

On Emergence (Emergenz: Die Entstehung von Neuem)

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[Introductory Report to the Conference as Programme for a Future Projekt]

In principle, philosophy is on a permanent quest for an adequate language. Hence, it shares a vital interest with literature. However, both philosophy and literature have been separated strictly within the ongoing public discourse as representing completely different approaches to mapping the world as *it is* (in speculative terms) and as *it is being observed* (in sceptical terms) at the same time. One could also add: And as *it could be* according to our imagination (or *cataleptic phantasy* rather, to be more precise). Essentially, this separation has been a direct consequence of the even more strict separation of the sciences and the arts as it has been carefully cemented for at least 200 years by now.

The only exception may be French philosophy, especially as seen under the perspective of developments in the 20th century: What is generally classified as belonging to the so-called "schools" of existentialism, structuralism and many other -isms, very often strives for an all-encompassing method to grasp a theoretical totality of knowledge and understanding that is not limited by boundaries of pre-defined disciplines. This may be the reason for another exception as far as French philosophy is being concerned: Before and after World War II, the political *engagement* of French philosophers (actually in the very wording of this concept a French invention) has been far greater than in other countries. Very many of them have shown up as politically engaged *intellectuals*, and very often the assemblies of estates (*états généraux*) have been organized by philosophers.¹

In his noteworthy essay on "the writer as intellectual"², Georg Jäger discusses the genesis of the intellectual out of a discourse of engagement as determined by a definition that is in turn its own performance: In this sense, the definition of the intellectual is the discussion concerning his/her definition.³ Hence, the writer is a proto-typical example for an intellectual who is "free-floating" in the sense that he/she is not firmly attached to some given "party" nor firmly attached to a given line of argument, but nevertheless unfolds a normative impact created by the chosen form of discourse in the first place. In fact, as to philosophers, the French educational system (at least during most of the 20th century) gave the "free-floating" state equal advantage as compared with the traditional university career: The main reason is probably the existence of the *écoles normales* that may equally serve as entrance *or not* as entrance to a classical career such that well-known philosophers (from Sartre to Derrida) did not acquire a sufficiently professorial state at any time, although despite of this they were more or less loosely attached to the academic scene.

For Germany, a good starting point might be Heinrich von Kleist: In his Kleist essay⁴, Hans Heinz Holz defines poetry⁵ as the *reflexive state of language*. According to him, a work of art

¹ Likewise, the invention of the concept of an *intellectual* goes probably back to a manifesto published on 14th January 1898 in the Paris journal "Aurore" including the famous open letter of Zola's to Félix Faure, then president of France, dealing with the Dreyfus case.

² Georg Jäger: Der Schriftsteller als Intellektueller. Ein Problemaufriß. In: IASL-Diskussionsforum *online*. Geschichte und Kritik der Intellektuellen. (ed. Britta Scheideler) <http://www.iasl.uni-muenchen.de/discuss/lisforen/intell1.htm> (03-05-2013)

³ This can be visualized as the motto of the aforementioned forum.

⁴ Hans Heinz Holz: Macht und Ohnmacht der Sprache. Untersuchungen zum Sprachverständnis und Stil Heinrich von Kleists. Athenäum, Frankfurt a. M., Bonn, 1962.

⁵ In fact, he talks of „Dichtung“ which in German carries the primary connotation of poetry, although (as is the case also in Kleist) traditionally, epic prose can be included in this.

alienates language such that "...we discover the forgotten meanings of the well-known, because we see it as something which is alien to us".⁶ Because Kleist's problem starts with apories of the general nature of language, Kleist can be possibly visualized as an early intellectual for whom philosophy of language, poetry, and political engagement fall into one.⁷

This problem is still present in our time – probably more than ever: Jacques Derrida – beside dreaming of a polymorphic diary that could establish an absolute text or looking for a fractal biography of some multiple, shifted rather than hierarchical type⁸ – bases his critique addressed to his colleagues, even to one of his best friends Althusser, on an explicit questioning of the foundations of the language actually applied: "In not asking any 'fundamental' questions oder questions for one's own foundations, for one's own assumptions, even for one's own axiomatic (...), I saw at the time a deficiency of radicality and a still all too dogmatic reference on one's own discourse, and this could not, sooner or later, remain without political consequences ..."⁹ And this is for him the deeper reason for inventing what he calls *deconstruction*, because whilst according to the linguistic tradition of Saussure the concept of difference is at the source of meaning, he argues that this type of thinking is still ruled by what he calls "logocentrism" or alternatively the "metaphysics of phonetic scripture". Against this tradition, he would rather prefer to put scripture itself into an equally important position in order to shatter an ontology which attaches the meaning of being to something present and the meaning of language to the full continuity of the spoken word. Different from this tradition, he would like to make enigmatic what usually comes in terms of names like vicinity, immediacy, and presence.¹⁰

In a nutshell, this is what "deconstruction" actually means: To solve the parts of a whole. To dissolve a construction. To reduce itself by loosing one's construction.¹¹ Obviously, what is left in between the parts, once they are layed out for analysis, this is the ground on which language is being built. This is very much on the line of the argument given by Hans Heinz Holz when he talks about Kleist: "Poetry is thus structurally kindred (or cognate) to architecture, which can be demonstrated by the fact that a literary piece of art, likewise an architectonic one, must stand to test the originality of its style within the adequacy of its linguistic material."¹² For Derrida, the original problem underlying this topic emerges from his interest in Husserl whose final and deepest ambition is to lay bare some primordial experience and to eventually reach "the thing itself" in its purest presence. Derrida finds this viewpoint more than problematic, and looks for an alternative that is clearly reminiscent of the romantic dreams of Friedrich Schlegel and others, reaching out for a symbiosis of philosophy and art.¹³

This is actually the important point: To look for the possibilities of grasping experience whilst recognizing that experience is always more than what can be said about it. In fact, this is what philosophers working on Schelling nowadays discuss very often when trying to find a correlation between Schelling's project of a positive philosophy and a modern equivalent which might be adequate for our present perspective. In the case of Schelling, it is exactly this experience also Husserl was interested in that is referred to the realm of religion.

⁶ Ibid., 11. (my translation)

⁷ Obviously, for Prussia at the time of Kleist, almost hundred years before Zola, the role of an intellectual would take quite a different form – and a more spectacular shape of failure after all.

⁸ Benoît Peeters: Jacques Derrida. Flammarion, Paris, 2010. (Here according to the German edition, translated by Horst Brühlmann. Suhrkamp, Berlin, 2013, 10 sq., 16 (par.))

⁹ Quoted here according to Peeters, op. cit., 220.

¹⁰ Paraphrased from Peeters, op. cit., 233 sq.

¹¹ Peeters quotes these connotations according to the Littré. (Ibid.)

¹² Holz, op. cit., 14. (my translation)

¹³ Cf. Peeters, op. cit., 259, 378 (par.). – As to the latter, Peeters refers here explicitly to Derrida's work: "Glas".

Essentially, Schelling, following his Freedom Essay, would like to re-construct the genesis of this experience in terms of a mythology which can be visualized as a log book of its manifestation. In this sense, for him, mythology shows up as a predecessor of monotheistic religion. Hence, it is this religion in the end that is the field which cares for this type of fundamental experience, beyond the reflexive field of propositional theories in philosophy (in the terminology of Schelling associated with what he calls *negative* rather than positive philosophy).

Unfortunately, this originally religious context is far from satisfactory nowadays: Without any doubt, the world *is not as we observe it*. And likewise, our experience is not identical with what we can propositionally formulate about it. This is quite an acceptable position taken in hermeneutically oriented philosophy.¹⁴ But it looks rather naïve when trying to fill the gap of interpretation by means of any religious tradition. However, the protagonists who claim this experienced beyond as their personal concern, cannot actually provide a suitable answer to the question *how this beyond could be visualized at all* (if not in a religious manner). Despite the fact that the answer is already available in Schelling (even if one would use it *against* Schelling himself): Indeed, it can be found in the philosophy of art.

The general viewpoint mentioned here will be the starting point for what we are going to do in this present work: What we would like to do is to draft out a plausible conception that might be able to find some more new answers to the problems involved here. Of course, we will approach this objective by a somewhat different method that has rarely been part of philosophical investigations so far: In the *first part*, we actually start with the *theory of systems*. The idea is the following: As I have shown more recently at another place¹⁵, it is Spinoza who can be understood as the first philosopher introducing the strict notion of a system in the modern sense of ongoing research in the sciences. In fact, the whole book on these consequences of Spinozist thought can be understood as a first commentary to a remark published by Henri Atlan at the 1995 ISES meeting in Vienna: At the time, he visualized Spinoza as the early inventor of the modern concept of *evolutionary systems* in the first place.¹⁶ And from the scope of Spinoza's seventeenth century *Ethics* we can actually derive the scope of the theory of systems nowadays, as the editors of the aforementioned volume have formulated: "It is important to see that describing the interactive history of systems in terms of stability and evolvability ... fundamentally rearranges any discussion on values, aims, and purposes, and on individuality and subjectivity."¹⁷

Hence, what we will do is to give a sufficiently compact summary of recent results on systems. Although this will be done by means of introducing a formal language (i.e. mathematics), somewhat alien to the philosophical discourse, we will nevertheless recognize quickly that the perspective chosen here is nothing but a generic consequence of the fact that reflexion must start from what is observable. In other words: We have to begin in a regressive and thus negative way, namely by taking in sight what is observable and then by illuminating its ground which is the proper material for the subsequent reflexion. This is why we start with the sciences.

The *second part* of the work is dealing then with the dual perspective: While visualizing reflexion as designing a sequence of theories consisting of sets of propositions that satisfy given constraints¹⁸, we now ask for the (human) conditions necessary for being capable of

¹⁴ Probably, it is analytical philosophy that would contradict here. But the question is for what prize?

¹⁵ Rainer E. Zimmermann: *New Ethics Proved in Geometrical Order. Spinozist Reflexions on Evolutionary Systems*. Emergent Publications, Litchfield Park (Az.), 2010.

¹⁶ Henri Atlan: *Immanent Causality. A Spinozist Viewpoint on Evolution and Theory of Action*. In: G. van de Vijver, S. N. Salthe, M. Delpo (eds.), *Evolutionary Systems. Biological and Epistemological Perspectives on Selection and Self-Organization*. Kluwer, Dordrecht, 1998, 215-231.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, x. (preface)

¹⁸ We call such sets *models* and thus visualize theories as collections of models.

designing theories in the first place. This is the perspective of the *meta-theory*: a theory that tells us how to create theories. Obviously, the necessary conditions can be visualized as the actual outcome of a biological evolution that is producing human beings (among other things). Probably, the original idea of this is going back to Freud's conception of a *meta-psychology*. It is Patricia Kitcher who discussed this idea for the first time in more detail.¹⁹ But while she comes to the conclusion that it has been essentially the overwhelming interdisciplinarity of Freud's project that opened his defence lines to the assault of those who discarded his approach as unscientific, we will try instead to re-construct his original line of argument in the light of more recent interpretations as provided by the French protagonists of the Lacanian influence on psycho-analysis. The important point is that this development is generically embedded into the development of what is generally called *structuralism* and classified as part of a philosophical paradigm rather than being a mere methodology of the various sciences. And in fact, it is not a coincidence at all that it is Lévi-Strauss who is said to be the father of this paradigm: This is because the onset for structuralistic approaches is provided by anthropology, the science of human beings proper. All what emerges in terms of scientific models and reflexive conclusions is something that has been produced by human beings under the conditions of human beings.

On the one hand, this is a result that is immediately linked back to the theory of systems: As a universal conceptualization of the sciences, the theory of systems is successful *because* the mode of thinking of human beings is constituted in a *systemic* way. On the other hand, this also provides a bridge to structuralism: As it turns out, a *structure* is to *system* what a *part* is to the *whole*. In other words, we can visualize structures as subsystems of systems.²⁰ This point will become particularly important, when we can show that there is a straightforward conceptual convergence of the theory of systems and psycho-analysis, respectively.

But we can also notice the *loop of self-reference* which is inherent in this approach: Whether theory or meta-theory, all of them are designed by human beings that are visualized as a result of permanently producing nature. Hence, theories are another subsequent result of this ongoing production. However: The evolutionary model of an ongoing production is itself again a reflexive result of producing theories. So human beings model their own becoming (and thus their own constitution) according to their mode of modelling (thinking). This is the reason for a fundamental gap (*décalage*) between what humans can actually find out about the world *as they observe it* and how the world *really is*. Hoglebe once referred to this aspect as a scandalon that could be understood as what Schelling calls "the source of bitterness which is in the interior of all life" and *therefore* topic of the arts.²¹

¹⁹ Patricia Kitcher: *Freud's Dream. A Complete Interdisciplinary Science of Mind*. MIT Press (Cambridge, MA), 1992.

²⁰ As far as I can see, this point has been actually missed in the otherwise important book of Heinrich Rombach: *Substanz, System, Struktur*. 2 vols., Alber, Freiburg/Br., 1981. – I have discussed these aspects in more detail in: *System des transzendentalen Materialismus*, Mentis, Paderborn, 2004. Probably, the error is in the mis-interpreting of the traditional antagonism of structure vs. function: In this present work, structure is always referred to organization. Hence, the function is grounded in the organization in the first place. So we can say that structure shows up as a pattern, but the latter has been organized and thus explicates its functions. Also, we can recognize that then, structure is to system what model is to theory. Apparently, it has been Paul Ricoeur who noticed this problem for the first time in his essay in "Esprit" (May 1967), when pointing out that Saussure did not actually utilize the word "structure", but the word "system" instead. While "structure" showed up not before the conference in La Haye of 1938 when it was used in the sense of "structure of a system", hence, as a specification of the latter. See in more detail Günther Schiwyl: *Der französische Strukturalismus*. Rowohlt, Reinbek, 1984, 16.

²¹ Wolfram Hoglebe: *Prädikation und Genesis*. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a.M., 1989, 115. (He mentions here explicitly Schelling's „World Ages“ III.)

Indeed, it is this loop of self-reference which is immanent in human theory design that prevents the reflexive transcending of lived experience. Human beings that try to grasp this lived experience in its fullness, reaching far beyond what can be propositionally formulated in terms of theories, are thus referred to the field of the arts. Hence, art shows up as a discipline of the imaginary altogether.²² Obviously, literature is a substantial part of it.

And this is exactly what will be topical in the *third part* of this present work: Based on Bourdieu's concept of "literary field", we will try to explicate what kind of understanding can eventually emerge out of the first two parts of this work. By doing so, we select a well-known (and well-studied) example which is Flaubert's epic prose, notably this of his celebrated "Madame Bovary". Despite the vast number of references available concerning this topic, we will try to extract some new insight as to the relationship between the literary field and the praxis of everyday life. The main idea is to demonstrate concrete consequences of the theoretical work undertaken, something which is usually left out of the discussion. And from hence come the difficulties of mediating the results to the larger public, because it is not very clear from the outset, of what practical relevance all these results may actually become. But as we have already seen in the beginning, the whole method is tightly linked to ethics in the first place: To demonstrate this is the chief objective of Spinoza's approach. Hence, all these efforts undertaken here are simply serving the eventual (but strict and precise) derivation of a suitable ethics which can be unfolded into two different lines of explication: into the system of law on the one hand, and into an aesthetical life style on the other, that is reminiscent of a praxis directly derived from the philosophy of art. It is here where the ancient concept of *kalokagathía* is coming back into play again.

²² As to mythology, we can find then that this can be visualized as the ground of art rather than the ground of religion.