou responsabilisation des communautés culturelles et de leurs membres dans la promotion de l'effectivité des normes juridiques *bottom-up* trouve une assise à la fois anthropologique et philosophique. Anthropologiquement parlant dans la pensée de É. Le Roy chez qui : « Le Droit (entendu au sens anthropologique du terme) est moins ce qu'en disent les textes qu'en font les acteurs », É. Le Roy, *Le jeu des lois. Une anthropologie « dynamique » du Droit*, Paris, LGDJ, 1999, p. 33. Symétriquement, nous entendons par « acteurs » à la fois les gouvernants, les autorités judiciaires, les citoyens (hommes, femmes, enfants), les organisations de la société civile, les ONG, tous engagés dans la présente réflexion pour l'effectivité des droits humains. Philosophiquement parlant dans la pensée de E.-M. Mbonda se demandant « [...] dans quelle mesure une réflexion ancrée elle-même et par l'histoire dans une ou des identités ne se trouve pas forcément vouée à perdre l'horizon d'universalité qui fonde la communication et l'échange entre tous les êtres humains », voir l'analyse succincte que fournit A. Renaut à son égard, in « Penser un nouvel humanisme après la colonisation », *op. cit.*, p. 375.

de l'homme » et à « éveiller » aux droits de l'homme⁶¹. Ce qui ressort les enjeux pratiques de cette reconnaissance par tous du fondement de l'universalité. L'écho d'un effacement de l'universel niveleur à la faveur d'un universel concret, résultat d'une démarche ancrée sinon enracinée, se fait alors retentissant.

Ce retentissement n'est pas inaudible aux oreilles de certaines voix scientifiques les plus entendues, comme les philosophes Alain Renaut et Lukas Sosoe qui rappellent à bon escient qu'« en raison de la crise de l'humanisme, de l'universel [...], de trouver un analogue à la vieille nature humaine pour enraceriner l'universalité requise par les droits de l'homme »⁶². Cette formule apparaît ainsi comme un rappel à l'ordre : car en s'universalisant, les droits humains ne peuvent aucunement faire l'impasse sur la diversité constitutive de l'humanité. Après l'euphorie bariba, nul ne saurait chérir l'horizon d'un universel se fermant à la multitude des communautés d'expérience, de croyance et d'histoire, dont le mot « culture » est le nom. On le voit, ces communautés d'expérience étant multiples et non une, il s'agit bien sûr d'inscrire l'universalité dans cette multitude. Une universalité perçue désormais comme immanente⁶³ à chaque culture. Quant à son inscription ou mieux son dévoilement, nous l'envisageons sous le prisme intellectuel d'une « mise en contexte du droit »⁶⁴.

D'autre part, les droits humains ne sont respectés que dès lors qu'ils sont regardés comme n'émanant pas de l'extérieur. C'est une évidence qui rappelle un propos de Simone Weil concernant l'origine des règles appelées à régir la vie de toute communauté : « Il faut qu'elles émanent d'une autorité qui ne soit pas regardée comme étrangère ou ennemie, qui soit aimée comme appartenant à ceux qu'elle dirige »⁶⁵. On s'appuiera sur l'exemple, déjà annoncé de l'ethnie Bariba au Nord-Est du Bénin. Le parallèle permet de faire ressortir combien, la découverte d'une similitude entre l'article 1 de la *Déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme* et un proverbe de

⁶¹ Voir Ph. Richard, *op. cit.*, p. 87 sq.

⁶² Cité par M. Troper, *La philosophie du droit*, Paris, PUF, 2008[2003], p. 13.

⁶³ Cette idée ne contrarie point la vocation première des droits humains qu'est leur idéalité-normative. Cela d'autant plus que, et tout comme le soulignait B. Boutros-Ghali en sa qualité de Secrétaire général de l'Organisation des Nations unies, « Les droits de l'homme sont, tout à la fois, absolus et situés. C'est-à-dire qu'il faut, tout à la fois, les poser dans leur universalité et les rendre accessibles à tous, quelles que soient leur histoire, leur langue, leur culture ». Cf B. Boutros-Ghali, « Préface », in G. Fellous, *Les droits de l'homme une universalité menacée*, Paris, La documentation française, 2010, p. 9.

⁶⁴ L'idée d'une mise en contexte du droit est ici empruntée à J. Commaille (*op. cit.*, p. 13-14) : « Mon positionnement est ici, dans cet ouvrage, délibérément celui d'une mise en contexte du droit en m'inscrivant dans une tradition des sciences sociales qui redonne au droit, à partir de ce qu'il dit, de ce qu'il fait, des façons dont il est approprié, dans le travail de connaissance consacré aux sociétés et à leur devenir, une place importante sinon centrale ».

⁶⁵ S. Weil, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

ladite ethnie emporte le respect des droits humains par un peuple jadis hostile. C'est qu'en réalité, incorporés à leur identité culturelle, les batonous renoncent à repousser les droits humains. Car, comme le souligne à juste mesure Simone Weil :

[...] les règles s'étant incorporées à leur être même, les possibilités interdites ne se présentes pas à leur pensée et n'ont pas à être repoussées. De même l'habitude, imprimée par l'éducation, de ne pas manger les choses repoussantes ou dangereuses n'est pas ressentie par un homme normal comme une limite à la liberté dans le domaine de l'alimentation⁶⁶.

Nous pouvons ajouter que la proposition par les batonous d'un comité de travailleur parajuriste avec pour mission de « veiller » et d' « éveiller » aux droits de l'homme dépouille les spécialistes ou professionnels du droit d'une part de leur responsabilité dans la garantie de l'effectivité au profit d'une diversification et mutualisation des responsabilités. Autrement formulé, il revient aux citoyens à tous les niveaux de la société d'être l'acteur principal de l'effectivité de la norme des droits humains. En effet, et à n'en pas douter, notre parti pris pour une promotion des droits humains « par le bas » dépossède du rôle d'avant-gardiste réservé aux spécialistes du droit, aux gardiens du savoir juridique et aux professionnels du métier de justice. Comme il serait loisible de le déduire, dans cette perspective, le cheminement de notre propos ne vise nullement à laisser le droit à la seule charge des juristes, mais plutôt l'ouvrir à toutes les composantes de la société qui, elle-même, se trouve pour ainsi dire pleinement investie d'une mission : celle de constituer (la société elle-même) une contrainte politico-morale et un groupe de pression à l'égard des gouvernants.

En déplaçant de la sorte la réflexion portant sur les droits humains des juristes aux profanes et aux autres penseurs des sciences humaines et sociales, nous ne cherchons pas à absoudre de leurs responsabilités ceux qui pratiquent réellement le métier de juriste. Il nous a semblé plutôt opportun de nous départir de leur unique et entier horizon de responsabilité pour essayer de comprendre pourquoi il est rationnel que d'autres spécialistes et profanes de la discipline juridique s'invitent à la table de la réflexion et de l'action. Le déplacement des spécialistes et professionnels du droit aux autres penseurs et citoyens ordinaires de la cité, est important dans la mesure où le droit se doit d'imprégner la société qu'il régit. Puisque, chacun d'entre nous, qu'il le veuille ou non, est garant de l'effectivité des droits humains ou, du moins, doit l'être dorénavant. Cette nouvelle posture contraste donc avec le type de conception en vogue jusqu'à présent et qui est la résultante de « L'exigence d'abstraction universalisante du droit »⁶⁷.

⁶⁶ *Idem.*

⁶⁷ J. Commaille, *op. cit.*, p. 391.

D'après cette conception contrastée, le droit constitue la chasse gardée des spécialistes et professionnels du domaine. Or cet état de fait entrave le rapport du citoyen au droit qui délimite ses prérogatives ainsi que celles identiques aux siennes. C'est-à-dire un rapport de verticalité se situant aux antipodes de l'esprit démocratique des lois. Raison pour laquelle, au bord opposé de cette conception classique se déploie notre trajectoire donnant à entendre que les droits humains pour leur promotion véritable doivent rester strictement tributaires de chaque contexte social, sociologique et politique dans leur mise en œuvre pratique. Et par conséquent, la réception des droits humains butant dans la plupart des contextes culturels sur les relents particularistes, c'est donc à dessein, que le projet de leur traduction nous paraît gage de caution scientifique. Pour tenir cette gageure, il importe de toujours garder à l'esprit le rempart qu'elle constitue face au soupçon d'une nouvelle hégémonie occidentale, d'un nouvel impérialisme d'expression juridique, d'une domination, et enfin d'un universalisme borgne. En clair, toute espèce de promotion de l'universalité des droits humains qui ne respectent pas chez les populations la double dimension de la traduction et de l'enracinement porte en elle-même la marque de sa propre ineffectivité. Et dans pareil cas, droits humains et cultures seraient identiques à la situation de deux miroirs placés l'un en face de l'autre et qui se renvoient mutuellement le vide.

Conclusion

En somme, l'universalité de surplomb des droits humains passant à nos yeux comme une menace à leur effectivité, nous avons identifié puis établi les nouveaux ressorts d'une universalité concrète apte à en assurer l'effectivité. Cet horizon de l'universalité, non plus comme de surplomb mais comme immanente à chaque groupe social, est une clé de liaison avec la déclaration de Boutros Boutros-Ghali (en 1993) d'après qui les droits de l'homme sont un « langage commun à l'humanité ». Comme un « langage commun », nous fait remarquer pour sa part l'expert onusien Philippe Richard : « [...] les droits de l'homme seraient une expression de la pensée, commune à l'ensemble de l'humanité, que chaque peuple pourrait déclamer dans sa propre culture, y compris linguistique »⁶⁸. Suivant cette formule et dès sa vocation première, le langage se veut essentiellement une communication. Autrement : qui dit langage dit bien communication.

⁶⁸ Ph. Richard, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

D'après cette conclusion, affirmer les droits humains comme un langage commun requiert une démarche communicante et non imposante. Par là même, il se trouve simplement que l'expression universelle du langage des droits humains exige d'entrer en communication avec les particularismes culturels. Cela, au compte du fait de la double signification du langage à la fois comme : « [...] une fonction (expression de la pensée et communication entre les hommes) et une façon de s'exprimer (usage qui est fait quant à la forme de cette fonction d'expression) »⁶⁹. Dans le cadre de cette double signification du langage, convenons-en, l'adjectif « commun » qualifiant le nom langage dévoile l'évidence que chaque peuple porte en lui certaines valeurs positives, allant dans le sens des valeurs cardinales véhiculées par le contenu des droits humains. Le peuple Bariba, par exemple, porte l'égalité entre les êtres humains sous la forme d'un proverbe. Sur ce point, on nous reprochera éventuellement qu'il ne s'agit que d'un cas particulier, incapable comme tel de servir de cas d'école dans un contexte africain où tout donne raison à l'idée que les valeurs fondatrices des droits humains sont d'emblée étrangères aux traditions locales. À cela nous répliquerons par l'idée que bien qu'il s'agisse d'un cas particulier, la démarche traductive de Philippe Richard se déployant à l'échelle d'une communauté culturelle spécifique y relève, avec une exemplarité recommandable, le défi contemporain du modèle communautaire caractérisant les sociétés traditionnelles africaines⁷⁰. Cela d'autant plus que, comme le lecteur le déduira du développement antérieur, sa démarche aboutit avec succès à la réitération du langage universel des droits humains. En d'autres mots, une consécration pratique de « l'universalisme réitératif » au sujet duquel Michael Walzer laisse entendre : « Ce qui le rend différent de l'universalisme de surplomb est son attention au particularisme et au pluralisme »⁷¹. Attention au particularisme et au pluralisme, défi majeur des droits humains sommés dorénavant de ménager une place à l'altérité, constitue en ce point la principale clé de voûte du succès élogieux de cette démarche de l'expert onusien qui nous sert d'emblème à l'échelle de tout contexte sociétal où le paradigme de la communauté se dresse frontalement comme un défi contemporain aux droits humains.

Fort de cette réplique, toute démarche visant une mise en œuvre concrète des droits humains ne peut préalablement que les sortir de leur vase clos d'une « Raison » transcendante qu'enveloppe présentement leur conquête mondiale.

⁶⁹ Comme l'indique bien Ph. Richard, *Idem*.

⁷⁰ Au dire de C. Eberhard : « Le modèle communautaire caractérisant les sociétés traditionnelles africaines, présente une ressource intellectuelle formidable pour repenser un paradigme pour nos pratiques des droits de l'homme confrontés aux défis contemporains », C. Eberhard, *Droits de l'homme et dialogue interculturel*, op. cit., p. 307.

⁷¹ M. Walzer, *Pluralisme et démocratie*, Paris, Éditions Esprit, 1997, p. 88.

Car, martelons-le, seule la connaissance et la compréhension effective de l'esprit des droits humains par les populations endogènes peuvent assurer leur promotion par les masses, en général, et les victimes de certaines pratiques en particulier. Cela tout en postulant que ces masses et ces victimes constitueraient pour la même raison une force de contrainte « par le bas » à l'égard des pouvoirs publics. Comme pour illustrer cela, seule la compréhension réelle par les batonous du fondement des droits humains a pu susciter leur plein engagement en leur faveur. Symétriquement, avançons-le, seule une réelle connaissance et une compréhension effective du fondement de l'universalité des droits humains peuvent entraîner la libération des femmes du joug des excisions. Cela d'autant plus que, parvenant à une compréhension claire de la lettre et de l'esprit des droits humains, ces femmes pourraient ainsi constituer un véritable groupe de pression d'abord contre toutes celles et ceux qui du sein de leur communauté respectives maintiennent en vie cette pratique⁷² ; ensuite contre les pouvoirs publics en place qui peinent encore à légiférer et à mettre en pratique les normes internationales en défaveur de cette mutilation⁷³. Un tel aboutissement constitue le contrepoison le plus efficace contre les replis (collectifs) sur soi se manifestant couramment à travers les refrains du type : « les droits de l'homme, ces trucs de Blancs ! ».

Dans une telle logique, notre prise de position instruit le besoin d'une approche « par le bas ». Car, l'humanité, la dignité, l'égalité, la liberté, ces valeurs phares autour desquelles se cristallise le discours de l'universalité des droits humains ne sont ni l'invention ni la découverte d'un peuple en particulier. Ces valeurs, répétons-le dans un esprit pédagogique, se trouvent dans les tréfonds de chaque culture⁷⁴. De là, toute affirmation de l'universalité des droits humains et par

⁷² Il s'agit de l'effet responsabilisant de chaque être humain sur l'effectivité des droits humains. Plus clairement, il en va de la responsabilité de chacune et de chacun pris isolément puis collectivement dans la promotion des droits humains. De fait, la notion de responsabilité qui est ici prise au sérieux dévoile doublement son utilité : d'un côté, parce qu'elle est tout comme le dit S. Weil (*op. cit.*, p. 16) un besoin vital de l'âme humaine dont « La satisfaction de ce besoin exige qu'un homme ait à prendre souvent des décisions dans des problèmes [...] envers lesquels il se sent engagé » ; de l'autre, parce que sans ce type de responsabilité le combat pour le respect des droits humains passe pour un combat perdu d'avance. Ainsi que le recèle le propos net et sans appel de R. Cassin : « Il n'y aura pas de droits de l'homme tant que l'homme ne respectera pas, lui, les droits d'autrui, et tant qu'il ne voudra pas s'associer à tous les efforts qui sont faits », cité par G. Fellous, *op. cit.*, p.15.

⁷³ Nous pensons par exemple au Mali, à la Sierra Leone et au Libéria où le cadre juridique national jusqu'en date du 1er février 2019 n'y a pas encore prévu ce cadre pénal contre cette pratique pourtant fort répandue dans ces différents pays.

⁷⁴ Cette affirmation court le risque d'une objection : celle se résolvant à souligner que si l'universel tel que nous le percevons existe ou à son fondement existentiel dans chaque culture pourquoi alors le besoin de le déterrer ; pourquoi le besoin d'une tierce personne pour le faire, poursuivrait-on.

extension, leur promotion, appelle un renversement de perspective : plutôt que de se focaliser sur ce qui différencie les différentes cultures avec le langage universel des droits humains, en partant d'emblée d'une opposition entre le pôle de ces cultures et celui de ces droits, la tâche pertinente à notre sens est celle qui consiste à mobiliser puis fédérer les énergies autour de ce qui unit les deux pôles, de sorte à pouvoir susciter un engouement à l'égard des droits humains à la manière des batonous. Comprise en ce sens, notre trajectoire de promotion des droits humains draine avec elle une conséquence majeure : un déplacement des spécialistes du droit aux autres penseurs et à tous les citoyens. Ce pourquoi Philippe Richard à partir de son approche constitue pour nous une égérie. Peut-être nous reprochera-t-on de n'avoir pas introduit cette égérie par la riche littérature disponible sur le sujet traité. À quoi bon de répondre qu'« On a beaucoup écrit ces dernières années sur [...] le monisme et le pluralisme, l'universalisme et le particularisme [...] et pourtant notre compréhension de ces couples d'oppositions simples ne semble pas progresser »⁷⁵. À la suite, prétextant qu'une lecture exhaustive de la riche littérature disponible sur le sujet ici traité ne serait qu'une prétention, il nous a semblé plutôt adéquat de s'arc-bouter sur un exemple concret. Car : « Rien ne vaut l'exemple, le fait concret »⁷⁶.

Visiblement, il pourrait *de facto* s'agir d'une contradiction dans les termes qui fondent notre argumentation. Mais en réalité loin s'en faut ! D'abord, parce que l'acte que tout contempteur de notre affirmation pourrait désigner par « exhumation de l'universel » correspond dans notre esprit à la décolonisation des idéaux formels que renferment les droits humains. De cette décolonisation résulterait la mise en œuvre pratique du contenu de ces droits, une mise en œuvre rendue possible par la prise en compte des inventions et des choix orientés par des valeurs endogènes. Bien davantage, cette décolonisation a l'écho d'un aboutissement heureux de la traduction. Dans cet esprit, la tierce personne (qui n'est pas forcément extérieure à la communauté culturelle spécifique mais qui possède une ouverture d'esprit sur les connaissances à l'échelle du globe) supposée rendre possible cette décolonisation a un statut : celui d'un médiateur. En réalité, il fait office de médiateur en ce sens qu'il participe à la mise en contact de cultures différentes ; une mise en contact à partir de laquelle jaillit l'urgence de la traduction : « [...] le contact des cultures favorise la traduction », dit S. B. Diagne, *op. cit.*, p. 163. Ensuite, et ce en liaison étroite avec l'argument précédent, parce que l'acte qui passerait aux yeux de nos contempteurs pour un acte d'exhumation correspond dans notre esprit à un dévoilement du masque empêchant aux Africains d'identifier dans le fondement des droits humains l'adéquation avec certaines de leurs valeurs endogènes.

⁷⁵ M. Walzer, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

⁷⁶ M. Eliade, *Le sacré et le profane*, Paris, Gallimard, 1965[1957], p. 20.

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SHOULD WE SUSPEND THE TRUTH TO PREVENT HARM?

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ABSTRACT. The paper examines the ethics of truth telling and free speech in Jonathan Rauch's *The Humanitarian Threat*. The central question is this: "Should we suspend the truth to prevent harm?". Both humanitarians and the anti-humanitarians supply different responses to this question. While the humanitarians supplied a positive answer, Rauch argues that the anti-humanitarian posture of the exponents of liberalism supplied a negative answer. The paper considers the humanitarian argument that puts the welfare of the people above the truth or anything else. Meanwhile, for the anti-humanitarians, the right to speak the truth must be guaranteed at all time. This paper argues that, in practice, the morality of truth telling is not only context bound, it also depends on what the truth is meant to achieve. Thus, the suspension of the truth may be consistent with morality in some medical and sensitive security situations due to the tendency to cause harm. The paper does not argue that the truth be suspended arbitrarily or for mischievous reasons. It only concludes by identifying some practical situations under which suspension of the truth may not be inconsistent with morality.

Keywords: Truth-telling, Harm, Liberal Science, Humanitarianism, Situational Moral Relativism

Introduction

This article examines the ethics of truth telling and issues that surround it. Given the important of truth-telling in any human society, in the family, in the work place and relationship, it is highly imperative to examine whether truth-telling is

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consistent with morality in all cases, and at all time. In ethics, the issue of truth telling is a complicated issue especially when discussed in connection with the politics of free speech. What is truth to begin with? Traditionally, truth is often contrasted with falsity. Generally, truth is always defined as the quality of those propositions that accord with reality, specifying what in case the fact is (Audi, 1999:929). Considering the central question in this paper, is truth really consistent with morality at all times? For instance, can a medical doctor tell his cardiac arrest patient the truth about his/her health condition at all time? Can the security agency give the true reports of the security situation of the society or what should be regarded as a classified information which is related to the weapon of mass destruction and its proliferation to the public at all time, even in the face of imminent danger? Part of the ethics of journalism is to seek truth and report it. But should a journalist report the truth at all time even if the truth could cause civil unrest? There are different approaches to these questions in ethics. In *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Morals*, one of the attempts to address the above questions is linked to Immanuel Kant. Kant supplies a positive answer to these questions in consonance with his categorical imperative which states that: Act only according to that maxim through which you can at the same time will that it becomes a universal law (Kant, 2012:421). Kant's argument is that, 'we could not will a universal law that allows us to lie, because such a law would be self-defeating' (Immanuel Kant, 1993:230). The import of this is that we should not suspend the truth for any reason because truth is consistent with morality at all times. His point is that we should not tell lies for any reason. The reason is simply because, for any reason, categorical imperative will not permit a universal law that allow us to lie. Also, telling lies or withholding the truth amount to treating others as a means to an end, and this in turn affects the duty we owe to them as fellow human beings.

Contrary to the Kantian view, the consequentialists will always remind us of the role of consequences in the morality of truth-telling. One needs to consider the consequences of telling the truth always. This is borne out of the fact that the emphasis of the consequentialist such as the utilitarians is always on the promotion of greater balance of happiness over pain for the people affected by the act. This suggests that the utilitarians response to the question of truth telling is neither here nor there depending on the dictate of the principle of utility. The emphasis is always about the promotion of the greater balance of happiness or favourable consequence over pain.

Apart from Kant and the utilitarians, we have the humanitarian and the anti-humanitarian approaches to the same question of truth-telling under consideration. These two approaches will be the focus of this paper. Now, by extension, is an offense

caused through free speech morally justifiable especially when the speech is the truth? Must we tell the truth even if others will be offended, harm or hurt? Should we suspend the truth to prevent harm? The task of this paper is to attempt these vital contentious questions. Starting by considering what morality requires will help us to see how incompatible answers are offered by contending sides on the subject matter.

This paper considers both the 'anti-humanitarians'¹ as well as the 'humanitarians'² approaches to the questions of free speech and truth telling. The humanitarians emphasise the view that offensive speech (regardless of whether it is the truth) should be restricted for good humanitarian reasons with the sole aim of protecting offense and harm. Meanwhile, the liberals argue against such restriction because it is possible that the speech that causes such an offence is the truth. In fact, for Rauch who also shares liberals view, the liberal science with its method of non-restriction remains the best method available for determining the truth (Rauch, 1996:135). But, is Rauch's view really tenable? We shall return this. Our focus in this paper needs to be clearly defined at this level. Our aim is neither to support humanitarianism wholesale nor to reject anti-humanitarianism in entirety. The focus is mainly to critically examine whether one should suspend the truth in order to prevent harm or not. Relying on the situational moral relativism approach to interrogate this, the paper provides a positive response.

The paper is divided into three main sections. The first section considers the minimum conception of morality as well as the conceptual clarification of the concepts 'free speech' and 'offensive speech'. The second section considers the humanitarians arguments on free Speech, truth and harm. Meanwhile, the fourth examines a situational moral relativist approach to the question of truth-telling and harm. With practical examples, the paper concludes that the gap between the humanitarians and the liberals is not as wide as Jonathan Rauch assumed.

Minimum Conception of Morality

Ethics is often defined as the philosophical study of morality. Ethics is commonly used interchangeably with 'morality' to mean the study of right and wrong; and sometimes it is used more narrowly to mean the moral principles of a particular tradition, group, or individual. (Audi, 1999:317). Specifically, James Rachels sees morality as the effort to guide one's conduct by reason while giving

¹ In this paper, anti-humanitarianism and liberalism will be used interchangeable.

² For the purpose of this paper, humanitarianism is used interchangeably with communitarianism.

equal weight to the interests of each individual affected by one's decision. (Rachels, 2012:13). While considering the minimum requirements for morality for any moral theory, reason is one of the key factors. That is, there must be a reason for acting in a particular way or backing our moral judgements. That is, justification for acting in a particular way. Also, in Rachels' view, the interest of the people affected by the act is another very important factor for any moral theory. This idea of minimum conception of morality led to the idea of conscientious moral agent as far as James Rachels is concerned. Who is a conscientious moral agent? A conscientious moral agent is someone who is concerned impartially with the interests of everyone affected by his/her act; who carefully sifts facts and examines their implications. (Rachels, 2012:13). The above view suggests that even a conscientious moral agent respect the interests of the individuals affected by a particular moral action. In other words, a conscientious moral agent will examine the implication of a particular action whether it has a tendency of causing harm or not to the people affected by the act.

Jonathan Haidt and Jesse Graham, identified five basic moral foundations: harm, fairness, loyalty, respect, and sanctity. (Haidt and Graham, 2007:98-99). The first on their list is the idea of harm. That is, no moral theory will justify harm. Thus, the idea that one should not cause harm to others is one of the basic moral foundations as far as Haidt and Graham are concerned. Now, given the above conception of morality, would the suspension of the truth to prevent harm be consistent with morality? Answer to this question is the main concern of this paper. We shall return to this in the body of the paper for details.

Conceptual Clarification: Free Speech, Hate Speech and Harm

One important question that motivates this clarification is the question of "what type of speech causes harm?" Addressing this question will help us to understand that not all speeches cause harm. Discussion on free speech, hate speech and their associated problems is arguably traced back to Socrates in the old Athenian society where he was accused of polluting the mind of the Athenian youth with his speech. This was even before John Milton's *Areopagitica*³ and the "First

³ The foundation of the traditional liberal model of free speech is traced back to 17th century England as expressed in John Milton (1644) *Areopagitica*. *Areopagitica is the Title of a speech of Mr John Milton speech which monster argument for the liberty of unlicensed printing. Opposing licencing/ censorship.*

Amendment Issue”⁴ in the United States of America that scholars often refer to. What exactly is free speech? Obviously, there is no simple definition for free speech. Why is this so? The reason is simply because the concept is being abused and thus, our understanding of the concept has been distorted. In fact, as hinted by Rauch, some people often use free speech as a weapon to protect their hidden political agenda or ideology and often present it as a shield to hide behind when being criticized.

Generally, Free speech is the right of an individual to express opinions without censorship, restraint or retaliation. According to Stanley Fish, free speech is just the name we give to verbal behaviour that serves the substantive agenda we wish to advance; and we give our preferred behaviours when we can. (Fish, 1996:127). This definition is problematic. This is problematic because politically motivated speech will fit in into this definition. Similarly, it is problematic in the sense that it does not cover the whole essence of free speech. Instead, it only reveals the negative part of free speech. Meanwhile the positive part of free speech that has to do with truth is left unattended to.

Just like free speech, there is no simple definition for hate speech also. Hate speech is generally considered as the speech that singles out minorities for abuse and harassment (Slagle, 2009:238). Thus, an offensive/ hate speech is an act of whatever kind, which without justifiable cause do harm to others maybe, and in the more important cases absolutely require to be, controlled by the unfavourable sentiments, and, when needful, by the active interference of mankind (Fish, 1996;106). Hate speech regulation targets speech-based harms that are not covered under current First Amendment jurisprudence (Bennett, 1993:3). For Kegan, hate speech is conceived as a speech that projects, promotes or perpetuates racial and gender inequality, and that the uncoerced disappearance of such speech would be cause for great elation (Kegan, 1993:873).

Meanwhile for John Bennett, proposals for hate speech regulation rest on two largely unexamined premises: that hate speech causes social harm and that the degree of speech-based harm is so severe that speech regulations are warranted (Bennett, 1998:445). What do we make out of the above definitions? We need to understand how free speech, hate speech and harm are connected. The question that necessitate this is that, is free speech inherently harmful? Or, at what point does free speech become harmful? The simple answer to this question is that free speech becomes harmful the moment it accommodates politics of hate speech. In

⁴ “First Amendment” is often used to refer to the first amendment of the constitution of the United States of America that guarantees freedom of speech in 1789: The First Amendment states, in relevant part, that: “Congress shall make no law...abridging freedom of speech.”

other words, the moment it has the tendency of damaging and causing injury or trouble for the parties involved then, it becomes harmful. With the understand that free speech and hate speech are two different concepts, W. K. Crenshaw in his analysis actually used the term *assaultive speech* interchangeably with *hate speech* to define “words that are used as weapons to ambush, terrorize, wound, humiliate, and degrade” (Crenshaw, 1993:1). One thing that must be made clear at this point is that freedom of speech does not include the right to incite actions that would harm or make utterances to humiliate or terrorize others like hate speech. Now, with the above background, the next equally important question is what is the humanitarians’ position on free speech, truth and harm? This question determines the focus of the next section.

Humanitarians on Free Speech, Truth and Harm

Humanitarianism is the doctrine that the people’s duty is to promote the wellbeing/human welfare. Thus, for the humanitarians, it is morally wrong to offend another person for any reason, either through one’s speech or actions. The argument is that the welfare of the people or the community should be paramount. For the humanitarians, speech should be restricted for good humanitarian reasons with the sole aim of protecting offense and harm (Rauch, 1996:135). Stanley Fish’s view actually represents the view of the humanitarians.

For Fish, in his paper “There’s No Such Thing as Free Speech, and it’s a Good Thing, Too”, he argues that, free speech is such an abstract concept which do not have any natural content but filled with whatever content and direction one can manage to put into it (Fish, 1996:126). The argument is that free speech does not exist in the real sense of it. What we call free speech are mere politically motivated speech that expresses the hidden agenda and personal interest of the speakers. It is believed that such hidden agenda is often sponsored by the liberals. This is with the aim of rejecting Rauch’s position.

The Humanitarian popular slogan is “cause no pain and allow no pain to be caused” (Rauch, 1996:135). What is the import of this slogan? The point is that if my telling the truth as a result of freedom of speech will hurt others or the community, then I should not tell such truth for humanitarian reasons. One controversial question that comes to mind is this. Giving that human beings are created to live in close proximity to one another arising from Aristotelian notion of *zoon politicon* (Aristotle, 1989: 446), how practicable is this slogan? One problem for the humanitarians is that given the nature of our present human society, Rauch is of the view that “the

social system does not permit a situation whereby harm does not come to anybody. Conflict of impulse and desire is an inescapable fact of human existence, and where there is conflict there will always be a loser or wound" (Rauch, 1996:135). The point is that the humanitarians' slogan is too ambitious. It is too ambitious in the sense that through their slogan, humanitarians assume an unrealistic human society where harm will be impossible. Tracing the argument back to the inception of human societies, the humanitarians need to tread with caution in this regard because human society is structured in such a way that harm of one form or the other is inevitable. We are yet to witness such a perfect human society where harm does not exist in one form or the other. Let us now turn our attention to the liberals' response to the question about whether we should suspend the truth in order to prevent harm or not.

The Anti-Humanitarians on Free Speech, Truth and Harm

Unbeknown to the humanitarians, the anti-humanitarians also stand against deliberate harm. Thus, it will be wrong for the humanitarians to think that liberalism accommodates harm. This clarification is essential because humanitarians always present their arguments as if liberals do not consider or pay attention to the issue of harm. As Jonathan Rauch rightly pointed out, just like the humanitarians, liberals have a slogan which states that "cause no pain solely in order to hurt" (Rauch,1996:135). This slogan essentially captures liberals' idea of free speech and harm. The argument is that, if the only reason why you want to hurt someone is just because you take pleasure in causing pain to the person and not because you want the truth to be told, one should not do it. I also want to support this slogan because it is morally wrong to perform an action with the sole aim of harming them.

The anti-humanitarian's argument is that truth must be spoken even if some people will be hurt. Not just because you want to hurt them just for fun, but for the truth to be known. This proposal actually finds support in the work of Immanuel Kant. Emphasising the moral importance of this truth, Kant argues that "To be truthful ... in all deliberations, therefore, is a sacred and absolutely commanding decree of reason, limited by no expediency" (Kant, 1949:348). Kant as we know, is one of the scholars who is of the opinion that truth is consistent with morality. Kant supports the view that truth must be told at all time and that human beings ought not to suspend the truth to prevent harm or for any reason. Thus, considering the question of whether we should suspend the truth to prevent harm, Kant answer as found on page 63 of *Grounding for the Metaphysics of Moral* is that we should not.

Similarly, for John Rawls, “each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of the society as a whole cannot override. The rights secured by justice are not subject to political bargaining or to the calculus of social interest” (Rawls, 1981:3). Just like Kant, Rawls also supports the view that the rights to tell the truth ought to be exercised at all time and that human beings ought not to suspend the truth to prevent harm or for any reason including the welfare of the entire society. However, does it mean that all the liberals maintain the same position on the question of truth-telling and harm? We supply a negative answer. The reason is simply because J.S. Mill who is also a liberal provided different account. We shall return to this for details in the last part of the paper.

Essentially, Rauch considered the arguments of the non-liberals such as Stanley Fish’s view as a humanitarian threat to freedom. For the humanitarian offensive speech should be restricted for good humanitarian reasons with the sole aim of protecting offense and harm (Rauch, 1996:136). However, Rauch argues otherwise. His argument centres on the fact that such restriction is a humanitarian threat to liberalism. The rider to his arguments is that seeking the truth requires not only free inquiry but free intellectual battle, which may sometimes include offensive speech and behaviour (Rauch, 1996:136). The fact of the matter is that, if one stands for the truth all the time, such a fellow is bound to offend people who do not want the truth to be told especially the morally bankrupt people in the society. Rauch argues that liberal science remains the best method available for determining the truth. This view may be correct because if determining the truth will bring about harm to some people in the community, humanitarians or communitarians will kick against such truth.

The anti-humanitarians tend to justify freedom generally, and free speech in particular, for a variety of reasons. What does this mean? As J. S. Mill rightly pointed out, free speech fosters authenticity, genius, creativity, individuality and human flourishing. According to Mill, “if we ban free speech, the silenced opinion may be true, or contain a portion of the truth, and that unchallenged opinions become mere prejudices and dead dogmas that are inherited rather than adopted.” (Mill, 1978:12). The implication of this quotation is that the humanitarians’ argument that we should suspend the truth to prevent harm for “good humanitarian reason” is a mere prejudice and dead dogma as Mill hinted. One problem with the humanitarians is that, what is this “good humanitarian reason?” The humanitarians did not clearly specify everything under the purview of good humanitarian reason. As a matter of fact, the ‘truth’ may even be what this ‘good humanitarian reason’ requires in the long run.

Furthermore, as quoted by Yong, Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes rightly argue that, “in a free ‘marketplace of ideas’, true ideas and opinions will tend to find favour and eventually prevail over false ideas and opinions.” (Yong, 2011:390). What does this suggest? Holmes idea tends to provide support for the liberals’ defence of free speech and the truth. This same view finds support in J.S. Mill’s claim that censorship will always be less likely to promote truth than free discussion because no authority can reliably identify wrong ideas and therefore suppression of ideas may simply lead to the suppression of true or at least partially true ideas (Yong, 2011:390). The point of emphasis in the above quotations is the truth.

This paper, I am not an advocate of free speech from a radical sense of the word due to the tendency of being abused as hinted in the introduction. Instead, our claim is that truth ought to be an utmost social value which should not be suspended because some people will be offended for their own selfish reasons.

As Caleb Yong has rightly pointed out,

Just as it is important to reach true judgments about which individual ways of life are good, it is important to reach true judgments about which collective ways of life are good, and which political and social arrangements are just. These are undoubtedly powerful values and interests (Yong, 2011:391).

What does this suggest? The point, in short, is that the “freedom” in free and equal citizenship requires respect for both the political and personal autonomy that citizens need to develop opinions about politics and the good life. The “equal” in free and equal citizenship reflects a concern to ensure that these capacities are respected equally regardless of one’s race, ethnicity, or gender (Bretschneider, 2012:1). Now, having considered the humanitarians and the anti-humanitarians’ positions on the question of whether we should suspend the truth to prevent harm or not, it is equally important to consider the situational moral relativist approach to the question of truth-telling and harm. The aim is to show with this approach, it could be established that the humanitarians and the anti-humanitarians are not necessarily antithetical on the subject matter.

A Situational Moral Relativist Approach to the Question of Truth-Telling and Harm

Given the view earlier considered, will it be appropriate to argue that humanitarians and the anti-humanitarians are totally antithetical on the question of whether we should suspend the truth to prevent harm? In my view, this may not be correct. The reason is this. Just like the liberals, the humanitarians too are not

really against truth telling. In fact, they both believe in truth-telling and support it differently. The only condition in which the humanitarians canvass for suspension of truth is if and only if the reason involve is a humanitarian reason. That is, if the reason concerns with the promotion of human welfare. But if the reason is not a humanitarian reason then, for the humanitarians, truth should not be suspended. For instance, it is doubtful whether the humanitarians will support the idea of suspension of the truth in order to defraud others. The reason is simply because doing so will amount to causing more harm to the people defrauded.

Now, the best way to address the question of whether we should suspend the truth to prevent harm is to adopt situational moral relativists' approach. The reason for the suggested approach is because it is not impossible for both humanitarian and the anti-humanitarian of the exponent of liberalism to accept this approach at certain level of discussion. What is situational moral relativism? According to John Tilley, situational moral relativism is an ethical view which states that whether a deed is right or wrong depends on the situation in which it occurs; thus, moral appraisals must be sensitive to circumstances. (Tilley, 1998:283).

In line with the above view, the question of whether we should suspend the truth to prevent harm depends on the situation under consideration. That is, the situation involved will determine that. However, it is important to announce at this juncture that there are positive and negative situations. It is only the suspension of truth in positive situations that is consistent with morality, and not under negative situations. For instance, a criminal who lied (suspended the truth) in order to escape being punished by the law has suspended the truth under negative condition and that is not our focus. The reason is because such negative condition is not consistent with morality because it is an indirect way of justifying crime. Our focus is on some medical and media positive cases which we shall consider below. The reason why we focused on the positive cases is because we are not ignorant of the fact that some people may want to engage situational moral relativism to justify injustice.

Case 1: Medical Case

The point about this case is this: should a medical doctor tell the truth about the condition of the patient at all time? Knowing fully well that truth telling is an integral part of the physician-patient relationship, it should however be noted that there are situations whereby telling the patient the truth in a certain situation could cause harm for the patient. For instance, let us consider this case study:

There was a car accident whereby a man was badly injured while the family have been killed. This badly injured man regains consciousness in a hospital bed and he is critically ill and fighting for his life after a road accident. If this man were to ask about his family as soon as he has regained consciousness, would lying to him be justified? It certainly will be difficult to see how it makes moral sense to tell him the truth, that his wife and three other daughters have been killed, until his condition is no longer critical (Yusrita, 2018:135).

From the above case, is the suspension of truth consistent with morality? For the situational moral relativists, it is. The reason is because the present condition of the man in the above example is critical. It is obvious that the humanitarians will also supply a positive response in the above situation. Similarly, it is doubtful whether the anti-humanitarians will reject the above view or supply a negative response. The reason is that doing so will not be consistent with their argument against "deliberate harm" because telling the truth in the above medical condition will amount to deliberate harm. That is, if the situation is not well managed, it could lead to the death of the patient in the above case. Thus, withholding the truth for the humanitarian reason in such a medically sensitive situation appears to be the morally right thing to do. The reason is simply because that is what the situation demands because that is what morality requires at that particular moment.

However, we are not ignorant of the fact that it is not impossible for a critic to make attempt to undermine the above case. How? It could be argued that even given the above case study, it is not in all cases that withholding the truth in such condition could cause harm. For instance, in a situation whereby the man in question has been thinking about how to terminate the lives of his wife and children because he got a privileged information that they are planning to kill him untimely so as to take possession of his properties, hearing such truth that his wife and children just died may as a matter of fact, aid his quick recovery instead of worsening his health condition. Thus, the claim that truth-telling in such a medical condition could be fallacious because it is based on a mere assumption.

As a rejoinder to the above counter objection, one may argue that the above objection is not strong enough. It is not strong enough because the above counter objection is also based on a mere assumption. The reason is this. If the man in the accident scenario did not have any information that his wife and children planned to kill him, and if the man so much love his family, suck from such truth (the news about their death) is enough to kill. The point is that whenever there is a clash between the truth and human welfare in such medical situation, human welfare should have it.

Case 2:

In community Q, there is a particular Mr. Y who after taking too much hard drugs became mentally derailed suffering from schizophrenic psychosis. One beautiful morning, Mr. Y picks his gun and enters into a particular grocery store to look for the owner of the store with the intention to kill whoever owns the store. Since he doesn't know the real owner, upon entry, he started asking for the owner of the store with gun in his hand. When he eventually met the owner of the store, being fully aware of Mr. Y's intention, he decided to tell him that the owner of the store is out of town.

In the above case, it is evident that the owner of the store suspended the truth to prevent harm. Given the situation in the above case, situational moral relativists will argue that suspending the truth in the face of such danger is consistent with morality. Interestingly, it is not impossible for both humanitarians and the anti-humanitarians to agree that suspension of truth in such condition is consistent with morality due to the reasons given in case 1.

One possible objection to the above case is that, the owner of the store should have spoken the truth because it is not impossible for Mr. Y who is the schizophrenic psychosis patient to change his mind. One way to reply the above counter objection is that if Mr. Y does not change his mind, not withholding the truth from him could be disastrous for the owner of the store. Thus, withholding the truth for self-defence is not inconsistency with morality because that is what the situation demands. This is quite different from withholding the truth in order to defraud others. That will amount to treating or using those people as a means to an end which is inconsistent with morality.

Case 3: Media Case

The point about this case is this: should a journalist report the truth at all time even if the truth is inimical to the peace and security of the people? Though, the ethics of journalism is to seek the truth always and to report it, but returning a positive answer to this question may not be consistent with morality. Arising from the fact that the public have the right to be informed about any matter of public concern and that a good journalist should always tell the truth, but such right may not be guarantee at all time depending on the issue under consideration. For instance, there are situations where it may be pertinent for the media to withhold the truth for the purpose of national goal and unity because failure to do so could lead to war or conflict.

There is a slogan that says 'Journalists should do no harm'. This is what led to the principle of harm limitation in journalism ethics. Principle of harm limitation deals with the questions of whether everything learned should be reported...it means that some weight needs to be given to the negative consequences of full disclosure.⁵ Consequently, this principle provides an exception to the claim that journalist ought to seek the truth and report it always.

Case 4: Others

In Joshua Chapter 2, Rahab the harlot hid the two men on the flat roof of her house, under large bundles of flax. When the soldiers arrived to look for the spies, Rahab told them that they were not there. The soldiers searched the tavern, but Rahab had hidden the spies well. The spies agreed to protect her and her family but explained that she must hang a scarlet rope out of the window so the Israelites would know which home to spare.⁶ What Rehab did in the above example was that she suspended the truth to prevent harm because human life is so sacred.

Evaluation of the Cases

Now, in the final analysis, are the actions in the above cases i, ii, iii and iv really consistent with morality? The above cases, under such situations are morally right especially for the humanitarian reason. As hinted earlier, the reason is simply because, if the truth is not suspended in the above cases and contexts, it could cause harm to the moral agents involved.

Interestingly, the fact that the anti-humanitarian posture of the liberals argues in defence of truth telling does not imply that they support wilful harm, especially when one has the knowledge that such truth could cause harm. In fact, their slogan is "cause no harm". J.S. Mill, for instance, gave an interesting account about situations in which suspension of truth could be consistent with morality. As a liberal, J.S. Mill in his 'Harm Principle' states that "the sole end for which mankind are warranted, individually or collectively, in interfering with the liberty of action of any of their number, is self-protection. That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others" (Mill, 2003:80). The above quotation is self-explanatory.

⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Journalism_ethics_and_standards&oldid=1072822084

⁶ Joshua Chapter 2 verse 1

Going by Millian's account, one moral drawn from the above view is that, the only situation or condition upon which one can be denied of his/her freedom is when one engages in activities that could cause harm to others. By extension, for a liberal like Mill, suspension of truth is not inconsistent with morality so long as it is done in order to prevent harm. Thus, it is our view in this paper that the gap between the humanitarians and the liberals on the question of truth-telling is not as wide as Jonathan Rauch assumed. The reason is simply that, just like humanitarianism, the anti-humanitarianism is not also an anti-welfare political theory.

Conclusion

The paper examined the ethics of truth telling and certain moral issues that are associated with it such as the issue of autonomy, benefit or harm. The paper explored the humanitarian and the antihumanitarian approaches to the issue as enshrined in the Jonathan Rauch's *The Humanitarian Threat*. The central question for the paper was that whether we should suspend the truth to prevent harm. Both humanitarians and the anti-humanitarians supplied different responses to the question. While the humanitarians supplied a positive answer, Rauch argued that the antihumanitarian posture of the exponents of liberalism supplied a negative answer. The paper considered the humanitarian argument that puts the welfare of the people above the truth or anything else. Meanwhile, for the liberals of Kantian version, the right to speak the truth must be guaranteed at all time. This paper argued that, in practice, the morality of truth telling is not only context bound, it also depends on what the truth is meant to achieve. Thus, the suspension of the truth may be consistent with morality in some medical and sensitive security situations due to the tendency to cause harm. The paper did not argue that the truth be suspended arbitrarily or for mischievous reasons. It only identified some practical situations under which suspension of the truth may not be inconsistent with morality.

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BOOK REVIEW

**Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Das Klima der Geschichte im planetarischen Zeitalter*, 2022, Suhrkamp, Übersetzung aus dem Englischen
von Christine Pries**

Bereits der Titel dieses Buches ist eine Herausforderung. Denn bei der Auseinandersetzung des Toynbee-Preisträgers (2014) mit dem brisanten Thema des Klimaschutzes angesichts der globalen Erwärmung geht es nicht um eine gewöhnliche Chronologie eines bestimmten Problemzusammenhanges, sondern um den Aufweis eines doppelten Bezugs: die Lesart des Genitivus als Subjektivus erlaubt zwar dem Leser der Geschichte in einer vielleicht poetisch-atmosphärischen Weise ein eigenes, sich veränderndes ‚Klima‘ zu unterstellen, der Genitivus Objektivus macht aber auf einen Akteur aufmerksam, der selber über ein anderes ‚Alter‘ bzw. Zeitverständnis verfügt. ‚Das Planetarische‘ vermag durchaus ein Klima zu zeitigen, das Geschichtlichkeit erneut zum Thema macht: Das Denken der Geschichte entzieht sich der klassischerweise als *animal rationale* begriffenen Spezies und wird zurückversetzt in etwas, das als ‚Tiefenhistorie‘ und deren „unmenschlich weit ausholenden Zeitmaßstäben“ (S. 14) jenseits des begrenzten Horizontes des jeweiligen *anthropos* die Geschichte der Spezies in der Geschichte des Planeten wurzeln lässt. Doch verhält es sich nicht gerade umgekehrt mit dem vom Menschen verschuldeten Klimawandel? Wenn die Menschheit als zentrale und globale Handlungsmacht

angesichts ihres Energiebedarfes mit dem Verbrauch fossiler Rohstoffe die klimatischen Veränderungen und den Eintritt in ein neues Zeitalter bewirkt hat (und da konkurrieren erst die Bezeichnungen: „Anthropozän“ und „Kapitalozän“), dann ist „der Planet“ nicht minder als der Globus ein dem Verständnis des Menschen, dem Gebrauch und Verbrauch durch den Menschen ausgeliefertes kosmisches Objekt und „das Planetarische“ durchaus keine selbständig agierende Macht, sondern eine zur Verfügung gestellte Ressource. Auch wenn dies einer Geschichte des Menschen als Krönung der Schöpfung entsprechen vermag, so zeigt Chakrabarty, dass genau diesem Verständnis der Natur als Bestand und dem Menschen als Herrscher der Erde und Schöpfer einer ‚Technosphäre‘ (so Peter Haff, s. Chakrabarty S. 16), das lange das Kernstück des Denkens der Moderne war (und ihrer Kritik entsprach), spätestens angesichts der Klimakrise ein Ende gesetzt wurde. Die Fakten sprechen für sich: Das Planetarische kann sich der Handlungsmacht des Menschen zwar bedingt fügen, zeigt sich aber auch als unverfügbare und bedrohliche, dem Kontrollbereich des Menschen sich entziehende Macht. Um zu verstehen, was das Planetarische überhaupt für eine Dimension darstellt und was für eine Reihe von Veränderungen der



Denkungsart es erfordert, bedarf es zunächst einer grundsätzlichen begrifflichen Klärung: „Der Globus, behaupte ich, ist eine humanozentrische Konstruktion: der Planet bzw. das Erdsystem, dezentriert den Menschen.“ (S.14) Dass der Mensch selbst sich als ‚Doppelgestalt‘ vernimmt, entspricht seinem Weltverständnis und der Spaltung in Prozesse der Natur und Produkte der Kultur (denen auch die klassische Debatte der Geistes- und Naturwissenschaften weiter folgen). Die Spaltung durchzieht auch das Zeitverständnis (die Geschichte erscheint allein im Horizont eines menschlichen Unternehmens der „Sinnebildung“, d.h. als „die Spannung zwischen Erwartungshorizont und Erfahrungshorizont“. S.291) Nunmehr, so Chakrabarty weiter, „kollidiert das welthistorische Narrativ (in unseren Köpfen) mit der sehr viel längeren geologischen Geschichte des Planeten bzw. in heutiger Benennung – des Erdsystems“. (ebd.) Die Herausforderung, ‚planetenzentrierte‘ Denkweisen zu entwickeln, zeigt sich immer wieder (nicht nur was Zeitlichkeit angeht) angesichts des Unvermögens, die zentralen menschlichen Fragen nach Gerechtigkeit, Fortschritt und Entwicklung in einem weiteren, planetarischen Umfeld zu verorten. Eine Sackgasse in dieser Hinsicht wäre auch der einseitige Fokus auf die Entlarvung des Kapitalismus als Urheber des Weltklimadesasters: „Aber in diesem ganzen Buch kommt es mir darauf an, dass die Geschichte der Menschheit sich nicht mehr aus der Perspektive von (höchstens) 500 Jahren Kapitalismus erzählen lässt.“ (S.234) Um das ungebrochene Selbstverständnis der ‚Spezies‘ (aus deren Perspektive Chakrabarty den anthropozentrischen Blick umzulenken versucht) zu relativieren, werden ferner zwei Gegenwürfe ausgeführt: das kantsche Projekt der aufklärerischen Moderne (*Die Moderne und Kants Geologie der Sitten*, S.241ff) und Bruno Latours Zurücknahme des Projekts der Moderne hinein in

eine symmetrische Anthropologie, gleichsam einer ‚Emanzipation‘ bzw. Befreiung nicht-menschlicher Wesen als etwas, was einem geistigen Dekolonisierungsakt ähnelt“ (S.256).

Es bleibt aber schließlich ein interessanterweise paradoxes Verhältnis, über das dieses beeindruckende und informierte Buch nachzudenken einlädt: Die Frage, ob sich der Anthropozentrismus der Humanwissenschaften überwinden ließe (was durchaus notwendig ist) schließt den Menschen gerade nicht aus, sondern bindet ihn an das Sein der Dinge und des Ganzen. Es bedarf also sowohl des menschlichen Weitblickes als auch seines aufmerksamen Hörens auf das „nur allzu menschliche Rauschen der Sprache“ (S.255). Anders gesagt: um das zu retten, was nie menschliches Eigentum und trotzdem menschliches und nichtmenschliches Wohnen als Leben, als planetarisch-fragiles Gleichgewicht weiter ermöglichen könnte, wird der Mensch als Verantwortender und ‚Treuhand‘ gebraucht. Als Stauer, als einer, der sich sowohl in Ehrfurcht zurückhält, und dem es auch nicht an Tatkraft bzw. ‚moralischem Mut‘ (S.341) fehlt. Chakrabarty nennt das damit geforderte Wesen *Homo prudens*. Es sei letztlich auch der besonderen Spezies erwünscht, die sich der Übernahme der Verantwortung für den Planeten nicht mehr entziehen kann und deren komplexe Problematik zum Schluss auf die Frage zugespitzt wird: „Kann der *Homo sapiens* lernen, ungeachtet der politischen Schlachten, die uns trennen, ein *Homo prudens* zu werden?“ (ebd.), dass sie auch letztlich den Weg zum notwendigen Wechsel des Standpunktes im Einzelnen findet: dafür hat Chakrabartys Buch auf jeden Fall viele schlagende Argumente zu bieten.

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ERRATUM

As co-author of the article entitled ***WE WILL FIGURE IT OUT. KNOW-HOW, HYBRID WAYS AND COMMUNICATIVE (INTER)ACTIONS***, published in ***STUDIA UBB. PHILOSOPHIA***, Vol. 65 (2020), 3, pp. 33-50, Mr. **ADRIAN LUDUŞAN** has asked us to specify the fact that his correct affiliation is as follows: *Department of European Studies and Governance, Faculty of European Studies, Babeş-Bolyai University, Emmanuel de Martonne 1, Cluj-Napoca, RO-400090. Email: adiludusan@gmail.com.*

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