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The current issue is the third of the fifth volume of the *Athens Journal of Philosophy* (AJPHIL), by the published by the Philosophy Unit of ATINER

Gregory T. Papanikos
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Axiogeniality: Paranoia, Philosophy, and the Genealogy of Value-Creation

By Jorge Hernando Pacheco Gómez[*]

Since Antiquity, the bond between genius and madness has marked a limit-problem for philosophy and psychology, revealing tensions between meaning, value, and subjectivity. In 1912, Sigmund Freud advanced decisive analogies, hysteria and artistic creation, obsessional neurosis and religion, paranoid delusion and philosophical systems, thereby situating psychopathological formations in continuity with major symbolic productions of culture. Freud's later distinction between neurosis and psychosis allows genius to be relocated on the side of paranoia, understood not as a mere pathology but as a singular mode of reorganising meaning. This article draws on Lacan's notion of the paranoia of genius (1932) as a structure that can sustain symbolic production. It also engages Nietzsche's psychological critique of morality and religious neurosis. I likewise propose an operative distinction between the philosopher as an existential figure and the professional philosopher as an academic function. Against the stabilising logic of religious neurosis, philosophy and art are analysed as potential sites of affirmative sublimation and value-creation. Within this framework, the category of Axiogeniality designates a specific mode of subjectivity. In this mode, rupture with established reality enables the creation of new axiological horizons rather than mere symbolic collapse. The article argues that philosophy, understood as a vital and clinical practice, is closely linked to axiogeniality. It functions as a space of transvaluation and as a criterion for evaluating the health or pathology of value systems.

Keywords: *Paranoia; Axiogeniality; Philosophy; Religious Neurosis; Value-Creation*

Introduction

Understanding the persistent, and in many respects enigmatic, relationship between genius and madness has long been a privileged concern of philosophy, psychology, and the cultural sciences. Far from an anecdotal association, the historical recurrence of this link indicates a structural affinity traversing forms of thought, artistic creation, and systems of valuation. What is at stake is not merely the coincidence of exceptional intelligence and psychopathology. It concerns the way in which certain singular configurations of meaning-production and value-creation collide with prevailing moral and symbolic orders. As I have argued elsewhere[1], many

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[1]The present article is the result of a process of revision, expansion, and updating of a previous study published in Spanish in 2018 in the *International Journal of Philosophical Research Aporia*. That earlier work constitutes the conceptual point of departure for the present investigation and is therefore cited repeatedly throughout the text.

figures historically recognised as "geniuses" appear, both biographically and structurally, as subjects whose relation to the social world is marked by tension, displacement, and estrangement, often resulting in their symbolic exclusion or self-exile from dominant normative frameworks (Pacheco 2018).

From Schopenhauer's perspective, genius manifests as a rupture with ordinary forms of representation and with the utilitarian grammar of the will. This rupture enables the emergence of new configurations through which the world becomes intelligible. Yet it also entails a cost. The same gesture that opens a new horizon of meaning frequently disrupts the subject's adhesion to established regimes of recognition. Consequently, genius does not merely innovate within a stable world, but risks transforming the very coordinates by which a world is shared.[2] This structural tension explains why the phenomenon cannot be adequately addressed through romantic idealisation or reductive psychopathology. It requires instead a rigorous analysis of the subjective conditions under which new regimes of meaning and value emerge.

A decisive conceptual turning point occurs in Jacques Lacan's doctoral thesis (1932), where he introduces the category of *paranoia of genius* in order to differentiate historically eminent intellectual figures who display paranoid traits from ordinary clinical paranoia. In my 2018 work, I emphasised both the strength and the limit of this formulation: Lacan successfully blocks reductive pathologisation by recognising a differentiated structure, yet leaves unresolved the question of its specific etiology and internal logic (Pacheco 2018). The heuristic value of Lacan's proposal lies precisely in its refusal to reduce genius either to illness or to transcendence; however, its theoretical incompleteness calls for further clarification regarding the organisation of meaning and valuation at stake in this structure.

The methodological groundwork for such clarification had already been laid by Sigmund Freud. In *Totem und Tabu* (1912), Freud established decisive analogies between hysteria and artistic creation, obsessional neurosis and religion, and paranoid delusion and philosophical systems. Through these analogies, Freud proposed that psychopathological formations can be understood as distorted, yet structurally homologous, expressions of the symbolic systems that organise culture.[3]

> Die Neurosen zeigen einerseits auffällige und tiefreichende Übereinstimmungen mit den großen sozialen Produktionen der Kunst, der Religion und der Philosophie, anderseits erscheinen sie wie Verzerrungen derselben. Man könnte den Ausspruch wagen, eine Hysterie sei ein Zerrbild einer Kunstschöpfung, eine Zwangsneurose ein Zerrbild einer Religion, ein paranoischer Wahn ein Zerrbild eines philosophischen Systems. (Freud 1912)

The key notion of *Zerrbild* (distorted image) operates on two analytical levels: it presupposes recognisability and formal continuity, while simultaneously marking an irreducible structural difference. (Pacheco 2015) This duality allows us to interrogate

[2]Schopenhauer maintains that "wisdom stands to genius as marginal notes stand to a text (or as the planets to the sun). A wise person is one who has studied extensively; a genius is one from whom humanity has something to learn, something of which nothing was known until then." 2009, 67

[3]In light of the imprecisions present in the Spanish translations of Freud's works, for instance, rendering *Das Zerrbild* as caricature, without attending to the implications of the Austrian author's decision to employ this term rather than *die Karikatur*. I consider it necessary to engage directly, in German, with several of the works by Freud and Nietzsche cited here, and to provide my own corresponding translations.

the relation between madness and genius without collapsing philosophical systems into delusions or idealising psychopathological formations as creative achievements (Freud 1912).

The present article radicalises this Freudian–Lacanian trajectory by shifting the analytical focus from genius as cognitive superiority to genius as axiological production. The central question thus becomes: under what conditions does a subject not merely reorganise meaning, but also institute or transform the values that confer legitimacy, weight, and orientation upon meaning itself? In my earlier formulation, I argued that the philosopher's labour is structurally proximate to that of the paranoid subject. Both engage in intensive construction of world and sense. However, philosophy operates through language as a medium of intersubjective validation, whereas ordinary paranoia remains confined to a closed circuit of certainty. (Pacheco 2018).

At this juncture, Friedrich Nietzsche's genealogical approach becomes indispensable. Nietzsche refuses the abstraction of a rational subject detached from life and instead conceives cultural productions as crystallisations of specific pulsional, affective, and axiological configurations. In my analysis of Nietzsche's pre-psychoanalytic psychology, I have shown that both art and psychology occupy a strategic position in his thought, functioning as privileged sites for understanding how values are created, embodied, and imposed (Pacheco 2021). More sharply, Nietzsche's diagnosis of modernity identifies a moral economy in which life is devalued through obedience, resentment, and the internalisation of guilt (Pacheco 2021), resulting in what he conceptualises as a form of religious neurosis[4].

This Nietzschean framework acquires renewed urgency when examined in light of contemporary secular moral economies. In a more recent, as yet unpublished work on Transvaluative Psychology and the formulation of the Neurosis of Herzl, I argue that late capitalism operates as a religious structure that reorganises guilt, sacrifice, and redemption around productivity and performance. This structure not only intensifies depressive and anxiety-related pathologies, as well as those associated with burnout, but also neutralises their axiological causes through an internalised form of dogmatism. In this context, the problem of genius and madness can no longer be understood solely in terms of exceptional individuals; rather, it must be situated within a broader conflict between value creation and a moral regime that demands adaptation to an objectively pathological order.

It is within this triangulation, Freud's analogical method, Lacan's differentiated structure, and Nietzsche's genealogy of values, that the category of Axiogeniality is introduced and positioned. As first formulated in my 2018 article, axiogeniality designates a mode of value-production in which genius manifests not as technical brilliance or social recognition, but as the capacity to institute new axiological hierarchies beyond prevailing moral normativity (Pacheco 2018). The concept thus names neither a psychological trait nor a sociological label, but an operative structure through which meaning and value are simultaneously reconfigured.

[4]Nietzsche highlights the relationship between Religious Neurosis and three perilous dietary norms: solitude, fasting, and sexual abstinence. The genealogy of these three norms, as well as the construction of their categorisation as 'dietetic', are tasks which he undertakes in his work from 1885 onwards. Several of his principal observations on the subject can be found in: (NF-1885, 122), (NF-1885, 23), (JBG-1986, 47), (GM 1887, 21).

Methodologically, the article is organised in three parts. The first examines the structure of paranoia through key Freudian formulations, focusing on its relation to meaning, reality, and the psychic economy (Pacheco 2018). The second outlines philosophical activity by distinguishing the philosopher as an existential figure from the professional philosopher as an academic function, thereby framing philosophy as a vital practice of value-production rather than a purely institutional discourse (Pacheco 2018). The third section examines the relation between paranoid delusion and philosophical systems. It shows how axiogeniality clarifies philosophical genius as transvaluation.

In sum, the guiding thesis of this article is that philosophy, when conceived as a vital rather than merely academic practice, bears a privileged affinity with axiogeniality insofar as it operates as a space of transvaluation and genealogical critique of values. The aim is neither to pathologise genius nor to romanticise madness, but to render intelligible the structural conditions under which value-creation emerges as a clinically and culturally conflictual process, particularly within moral regimes that convert the will to power into guilt and suppress aesthetic reorganisation. In this sense, axiogeniality names a differentiated configuration of subjectivity in which the creation of meaning and the institution of values converge in a historically decisive form of life.

In light of the foregoing considerations, this article is guided by three explicit research questions. First, under what structural conditions does a rupture with consensus reality lead not to symbolic collapse, but to a productive reconfiguration of meaning and value? Second, how can Lacan's notion of the "genius" in paranoia be understood as a structural modality of sense-production rather than merely as a pathological deviation? Third, can philosophy, especially in its genealogical form, be interpreted as a paradigmatic instance of axiogeniality, that is, of value-creation emerging from a break with the given order? The first question will be addressed in the opening section through a structural clarification of paranoia in Freud and Lacan; the second will be examined in the subsequent section through the conceptual articulation of the paranoid genius; and the third will be developed in the final section, where the genealogical practice of philosophy is interpreted as a privileged site of axiogenial creation.

Methodologically, this article adopts a theoretical and conceptual approach. It proceeds through close textual analysis and argumentative reconstruction of key psychoanalytic sources (primarily Freud and Lacan) alongside philosophical texts, with particular attention to the genealogical method of value-analysis grounded in Nietzsche's psychological account of value-creation. The analysis operates through structural comparison and analogical differentiation between clinical paranoia, the Lacanian figure of genius, and philosophical practice. Axiogeniality is not derived from empirical data, but is constructed as an operative concept. It clarifies the conditions that make it possible for a rupture with consensual reality to lead either to symbolic closure or to the creation of values. The aim, therefore, is not to describe empirical psychopathology, but to elucidate the logic of sense-production involved in paranoia, genius, and philosophical creation.

General Considerations on Paranoia

The philosophical and medical tradition has long tended to conceive madness as a simple withdrawal from reality, understood as an objective, shared, and stable order. From this standpoint, the "mad" subject appears as one who loses contact with a world that remains intact for others. As Foucault has shown, what counts as "madness" is historically constituted within regimes of rationality rather than simply discovered as deficit.[5] Psychoanalysis introduces a decisive rupture with this naïve conception by situating madness within the field of psychosis, alongside structures such as paranoia, schizophrenia, and autism. This shift allows for an inquiry not into the abstract loss of reality, but into the specific modes through which each subjective structure relates to reality, language, and meaning.

From 1911 onwards, Sigmund Freud laid the foundations for a critical revision of this tradition. In his early writings on paranoia, Freud demonstrates that the loss of reality is not an exclusive feature of psychosis, but a condition that also traverses the neurotic subject and, more broadly, the "normal" individual integrated into the social order. The subject who submits to norms, conventions, and cultural demands, at the cost of repressing instinctual drives, does not preserve an intact relation to reality; rather, this relation is transformed through defensive mechanisms that secure symbolic adaptation. Reality thus appears not as a given, but as the result of a complex psychic operation.

From this perspective, neurosis does not constitute the opposite pole of psychosis, but rather a specific mode of compromise with reality, sustained by repression and instinctual renunciation. Paranoia, for its part, does not entail a simple disconnection from the world, but a radical reorganisation of meaning, through which the subject reconstructs reality according to an internally coherent logic. It is precisely this capacity for meaningful reorganisation, rather than a mere cognitive deficit, that renders paranoia particularly relevant for thinking its structural affinity with certain forms of philosophical and cultural production. Freud articulates this position clearly in 1911:

> The neurotic is estranged from reality[6] because he finds it, either in its entirety or in certain parts, unbearable. The most extreme type of this detachment is shown in

[5]On the historical constitution of madness as exclusion rather than simple cognitive deficit, see Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), especially the Preface and Part I, where madness is analysed as a limit-experience structured by the episteme of classical reason rather than as mere loss of reality.

[6]There are differences between this quotation and the translation of it found in the majority of official Spanish editions. In those, a loss of objective reality is mentioned; yet the use of the term 'objektive' (objective) is not frequent in Freud. He introduces two distinct terms to refer to reality: one is 'Wirklichkeit' (effective reality, in the Scholastic sense) and the other 'Realität' (reality proper). This distinction was formulated by Hegel in the 'Phenomenology of Spirit.' The neurotic distances himself from efficient, immanent, material reality, 'Wirklichkeit.' The paranoiac distances himself from reality understood as conventional, formal, intersubjective, psychic, and social—or reality 'per se', 'Realität.'

To illustrate this distinction, we might hypothetically say that if one were to raise a coin before an audience, display it, and ask what that object is, the neurotics would answer that it is a coin, even though it exists only as a metaphor and is therefore not observable. The psychotic, responding literally to the question and renouncing metaphor, would say that the object is merely a flattened circular piece of metal with an exchange and consumption value within social conventions. The neurotic does not see material reality; he sees the conventional one created by norms and social canons—he sees what he has been

> certain cases of hallucinatory psychosis, in which the event that provoked the madness is denied.
> Der Neurotiker ist von der Realität abwendet, weil er sie in ihrer Gesamtheit oder in einigen unerträglichen Bereichen vorfindet. Den extremsten Typus dieser Abwendung von der Realität zeigen uns gewisse Fälle von halluzinatorischer Psychose, in denen jenes Ereignis verleugnet werden soll, welches den Wahnsinn[7] hervorgerufen hat. (Freud 1911c)

By positioning neurosis and psychosis as differentiated, and in a certain sense opposed, modes of relating to reality, Freud initially seeks to clarify the specificity of the neurotic subject's relation to the external world. This inquiry is crucial for determining the psychological status of reality in the constitution of the "normal" subject, and only subsequently for delimiting the singularity of the paranoid relation to the world and its structuring function.

Freud posits the existence of an originary phase in psychic life in which unconscious processes alone are operative. He terms these primary psychical processes; whose defining feature is their submission to the pleasure principle. As Freud states: "These processes strive to obtain pleasure; mental activity withdraws (repression) from acts that may arouse unpleasure" (Freud 1911a). Dreams, the avoidance of painful impressions, and fantasy attest to the persistence of this principle.

The reality principle emerges when expected satisfaction fails to occur, giving rise to frustration. This compels the psychic apparatus to abandon immediate satisfaction and instead to represent the real constellations of the external world with a view to their possible modification. Psychic activity thus ceases to be governed exclusively by pleasure and begins to organise itself around reality, even when reality is unpleasurable.

As a consequence of this shift, perception, attention, and memory develop. Freud describes this transformation as follows: "In place of repression, which excluded from investiture some of the emerging representations because they generated displeasure, there arose the impartial judgement[8] that would decide whether a given representation was true or false, that is, whether or not it was in accord with reality; and it did so by comparing it with the mnemic traces of reality." (Freud, 1911a, pp. 225–226). This operation introduces a structural distance between subject and reality, a distance that, in the neurotic, is stabilised through repression and instinctual renunciation.

From a genealogical perspective, this operation can be read in continuity with Nietzsche's analysis of the internalisation and domestication of drives in Western culture. As I have argued elsewhere, morality and culture do not emerge as expressions of a higher rationality, but as technologies of obedience, indignation, and

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taught to see: 'Realität', the metaphor, the representation. The psychotic, on the other hand, sees with his own eyes, renouncing social conventions. He observes for himself; he perceives 'Wirklichkeit.'

[7]The term 'Wahnsinn' in Freud's works has been translated into Spanish as 'insania.' 'Wahnsinn' is composed of the noun 'der Wahn' (mania or delusion) and 'der Sinn' (sense or meaning). The combination of both yields "delusion of the senses." 'Wahnsinn' is also commonly used to mean 'madness.' In German, 'Wahn' is also synonymous with 'delusion', for example, 'Größenwahn' (delusion of grandeur), 'Wahnbildung' (formation of delusion), etc. We can thus see that 'Wahnsinn' is not a simple 'insanity'.

[8]'Urteilsfällung' is related to 'Urteilsverwerfung' (rejection by judgement), which had already appeared in the first edition of the book on the joke ('Der Witz', 1905c) and was later examined in greater detail in 'Negation' (1925b).

uprising that organise, hierarchise, and repress instinctual life (Pacheco 2021). In this sense, the neurotic's loss of reality is not a defect, but the structural cost of inscription within a symbolic order that privileges stability, predictability, and obedience.

This logic reaches its paradigmatic form in what Nietzsche diagnoses as religious neurosis: a configuration in which suffering is not denied, but moralised, fixed, and justified through transcendent values. Against this reactive economy, Nietzsche situates art as a privileged path of transfiguration, not as an escape from reality, but as an affirmative reworking of conflict, capable of transforming pain into form, style, and creation. This distinction proves decisive for understanding why certain subjective configurations, particularly those proximate to paranoia, do not merely adapt to a given reality, but tend to reorganise it axiologically.

At this point, the central problem guiding the present article can be anticipated: if neurosis implies a costly adaptation to the symbolic order, and paranoia entails a radical reorganisation of meaning, under what conditions can such reorganisation become a creation of values rather than a delusional closure? Addressing this question requires a conceptual framework capable of articulating psychic structure, meaning-production, and axiological configuration. It is at this threshold that the groundwork is laid for the notion of axiogeniality, understood as a singular mode of value-creation that will be developed in the sections that follow.

In contrast to neurosis, paranoid psychosis is not defined by a renunciation of reality, but by a radical reorganisation of meaning. As developed in *The Divine Animal*, a rupture with dominant cultural normativity does not necessarily result in pathological disorganisation; it may also give rise to productive configurations of meaning, in which subjectivity is compelled to generate new systems of value in response to the collapse of existing ones (Pacheco 2025). It is at this juncture that the category of Axiogeniality begins to take shape, understood as a specific mode of axiological production in which the relation to reality is sustained not through repression, but through creation.

Freud provides a decisive foundation for this reading when he describes the transition from the dominance of the pleasure principle to the increasing importance of external reality. In 1911, he writes:

> The increasing importance of external reality also heightened the importance of the sense organs directed towards that external world and of the consciousness attached to them, which learned to perceive sensory qualities in addition to the pleasure and unpleasure qualities that had hitherto been its sole concern.
> Die erhöhte Bedeutung der äußeren Realität hob auch die Bedeutung der jener Außenwelt zugewendeten Sinnesorgane und des an sie geknüpften Bewußtseins, welches außer den bisher allein interessanten Lust- und Unlustqualitäten die Sinnesqualitäten auffassen lernte. (Freud 1911a).

According to this formulation, thinking adapts in order to enable the psychic apparatus to withstand high levels of instinctual tension during the postponement of libidinal discharge, or to operate through the displacement of smaller quantities of cathexis. Thinking thus functions as a technique for regulating psychic energy, allowing immediate gratification to be deferred in favour of delayed satisfaction. Freud identifies religion as a paradigmatic example of this process, insofar as it bears the endopsychic imprint of such substitution: the renunciation of immediate pleasures in exchange for the promise of future, more secure ones. As Freud states, "The doctrine of reward in the afterlife for renunciation, whether voluntary or enforced, of earthly pleasures is nothing other than the mythical projection of this psychical subversion" (Freud 1911a).

This activity of thinking also entails a specific capacity for organising libidinal cathexis, which becomes possible only through the binding of small quantities of energy. At this point, Freud anticipates what will later be articulated as a structural conception of object representations, as well as the decisive role of language in processes of thought and in the modification of the external world. He formulates this as follows: "It is possible that thinking was originally unconscious, insofar as it rose above mere ideation and directed itself towards relations between object-impressions; it then acquired new qualities perceptible to consciousness only through its linkage with word-residues" (Freud 1911a).

This insight allows us to return to the problem of clinical structures, and in particular to paranoia, which runs transversally throughout the present article. If, as Freud maintains, neurosis and psychosis fundamentally concern differentiated modes of relating to the external world (Außenwelt) and its psychological significance, it becomes essential to emphasise the role of education as a cultural mechanism of social inscription. Freud describes education as a systematic incitement to overcome the pleasure principle and to replace it with the reality principle (Freud 1911a). In this sense, the cultural demand to renounce pleasure entails not only a reorganisation of libidinal economy, but also a renunciation of a fragment of reality itself.[9]

From a genealogical perspective, this renunciation can be understood as part of the broader process of domestication and moralisation of instinctual life characteristic of Western culture. As I have argued through a Nietzschean framework, education and morality function as formative technologies that regulate not only enjoyment, but also the horizons of meaning and value available to the subject (Pacheco 2021). Within this framework, religious neurosis appears as a paradigmatic form of reactive stabilisation of suffering, in which instinctual renunciation is morally justified and converted into virtue.

Against this structural renunciation, paranoia, and in a singular way, paranoia of genius, does not merely reject an imposed reality, but attempts an alternative reorganisation of meaning, thereby opening a space for axiological production not subordinated to prevailing normativity. It is within this fissure, between neurotic adaptation and paranoid reorganisation, that the category of Axiogeniality begins to emerge with greater clarity: not as an exaltation of rupture for its own sake, but as the name of a specific mode of value-creation capable of sustaining a relation to reality through invention rather than repression.

When this substitution, namely, the replacement of the pleasure principle by the reality principle, becomes possible and establishes itself with sufficient strength and predominance, we enter the domain of neurosis. Conversely, when this

[9]It must be clearly understood here that speaking of reality is not the same as speaking of the reality principle. This section points out that in the neurotic there is a fragment of reality that is lost—namely, a fragment of 'Wirklichkeit', the effective and natural reality that precedes the subject. In the face of this loss, the subject assumes a new reality that is intersubjective and cultural, a second nature: 'Realität'.

substitution fails, is rejected, or becomes inverted, and the pleasure principle regains primacy, we find ourselves within the field of psychosis. As Sigmund Freud argues in *Formulations on the Two Principles of Mental Functioning* (1911a), the transition from the pleasure principle to the reality principle entails a structural renunciation that makes symbolic substitution possible and secures the subject's mediated relation to shared reality. When this renunciatory function collapses, libido withdraws from external objects and reinvests internal constructions, a mechanism Freud explicitly associates with psychosis in his analysis of paranoia.

In Lacanian terms, this failure corresponds to foreclosure: the fundamental signifier that would guarantee symbolic mediation is not integrated into the symbolic order and therefore returns in the Real. The consequence is not mere confusion but a structural reorganisation of meaning. Within this framework, a decisive feature of paranoid psychosis, resulting from this inversion of substitutive regularity, is the emergence of delusion. Freud already describes delusion not as simple disintegration but as an attempt at reconstruction, a secondary effort to restore coherence and consistency after libidinal withdrawal from consensual reality.

Freud defines delusion not as a merely deficient symptom, but as an attempt at cure (Heilungsvorgang). Insofar as the paranoid subject rejects the social demand to renounce the fulfilment of desire, a demand that, in the neurotic, is translated into repression and compromise with reality, that desire is realised in a concealed manner through a particular reconstruction of the world. Delusion thus appears as an active operation of recomposing meaning, aimed at restoring a viable relation between the subject and reality.

The specific function of delusion is to cover (decken) the fulfilment of desire. This function is achieved through projection, which should not be understood as a simple displacement of a repressed sensation from the interior to the external world (Außenwelt). Rather, projection implies that what the subject lacks internally, the regulation of jouissance, symbolic castration, the limitation imposed by the social order, is experienced as coming from outside. What has been annulled internally returns from the exterior as an instance that addresses, imposes itself upon, and often persecutes the subject. Freud formulates this process succinctly: "What has been annulled internally returns from the outside. - Wir sehen vielmehr ein, daß das innerlich Aufgehobene von außen wiederkehrt." (Freud 1911c).

This return does not constitute a mere repetition of the repressed, but a reconfiguration of the world in which the subject reinscribes desire under new coordinates of meaning. From this perspective, paranoid delusion should not be understood solely as a loss of reality, but as a meaning-producing operation, endowed with internal coherence and oriented towards the restoration of order where the reality principle has been rejected.

This understanding of delusion as a productive operation makes it possible to articulate paranoid psychosis with certain exceptional forms of symbolic creation. As I have argued through a Nietzschean framework, when rupture with cultural normativity does not lead to mere disorganisation, it may open a space for axiological creation, in which the subject not only reconstructs the world but also institutes new values (Pacheco 2021, Pacheco 2025). It is at this threshold that paranoia of genius ceases to be conceived exclusively in clinical terms and begins to emerge as a singular mode of meaning-production, a condition of possibility for Axiogeniality.

As observed above, both the path of projection and the work of delusion result from the withdrawal of libido from people and objects. However, this withdrawal cannot be considered the pathogenic agent of paranoia. Many individuals in ordinary psychic life renounce (lossagen) persons and objects without thereby falling into a paranoid state. On this basis, Freud maintains that a specific distinguishing feature must exist that differentiates the libidinal withdrawal (Ablösung der Libido) proper to paranoia from other forms of libidinal withdrawal.

With regard to the withdrawal specific to psychosis, Freud writes in The Neuro-Psychoses of Defence (1892) that the ego may defend itself against an intolerable representation through a far more radical mechanism than repression: rejection (Verwerfung). He states:

> The intolerable representation remained in consciousness, albeit isolated and weakened. But there is yet another form of defense, far more forceful and effective, which consists in the ego rejecting, dismissing (Verwirft)[10], the intolerable representation together with its affect, and behaving as if the representation had never reached it. At the moment this is accomplished, the subject succumbs to a psychosis that must be described as hallucinatory madness. (Freud 1892).

Freud immediately clarifies that "the ego detaches itself from the intolerable representation, but this representation is inseparably bound up with a fragment of reality, and in detaching itself from it, the ego also detaches itself, wholly or in part, from reality" (Freud 1892). This detachment appears in Freud's later works as a withdrawal or estrangement of libido (Unbesetztheit), as in the Schreber case (Freud 1911c), or as a loss of reality (Realitätsverlust), as explicitly formulated in his writings of 1924.

In The Loss of Reality in Neurosis and Psychosis, Freud argues that neurosis arises because the ego represses a fragment of the reality of the id, whereas in psychosis the ego withdraws from a fragment of external reality (Realität). Thus, "what is decisive for neurosis would be the predominance of the influence of reality (Realeinflusses), and for psychosis, the superiority of the id."[11] (Freud 1924). From this perspective, both neurosis and psychosis involve a disturbance in the relation to reality; however, the reality that is lost is not the same in each case.

This distinction is decisive, as it prevents an undifferentiated understanding of psychopathology as a mere deficit in reality-testing and instead requires an analysis of the mode, level, and function of the disruption. It is precisely within this differential

[10]It is interesting to observe the term Freud chooses to explain this process. Verwerfung is a noun that literally translates as "rejection" and is the nominalization of the verb verwerfen, which means "to discard." Accordingly, what is it that is rejected or discarded? Many authors have attempted to answer this question. If we turn to a genealogy of the concept and to the context of its use in Freud, Verwerfung is related to Verweis, which means "rectification" or "correction," and to Werfung, which refers to "servilism." It is known in Freudian theory that the psychotic presents a lack, a hole at the level of the symbolic, in meaning itself, and therefore lacks the rectification and subjectivization of what is correct and incorrect made possible by the order of language. Together with Lacan, one could say that the psychotic inhabits language but remains outside the discourse that regulates it.

[11]The terms Freud employs in this passage are „die Psychose die des Es maßgebend" and „die Neurose wäre also die Übermacht des Realeinflusses". Through them, he refers to the predominance of the id in the case of psychosis, and to the superiority of the influence of the real in the case of neurosis. Here Freud makes no reference to hyperpotencies or to objectivity, as some translations suggest.

analysis that it becomes possible to conceive a paranoid reorganisation that does not culminate in delusional closure, but instead opens onto value-production, thus preparing the ground for the full conceptual articulation of Axiogeniality.

From the very outset of his 1924 paper Neurosis and Psychosis, Freud explicitly states his intention to investigate what he considers the most important genetic difference (genetische Differenz) between these two structures. This difference consists in the following: whereas neurosis is the outcome of a conflict between the ego and the id, psychosis is the analogous outcome of a disturbance in the relations between the ego and the external world (Außenwelt) (Freud 1924a).

This formulation is particularly significant insofar as it situates the divergence between neurosis and psychosis not at the level of symptomatology, but at the structural level of the ego's relation to reality. Freud thus avoids reducing psychosis to a mere intensification of neurotic mechanisms and instead conceives it as a distinct mode of subjective organisation, governed by a specific logic.

Freud further clarifies this distinction by means of a clinical example intended to show how neurosis and psychosis diverge in their responses to an identical conflictual situation. In The Loss of Reality in Neurosis and Psychosis, he presents the following case:

> (…) a young woman in love with her brother-in-law was moved, at her sister's deathbed, by the thought: "Now he is free and can marry me." This scene was immediately forgotten, and thus began the process of regression that led to hysterical pains. What is instructive here is to observe the paths by which neurosis attempts to work through the conflict. She devalues the objective alteration (die reale Veränderung) by repressing the instinctual demand in question, namely her love for her brother-in-law. The psychotic reaction, by contrast, would have been to deny the fact of the sister's death (Freud 1924c).

This example makes it possible to specify a decisive point: in neurosis, the conflict is resolved through the repression of instinctual demand while preserving objective reality, even at the cost of the symptom; in psychosis, by contrast, the ego withdraws from a fragment of reality itself. Yet this withdrawal does not necessarily entail a collapse of meaning. Rather, it may give rise to an alternative reorganisation of the world, oriented towards restoring a form of instinctual satisfaction where the previous order rendered it impossible.

At this juncture, it becomes possible to introduce a conceptual nuance that Freud himself describes but does not fully develop: the loss of reality in psychosis should not be understood solely as a deficit, but also as an operation with a function, whose meaning depends on the psychic and axiological economy reorganised through that loss. Drawing on this indication and articulating it with Nietzsche's psychological thought, I have proposed elsewhere the category of Axiogeniality to account for those structures in which the rupture with conventional reality (Realität) enables the production of a new horizon of values rather than a mere negation of the symbolic order (Pacheco 2018).

This perspective distinguishes pathological foreclosure from structural displacement. In the latter, the subject resists the influence of reality (Übermacht des Realeinflusses), and establishes an alternative configuration of meaning. This reading finds strong support in Nietzsche's conception of psychological subversion as a condition for the creation of new values. In the movement from obedience to indignation and finally to subversion, Nietzsche describes the process through which both individuals and cultures transform their relation to suffering, meaning, and life itself (Pacheco 2021).

Accordingly, the Freudian distinction between neurosis and psychosis may be reread not only in terms of loss versus preservation of reality, but also in terms of the function that such a loss fulfils within the subjective economy. While neurosis remains bound to the dominance of the influence of reality and to the instinctual renunciation it demands, psychosis may, in certain exceptional configurations, open the possibility of an axiological re-foundation, in which the subject relates to reality not through adaptation, but through creation.

In a manner analogous to neurosis, Freud observes that the genesis of psychosis unfolds in two stages. In the first, the ego detaches itself from reality; in the second, it attempts to remedy this loss by reinventing and restoring its relation to the world, even in the face of the id. This attempt at satisfaction is achieved through the creation of a new reality, a new order of things in which the source of displeasure that triggered psychosis can be resolved. In other words, the psychotic attempt at cure consists in creating a new world, a new Realität, in which the instinctual desire previously rejected by the former order can finally find satisfaction.

When such a creative reorganisation does not collapse into delusional closure, it constitutes the structural point of articulation between psychosis, philosophical production, and the creation of values, thereby preparing the ground for a rigorous conceptualisation of Axiogeniality.

In both neurosis and psychosis, the second moment of the structural process involves the evocation and representation of the power of the id. The id does not submit to reality; it rebels against the external world and expresses this rebellion actively. In this sense, the id reveals its constitutive incapacity to adapt to the pressure of reality, to ananké[12]. Freud clarifies that the differences between neurosis and psychosis are far more visible in the first moment than in the second; nevertheless, this initial difference is clearly expressed in the final outcome of each structure. Freud formulates this distinction with precision in 1924:

> In neurosis, a fragment of reality is avoided by a kind of flight, whereas in psychosis it is reconstructed. In other words, in psychosis the initial flight is followed by an active phase of reconstruction; in neurosis, the initial obedience is followed by a later attempt at flight. Or again: neurosis does not deny (verleugnet) reality; it merely does not want to know anything about it; psychosis denies it and reconstructs it (Freud 1924c).

This passage allows us to specify a fundamental distinction: while neurosis preserves objective reality at the cost of repression and symptom formation, psychosis

[12]Freud revisits a Greek concept which, in the early theogonies, designates, together with the notion of 'moira' (fate), the inexorable necessity inherent in 'physis'. It refers to necessity in the Aristotelian logical sense: necessity as that which is in one way and cannot be otherwise. From this perspective, it is possible to state that the necessary being 'par excellence' (in the logical sense of necessity) is God, who is, in turn, the creator of order, norm, and natural law. Thus, while the neurotic conforms ('anzupassen') to the norm, obeying destiny and its decrees, the psychotic, on the contrary, rebels against necessity and the absolute, consecrates himself as God, and becomes a creator, thereby animating God.

assumes the risk of a rupture with reality in order subsequently to reconstruct it actively. This reconstruction is not arbitrary, but follows a precise libidinal logic.

Through Freud's analysis of the Schreber case, it becomes clear that in paranoia libido is withdrawn from objects and persons in the world and redirected towards a particular mode of use. Most clinical cases of paranoia indicate that one of the most frequent destinies of this withdrawn libido is its reconduction to the ego in the form of a narcissistic fixation. Freud notes:

> We recall that most cases of paranoia show a fragment of delusions of grandeur, and this delusion may constitute a paranoia. (…) This clinical observation allows us to suppose that the paranoiac has contracted a fixation in narcissism, and we say that the regression of sublimated homosexuality indicates the degree of regression to narcissism characteristic of paranoia (Freud 1911c).

In this way, the reality withdrawn in psychosis is rebuilt through the creative function of delusion. For this process to occur, libido invested in reality must first be withdrawn, leading to its collapse, and then return to the ego in the form of narcissistic libidinal fixation. This dynamic allows delusion to be understood not as mere disorganisation, but as an attempt at cure, oriented towards restoring a relation to the world.

In the Schreber case, the origin of the illness is located in a conflict generated by the recognition of a desire that was subsequently rejected with indignation. This desire was experienced by Schreber as incompatible with the norms and values that, as a magistrate, he was obliged to embody, defend, and represent. The delusion persistently reiterated this repudiated desire and sustained the course of the illness until that desire eventually found a form of acceptance within the new world-order that Schreber constructed through his delusion.

The delusion of persecution enabled Schreber to remember that, beyond himself and his voluptuousness[13], a world still existed: a reality populated by external beings and persons. This libidinal return towards successive persecutors reintroduces libido into an external object, albeit under the negative sign of repression. On the one hand, the contested object, the physician Flechsig, represents the patient's link with the external world and attracts the totality of libido. Delusion thus functions as the link that prevents a total rupture with the external world.

On the other hand, the concentration of libido in a single object generates an extreme struggle. The battle against this object is experienced as a cruel confrontation, in which the triumph of repression is felt as the total annihilation of the object and, with it, as a destruction of the world (Weltuntergang) and of its sublimations. Yet this destruction is never complete. The delusion of grandeur enables the paranoiac to assume the role of redeemer and to reconstruct the world from the ruins of its destruction.

In this new order, the delusion of persecution is no longer required. The delusion of grandeur reforms and remodels reality from the psychic sediments of

[13]The German term for voluptuousness is *Die Wollust*. This word is related to *Wollen*, which is the verb "to want", and Lust, which means lust. When Schreber begins to speak of the cultivation of his voluptuousness, he refers to a lustful pleasure that he himself demands from God, as compensation for subjecting him to the sufferings of his illness and the pains he experiences in his emasculation.

previous relations with it: memory traces, representations, and judgments that had previously structured psychic life. Delusion thus appears not merely as a symptom, but as a productive operation, capable of reorganising the world where neurotic adaptation to reality becomes untenable.

This point is decisive for the general hypothesis of the present article: where neurosis remains bound to obedience and renunciation, paranoid psychosis, in its exceptional configurations, may open a path towards the creative reconstruction of the world. It is at this threshold that delusional reorganisation ceases to be mere pathology and approaches a logic of symbolic and axiological creation, thereby preparing the ground for the conceptual articulation of Axiogeniality.

Demarcation of the Philosophical System

It has been argued that paranoid delusion constitutes a system of an interpretative nature through which the subject reconstructs the world and re-establishes a relation to reality after its collapse. The question guiding this section, however, is more precise: why did Freud specifically turn to the philosophical system as a point of comparison for paranoid delusion, rather than to other interpretative systems, religious, mythical, juridical, or scientific? What is it about philosophy that enabled Freud, as early as 1912[14], to draw a structural analogy between a paranoid delusion and a philosophical system?

Freud's well-known analogy does not merely point to formal similarities between an individual delusion and an isolated philosophical construction. Rather, Freud identifies deep concordances between the major social productions of philosophy and paranoid formations, understood in both cases as systems of meaning endowed with internal coherence, a claim to truth, and the capacity to reorganise reality (Freud 1912, 45). This observation compels us to ask what should be understood, in a rigorous sense, by philosophical production.

From Antiquity, and still in Freud's time, the philosopher was not primarily defined by the possession of an academic title, but by an existential attitude towards thought and life. A philosopher was someone engaged in a radical activity of reflection, oriented towards questioning the ultimate foundations of existence, knowledge, morality, power, and meaning. For this reason, a significant number of canonical philosophers did not emerge from philosophy as an academic discipline, but from mathematics, philology, economics, politics, engineering, or the natural sciences. The philosophical gesture consisted precisely in exceeding the limits of a particular discipline in order to interrogate the principles organising the totality of experience.

This gesture is not merely theoretical. It entails a profound transformation of the subject's relation to the world. The philosopher does not simply describe reality; he or she reorders it symbolically, reshapes its hierarchy of values, and thereby transforms his or her own vital orientation (Desta 2023). Plato offers a paradigmatic formulation of this constitutive estrangement of the philosopher in the Theaetetus, through the well-known anecdote concerning Thales of Miletus:

[14]I refer to the book cited in this article's introduction, *Totem und Tabu*.

> It is said of Thales that, while gazing at the heavens and absorbed in astronomy, he fell into a well; whereupon a witty Thracian maid mocked him for wishing to know what was in the sky while failing to see what lay before his feet. This jest may be applied to all who devote their lives to philosophy (Platón 1982).

This anecdote should not be read as a mere ridicule of philosophical distraction, but as the expression of a structural displacement from the immediacy of everyday life. The philosopher appears removed from the practical order of the world because his or her attention is oriented toward what is not immediately visible within shared empirical reality. Such distance is not accidental but structural: it marks a position from which the given is no longer self-evident but demands reconfiguration.

It is at this point that Lacan's formulation of the "paranoia of genius" becomes illuminating. In Lacanian terms, paranoia is not defined primarily by cognitive error but by a specific mode of symbolic consistency: the subject reorganises the field of meaning around a central interpretative certainty. When foreclosure destabilises ordinary symbolic mediation, delusion can function as a compensatory construction that restores coherence. The figure of the philosophical genius occupies a structurally analogous position, not because philosophy collapses into psychosis, but because both operate through a rupture with consensus reality that seeks to rearticulate the coordinates of meaning.

What distinguishes axiogenial production from pathological disintegration is not the absence of rupture, but the capacity to transform displacement into systematic revaluation rather than into rigid defensive closure.

Regardless of doctrinal differences among philosophical traditions, this relative indifference to the immediate has remained a constant. Nietzsche, a radical critic of Platonism, articulates this paradoxical condition of the philosopher in even sharper terms when he writes in Twilight of the Idols: "To live alone one must be an animal or a god," says Aristotle. One more thing is required: one must be both at once, that is, a philosopher (Nietzsche 1889).

The philosopher thus emerges as a liminal figure: at once embedded in the world and radically distanced from it; subjected to necessity (ananké) and yet capable of rising above it through the creation of meaning. This structural position, neither fully adapted nor completely withdrawn, helps to explain why philosophy, more than other symbolic systems, lends itself to comparison with paranoid delusion. Both function as total interpretative machines, capable of reorganising experience around a unifying principle.

Unlike pathological delusion, however, the philosophical system can achieve a form of symbolic stabilisation and cultural transmissibility. It is precisely at this juncture that the possibility arises of thinking paranoia of genius, and subsequently Axiogeniality, as configurations in which the rupture with established reality does not culminate in clinical isolation, but in the production of new values, concepts, and horizons of meaning. The demarcation of the philosophical system thus proves indispensable for understanding why Freud did not resort to another interpretative figure, and why philosophy occupies a privileged position in the articulation between delusion, creation, and value.

By virtue of the very nature of philosophical inquiry, the philosopher has historically emerged as a singular figure: a type of subject who pursues the exploration of fundamental questions through a solitary, reflective, and meta-interpretative practice.

Solitude, relative withdrawal from the crowd, and the suspension of social conventions are not accidental traits, but structural conditions for attaining a reflexive exteriority with respect to the world. Nietzsche articulates this demand in Thus Spoke Zarathustra, situating the philosopher, and the creator of values, in a position that exceeds prevailing moral and cultural coordinates:

> I teach you the overman. Man is something that must be overcome… You have made your way from worm to man, and much in you is still worm (Nietzsche 1883–1885, Prologue, §3).[15]

This passage should not be read merely as a moral or anthropological proclamation, but as the formulation of an axiological requirement: overcoming the human entails overcoming the values that constitute it. Such a requirement presupposes a distance from the existing symbolic order, a capacity to situate oneself outside dominant normativity in order to interrogate, dismantle, and eventually recreate it. In this sense, philosophical solitude is not a pathological isolation, but a condition of possibility for transvaluation.

If we proceed from these characteristics of philosophical activity and from the classical understanding of philosophy, it becomes legitimate to claim that every genius has been, in a certain sense, a philosopher. As already suggested by Schopenhauer, what distinguishes the genius is not the accumulation of knowledge, but the capacity to originate something new, to institute an unprecedented perspective on the world. Yet nothing genuinely new can emerge if the world is perceived through the same axiological and perceptual coordinates that structure social consensus. To perceive differently, one must relate to reality differently.

This insight finds strong support in contemporary interpretations of Nietzsche. Katsafanas has shown that, within Nietzschean psychology, agency and value-creation arise precisely when the subject succeeds in disrupting uncritical identification with inherited values and constitutes itself as an active source of normativity (Katsafanas 2013). In this sense, the philosopher is not merely an interpreter of the world, but an axiological agent, whose practice involves a reconfiguration of desires, affects, and evaluative standards.

Convergences and Divergences Between Paranoid Delusion and the Philosophical System

In his 1914 essay On Narcissism: An Introduction, Freud addresses schizophrenia (Bleuler) or dementia praecox (Kraepelin) in order to clarify the distinction between a primary, structural narcissism and a secondary, pathological form. In this context, Freud identifies two fundamental features: (1) delusions of grandeur and (2) estrangement of interest from the external world, that is, from persons and things. Subjects displaying these characteristics were initially termed paraphrenics, and later more precisely described as paranoiacs (Freud 1914a).

With regard to withdrawal from the external world, Freud draws a decisive distinction between paranoia and neurosis. Although hysterics and obsessional

[15]This analysis follows the 1981 Spanish translation., p. 34.

neurotics also withdraw, to some extent, from reality, they do not sever the erotic bond with persons and objects. In such cases, real objects are replaced by imaginary ones or combined with them. In paranoia, however, the operation is radically different. Freud states that paranoiacs: "seem actually to have withdrawn their libido from the persons and things of the external world, without replacing them by others in fantasy" (Freud 1914a).

The second feature, delusions of grandeur, indicates that the libido withdrawn from the world has been redirected towards the ego, giving rise to narcissism. This secondary narcissism, Freud argues, is "the amplification and unfolding of a state of affairs that had already existed previously" (Freud 1914a), and is built upon a primary narcissism that had been obscured by socialisation and the demands of reality.

When considered in relation to philosophy and philosophical systems, these observations illuminate numerous moments in the history of philosophy marked by a pronounced estrangement from the world. Yet episodes such as the anecdote of Thales suggest that this estrangement is only partial. The philosopher withdraws libidinal interest from the world in a practical and immediate sense, but does so in order to reclaim it on another plane: as an object of contemplation, reflection, and conceptual elaboration. The world does not vanish; it is symbolically reconfigured.

The consequence of this displacement is also a voluntary renunciation of full participation in ordinary social life. Socrates' death, as narrated by Plato in the Phaedo, provides a paradigmatic example. Shortly before his execution, Socrates celebrates the prospect of liberation from the body, conceived as a prison for the soul (Platón 1983). The philosopher appears here as the one who approaches truth most closely precisely because he has distanced himself most rigorously from the slavery of opinion (doxa) and the tyranny of bodily sensibility.

This trait allows for a structural convergence between the philosophical system and paranoid delusion: both involve a partial withdrawal from immediate empirical reality and a reorganisation of meaning around an internal principle. The decisive divergence, however, lies in the outcome of this operation. While paranoid delusion may close in upon itself within an autoreferential logic, the philosophical system, at its most fertile, achieves a form of symbolic stabilisation and cultural transmissibility, enabling the production of new, shareable values.

It is precisely within this liminal zone that the problem of Axiogeniality is situated: as a category designed to conceptualise those subjective configurations in which withdrawal from the world does not culminate in the foreclosure of meaning, but in its creative reinvention, articulating solitude, estrangement, and axiological production into a higher-order relation to reality (Pacheco 2018).

Examples such as Heraclitus, Rousseau, and Wittgenstein, figures separated by centuries and radically different contexts, reveal a striking convergence: a recurrent tendency to withdraw from large urban centres in order to inhabit isolated, mountainous, or marginal spaces. This gesture cannot be reduced to mere biographical eccentricity. Rather, it suggests a partial withdrawal of interest from persons and things, not in order to deny them, but in order not to be absorbed by them, thereby enabling a more fundamental understanding of social structures, of the foundations of the human world, and of the historical formations of meaning.

Such withdrawal, however, is not sufficient to establish an analogy with paranoia. It is necessary to examine whether the second characteristic identified by Freud in *On Narcissism* (1914), namely, delusions of grandeur, is also present. In this regard, it suffices to consider the chapter titles of Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*, the previously cited passage from Twilight of the Idols concerning the capacity to live in solitude, or the Platonic and Socratic conception of the philosopher's soul. In all these cases, one encounters an exceptional self-attribution of meaning, a radical consciousness of singularity that, while not pathological, structurally approaches the limits of secondary narcissism.

The philosopher, however, is not a paranoiac. Yet, as Freud already suggested and as this article has argued, philosophical practice comes sufficiently close to this structure to justify the analogy. The philosopher lives, thinks, and dwells in the vicinity of the unsayable. He makes his life a constant reflection and his doctrines an attempt to access externalist perspectives, that is, viewpoints that aspire to situate themselves beyond the immediate determinations of time, space, and convention. Hilary Putnam has referred to this aspiration as the "God's Eye View" (Putnam 1988): a perspective impossible for any mortal, yet structurally constitutive of the philosophical gesture.

The philosopher seeks to be, simultaneously, observer and observed; he attempts to see himself not as a reflection, but as a totality. This tension, logically unsustainable, does not necessarily lead to psychic disorganisation, but may become a motor of symbolic creation, provided that it remains articulated within shared language.

From this standpoint, it becomes clear why Freud chose the philosophical system, rather than any other interpretative system, in his analogy with paranoid delusion. In philosophy, one observes most clearly the work of world-reconstruction that also characterises delusion. Both are total interpretative systems; both emerge from a rupture with the given symbolic order; both attempt to restore meaning where reality has become unbearable.

Yet a decisive difference remains. The philosopher is a human being, an animal among others, who, within his contingent existence, nonetheless pursues a necessary and absolute understanding of reality and of his own nature. Aristotle defined the human being as zoon politikon, grounding sociability in logos, language (Aristoteles 2000). Unlike the ordinary individual, the philosopher constructs the sociability of his world within the solitude of his system, just as the paranoiac reconstructs sociability through delusion. But whereas the paranoiac breaks with language, the philosopher respects and inhabits it.

This is the decisive point of divergence. As Izcovich has argued, both delusion and philosophical systems are interpretative systems (Izcovich 2011). Yet the philosopher introduces his interpretation within the common language, respecting its grammar, its rules, and its transmissibility. The paranoiac respects neither the Other nor language; his step is more radical, more extreme, and therefore clinically incommunicable.

The philosopher introduces something new into the spirit of his age, but does so with the language of others. He employs writing, inherited concepts, and discursive conventions in order to become a reformer, a censor, a cultivator of ideas, an artisan of a rectification of values, tastes, and consciences. From this perspective, the philosopher's paranoia of genius approaches what I have termed Axiogeniality: a form of genius grounded not in accumulated knowledge, but in an attitude towards the world capable of forging a new way of seeing, valuing, and acting, in short, a transmutation of one's own values (Pacheco 2018).

In this sense, Axiogeniality articulates directly with Nietzsche's psychology. Where religious neurosis stabilises suffering through renunciation, guilt, and the promise of transcendent redemption, art, and philosophy when it becomes creative, operates as a path of affirmative sublimation, transforming suffering into formative power. As I have argued elsewhere, Nietzsche enables a conception of clinical psychology oriented not towards normalisation, but towards the evaluation of the values organising a life, distinguishing reactive configurations (religious, moral) from affirmative ones (artistic, creative) (Pacheco 2021).

Axiogeniality thus does not constitute a romantic exaltation of madness, nor an aestheticisation of suffering. Rather, it is a clinical and philosophical category designed to think those subjective structures in which rupture with the dominant symbolic order gives rise to a transmissible, shareable, and culturally productive creation of values. This horizon finally opens up the possibility of a clinical psychology of Nietzsche, in which the fundamental criterion of health or illness is not adaptation to the norm, but the capacity to create values that confer a greater meaning upon life, strengthen it, and make it more liveable, healthier, more intense, and more truthful.

Conclusion

This article has addressed three guiding questions concerning the structural relation between paranoia, genius, and philosophical value-creation.

In response to the first question, it has argued that a rupture with consensus reality does not necessarily entail symbolic collapse. Such rupture becomes destructive when it results in foreclosure and the disintegration of symbolic mediation. However, when the break with the given order is structurally accompanied by a reorganization of meaning, it may yield a productive reconfiguration of value. The decisive criterion is not deviation from shared reality as such, but the capacity to generate a new symbolic consistency.

Regarding the second question, the analysis has shown that Lacan's notion of the "genius" in paranoia designates precisely this structural possibility: a configuration in which the subject, rather than dissolving into fragmentation, constructs a new horizon of intelligibility. The paranoid genius thus represents not a romanticized pathology, but a structural modality of sense-production in which delusional logic may function as a matrix of coherence rather than mere collapse.

Finally, in response to the third question, the article has argued that philosophy, especially when understood through Nietzsche's psychological genealogy of value, can be interpreted as a paradigmatic instance of axiogeniality. Philosophical practice, in its most radical form, suspends the self-evidence of inherited values and exposes their contingent origins, thereby opening the space for transvaluation. In this sense, philosophy operates structurally in proximity to paranoid rupture, yet differs from psychotic disintegration insofar as it sustains symbolic articulation and communicable meaning.

The concept of axiogeniality, introduced and refined here, seeks to clarify this distinction. It designates a mode of subjectivity in which rupture with the given becomes the condition for value-creation rather than for symbolic foreclosure. This proposal does not aim to romanticize psychosis, nor to blur clinical distinctions, but to articulate a structural differentiation between collapse and creation. By bringing Freud's structural insights, Lacan's formulation of the paranoid genius, and Nietzsche's psychological genealogy into a unified framework, the article contributes a conceptual tool for thinking the productive edge of rupture, where madness, philosophy, and value-formation intersect without becoming identical.

This framework also gains urgency in relation to contemporary secular moral economies. If late capitalism reorganises guilt, sacrifice, and redemption around productivity and performance, then the distinction developed here exceeds the psychological register. In ongoing work on Transvaluative Psychology and the formulation of the Neurosis of Herzl, this dynamic is analysed as a structural reconfiguration of religious logic within economic life. From this perspective, axiogeniality serves as a critical criterion. It helps distinguish emancipatory value-creation from compulsive adaptation to a performative moral order.

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"To be no longer ashamed of Oneself": Shame, Embarrassment and Shamelessness in Nietzsche's Philosophy and Life (A Hermeneutical Study)

By Jacek Dobrowolski[*]

The topic of shame may not seem, at first sight, a major issue in Nietzsche's philosophy, not any more a key to understanding it. The notion, however, does appear in some important contexts, if not highlights of his thinking, as we shall closely see, most remarkably in Gay Science and Zarathustra. Nietzsche also experienced in his life episodes of profoundly embarrassing character, and the feeling of being ashamed must have occurred, and played role, in some of the turning points of his biography. Also, if we think of shame's closest companion, guilt, it turns out even more relevant, as the philosopher has in fact engaged, and extensively, into analysis of „bad conscience", and „guilt feeling" in his most systemic and treatise-like work On the Genealogy of Morals, and in other books, too. This analysis is psycho-anthropological in its essence, and possibly impersonal, as it refers to "mankind", yet the reader might get an impression of some "deeper" motivation hiding behind this apparently objective and impartial, still very passionate, as much as exaggerated, critique of "bad conscience" in particular, and "Christianity" in general. If we follow this impression, it might lead into a deeper investigation of the theme of shame in Nietzsche, and how it casts light on his entire philosophical endeavour.

Introduction

In the following study - which assumes at its basis the principles of hermeneutical approach in that it combines an attempt at understanding the texts with an endeavour to understand the person behind (the author)[1] - I will venture to

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[1]In other words, our aim here is not to determine what exactly Nietzsche wanted to say about the world, and whether he was right in it or not (or: what did he believe was true); our aim is to understand what made him say what he said and what does it say about himself – who was he to say it? As H.G. Gadamer, the patron of all contemporary hermeneutical philosophy, stated in the initial part of his fundamental work *Wahrheit und Methode*, „Humanities have no method on their own. One can ask, then, after Helmholtz, what does „method" here mean, and if other conditions of human sciences are not much more important than inductive logic. Helmholtz rightly remarked this, when trying to properly define the essence of humanities he mentioned memory and authority, and discussed, too, psychological insight, which would replace conscious implying (...)" (part One, I. A.) He also added, in reference to the romantic theory of understanding by Schleiermacher, that he „assumes, that every individuality is an expression of all life, hence 'everybody holds in himself some minimum of everybody, and intuition is excited by comparison to oneself' (…) In this way focusing the understanding on the problem of individuality, Schleiermacher presents the task of hermeneutics as universal (…) The 'method' of understanding will be having before its eyes both what is common (through comparison), as well as what is specific (through insight), that is, it will be both comparative and intuitive. In either aspect, however, it remains an 'art', as it cannot be reduced to a mechanical application of rules. Intuition is indispensable." (part Two, I.1.A.b. My translation). The reader might

defend a hypothesis that the feeling of shame, also in the broader meaning of being embarrassed, ashamed of oneself, and ridiculous, was an important element of Nietzsche's self-identity, one with which he waged an inner war, a war that triggered many of his major relationship breakups, mental crises and, perhaps less directly, the developments in his thinking. In this undertaking, my approach will also somehow echo the Nietzschean one, as Nietzsche indeed was one of the greatest masters of hermeneutics and his tools of understanding the psychology of the "deepest motifs"[2] – his "psychoanalysis" avant la lettre[3] – remain, if with some limitations, an inspiring method of interpretation [cf. BGE 23] one that can also be used to understanding Nietzsche himself.

Let us start with a remark that Nietzsche's biography might be divided into chapters which, each one, could take as their departure point a breakaway, a "divorce" or, in more Nietzschean wording, an "overcoming".[4] However we name the process, it seems that by principle it is mostly, if not exclusively, an essentially subjective, introvert and inner exercise; an event of which the substantial occurrences remain hidden from the external eyes, and perhaps from the internal, too, to some extent, and develop in an “inwards” rather than extraverted way, affecting the individual from within their profoundest emotional cradle – indeed, a breakaway is in the first place one which the Self has to do to itself and that proceeds by inner implosions; no one is more affected with it than the breaking up agent. And the challenge is so involving the entire Self that it requires – being otherwise ineffable on it own – a whole "philosophy", understood as an all-encompassing worldview, that would both express and indirectly give legitimacy to the rupturing event of life. Nietzsche's philosophy as a whole, without much controversy, could be defined as a philosophy of rupture.

To be more specific, let us recall the dramatic turns of Nietzsche's biography that clearly were such ruptures: firstly, the adolescent breakaway from religion and his naturally inherited professional career-path of a Lutheran minister; secondly, the breakaway from Wagner, which included an overnight flight from participating in Wagner's great festival in August 1876, and, consequently, a breakup with the "world"; thirdly, the forced breakup with Lou Salomé, his spiritual soulmate; four, the breakaway, temporal, from the mother and sister (following the Salomé affair); five, the intellectual breakaway from Schopenhauer, his "educator"; six, an ongoing process of breaking away from Germany, the mother-country; seven, the growing solitude of

be also referred to J. Grondin, *Introduction to philosophical hermeneutics*, trans. J. Weinsheimer, Yale U.P., 2018, and also P. Ricoeur, *Existence and hermeneutics*.

[2]The most extensive discussion of Nietzsche's psychology is to be found in G. Deleuze, *Nietzsche et Philosophie.* See also: P. Katsafanas, *Nietzsche's philosophical psychology*, in: OHN [abbreviations refer to detailed bibliography]

[3]Cf. P. Ricoeur, *Existence and hermeneutics*.

[4]Such a biography, to the best of my knowledge, does not exist, but the events I am referring to here are very well known and covered by many recounts. This study is based on those given in: R. Safranski, *Nietzsche: Biographie seines Denkens*, Hanser: 2019; S. Prideaux: *I am dynamite. A life of Friedrich Nietzsche,* London, Faber&Faber, 2019; J. Young, *Friedrich Nietzsche. A Philosophical biography*, Cambridge U.P. 2010; J. Young, *Nietzsche and Women*, in: OHN; Charlie Huenemann, *Nietzsche's Illness*, in: OHN. The most important source on Nietzsche's life of course are his letters, I used the eKGWB archive [nietzschesource.org]; later in the text I will quote from them referring to date and addressee of the letter.

the years before the final collapse; and lastly, a forced, final breakup with "all", himself included, marked by his neurologically caused mental collapse of the January 1889, which to so many, although a medical condition, seemed so much in line with his entire profile.[5]

One does not break up with their deepest engagements for a banal or superficial reason. There must be a wound, or a thorn burning inside, caused by an external-internal factor. The name external-internal is paradoxical and contradictory, but the factor indeed is both alien and proper, one's own, as much as Other's, and the Other is using it against the self – from within the self. In many cases this wound is one of shame, and it might be argued that in some, if not all, of Nietzsche's breakaways the shame-wound could have been a major driving force. Shame is an outside influence of the otherness, erasing the limits of one's self (the out-in imaginary edge of the subject), rooted, as well, in the most profound inner life. Apart from the shame-wound, however, there is also the shame of being wounded, of letting oneself be ashamed, or else, letting the outside life undermine the inside life – this is the inner thorn, the shame one feels for being ashamed. Not letting oneself to be ashamed, that is, detaching the inside from the outside enemy influence, becoming shameless, and also, in the last instance, extremely, as much as ridiculously, unashamedly proud, seems a state of mind which Nietzsche romanticized, and even obsessed about, under the term "innocence" [GS:Preface, 4, where one can find an expression "dangerous innocence"; GS:Songs, *In the South*], and connected to his metaphor of a "child". But how can one free oneself truly from it, if not by way of an over-all change of human nature?

For it seems that shame is an universal human experience, and, in the standard moral psychology, as well as common understanding, not an experience to be ashamed of, as indeed it is a "higher feeling", the Platonic thymos,[6] linked to and made possible by the human, and uniquely human, cognitive skills, enabling morality (as the recognition of one's wrong doings), reciprocity (as being primarily an interpersonal, or social feeling), and moral recovery (shame being indispensable mark of one's feeling guilty and a step towards repentance) – shame is not bad, and rather good, in the first place, while it is rather shamelessness that seems to be evil. And yet, the feeling of being ashamed of one's shame, even if this last one is justified, shows an inevitable ambiguity of the sentiment, which, although supposedly sublime and morally recommendable, leaves the individual inflicted with some distaste and a consciousness of weakness. This is likely because it is a negative, and self-related negative sentiment, verging with self-hate, and obviously not expressing one's joy with oneself, the condition which Spinoza believed to be a mark of personal power and virtue. Shame in fact is synonymous with feeling helpless and under pressure, it is a stressful wound, as already said, not a mere passing mood but something that always needs a cure. The likening of shame with weakness and illness is imminent in Nietzsche's understanding of it.

[5]For Klossowski, *Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux*, Paris: Mercure de France, 1963, Nietzsche's madness is *the truth of his though,* the point where his philosophy of the eternal return and the dissolution of the stable self becomes real in his own life. "In Nietzsche, the thinking subject dissolves into the multiplicity of impulses that constitute him; madness marks the point at which this dissolution can no longer be symbolized.", p. 23; M. Foucault, *Madness and Civilization*, Preface: "The moment when Nietzsche goes mad is that in which his thought reaches its own limit, where it encounters that which it cannot think."

[6]B. Williams, *Shame and necessity*, U.C. Berkeley, 1993.

There is something beyond commonsensical, though, in his approach, also to be noticed immediately: his insistence and emphasis on the shame, and, more precisely, guilt feeling as widespread among human beings, to the extent of it being the ultimate condition to overcome for the "superman" (this last figure being defined many times by reference to "innocence", which was a term appearing in Nietzsche from very early on) [Z III: *The ugliest man*, IV: *The Awakening]* The ill of the ill-conscience turns to be even an "infinite guilt", never repayable debt [GM II: 20-23] Yet, it is arguable, indeed, from the everyday life perspective, how much really an average human being is eager to be affected by shame (or else, how much "christian" are Christians), and how often, in fact, it is rather lack thereof that seems a person's most remarkable feature, yet hardly their virtue, even from the controversial standpoint of specifically Nietzschean virtue ethics. Shamelessness does not seem, at first sight, neither rare, nor especially noble in most of its so many cases; very often it appears a psychopathic quality, or at least a mark of limited sensibility and responsibility. Any uncritical praise of shamelessness seems to point out to the fact that it is motivated by an exaggerated or excessive sense of shame, great vulnerability to it, overrating its psychological impact and force in the individual psyche, one very subjective and hardly rooted in common human experience, or else, a conviction of specifically idiosyncratic, and thus otherwise unverifiable, nature.

Nietzsche's Questionnaire

As a more specific evidence for the above somehow speculative interpretation of Nietzsche's deeper motifs, we might turn, to begin with, to one less commented fragment of the *Gay Science*, namely, what one could name "Nietzsche's questionnaire". This is a passage from the end of Book III, contained in paragraphs 268-275, a series of eight questions and answers of which the last three refer explicitly to the theme of shame. Here is the entire thing:

268. What makes Heroic?—To face simultaneously one's greatest suffering and one's highest hope.
269. What dost thou Believe in?—In this: That the weights of all things must be determined anew.
270. What Saith thy Conscience?—"Thou shalt become what thou art."
271. Where are thy Greatest Dangers?—In pity.
272. What dost thou Love in others?—My hopes.
273. Whom dost thou call Bad?—Him who always wants to put others to shame.
274. What dost thou think most humane?—To spare a person shame.
275. What is the Seal of Attained Liberty?—To be no longer ashamed of oneself.

(transl. by Th. Common)

This is a questionnaire in the sense of a series of questions that should reveal the subject's inner nature, his ideals; a very well known example is that of Proust's questionnaire. This form, especially if primarily addressed to the author, self-oriented, which seems to be usually the case, and is evidenced in point 269, is particularly personal and even intimate in tone, style, and its truth-value. Number

270 overshadowed the others with its famous, and repeated by Nietzsche in other works, formula of existential truthfulness to oneself, originating in Pindar's odes; however the ending of this otherwise important fragment had rarely attained any closer attention, even though it seems programmatic for the remaining part of Nietzsche's intellectual development, and the questions seem to follow in the order of importance. There is clearly an early formulation, in the fragment 269, of the "reevaluation of the values" project, to be fully and extensively treated in the three essays of GM, but there is also the "self-therapeutic" project of facing the greatest suffering as the greatest hope, in all likelihood related to Nietzsche's coping with ill health (268), and there is the early announcement of yet another Nietzsche's themes, that of "pity" being the greatest danger to himself, which will also return in GM, but in a more generalized way of a threat to all humanity as such [Z III: *The retur*n; GM III:14].

Thus, the fragment is not marginal to the entire Nietzsche's philosophy, but contains in a pill some of his major topics. It is remarkable, then, too, that it ends with three interconnected ideas about shame. The reason why this arguably important passage, and especially its reference to shame, had not been subject to many analyses, and have relatively modest presence in commentary literature, might be that it sounds not so intensely Nietzschean as usually quotes from the philosopher would. In this passage Nietzsche seems milder, more "vulnerable" and confessing than he typically appears, and more exposed to the reader. For he usually does not disclose himself directly, but rather covers behind masks and even assumes poses, almost always avoiding to show his vulnerability (in other words, the author implied by his official works is very different from his actual person, cf. BGE 40) – a "masked philosopher", as Klossowski, and Foucault,[7] deemed him. This, however, is a rare fragment of his lowered grandiosity, where his use of the term "humane" and "most humane" is not misanthropic but humanist; and he generally sounds almost unlike himself – assuming an intimate tenor. It seems, then, that it might have been indeed the issue, primarily personal, of shame that led Nietzsche to the extended study of psychology of morality and a critical genealogy of moral values.

The Gay Science is a work marking the turn from early to mature Nietzsche, as the ideas of Overman, Eternal Recurrence, Will-to-power, Amor Fati, God's death all commence to emerge there; it is also very often accounted for as indicating philosopher's shift from a "culturalist" perspective to one "naturalist", with the intent of "renaturalization of human nature".[8]

By the time of its publication just several years passed from Nietzsche's breakaway from Wagner. This event, beyond the officially expressed reasons, had as backstage the most embarrassing and shaming opinion Wagner shared about Nietzsche with his doctor, suggesting the actual cause of his bad health to be compulsive masturbation. Of course, this embarrassing aspect of the end of Nietzsche's connection to Wagner, and thus his belonging to the cultural elites, should not disavow Nietzsche's critique of Wagnerism, yet it might explain its ferocity. Also, Nietzsche started to depart from his "Master" much earlier than the news about allegation came to him in 1877, upon his

[7]The topic of Nietzsche as a masked philosopher can be traced from P. Klossowski, *Nietzsche et le cercle vicieux*, Paris: Mercure de France, 1963; through G. Deleuze, op. cit.; to M. Foucault, „The Masked Philosopher", in: *Foucault Live: Interviews, 1961–1984,* ed. Sylvère Lotringer, 1989.
[8]Michael Ure, *Nietzsche's The Gay Science: An Introduction*, Cambridge U.P. 2019, pp. 112–153.

visit to doctor Eiser, who has reportedly revealed to him Wagner's letter.[9] In 1878, in *Human, All too Human* [HAH I: "From the artists' and writers' soul", 145-223] Nietzsche somehow sealed the breakup with Wagner textually with an assault on what he himself had been the foremost representative of – the cult of the artist-genius, and the great artist as such. Clearly, in accord with the mechanism of wound-induced breakup, the volume of this criticism, which Nietzsche later on returned to multiple times, proves how much the philosopher needed to cut off a piece of his "heart". It was a self-surgery, which costed him lots of self-inflicted pain. The fact that he has been for all years of relationship with Wagner "in love" with Wagner's wife, and that the Wagners realized it, made the whole story even more embarrassing. Wagner is never explicitly mentioned in the passages of HAH, but he did understand that it was all about him, and from that time on Nietzsche was considered persona non grata in the Wagnerian circle. Of, course, later there would come more Wagner-related texts, also with him being explicitly named, that will try to offend and diminish the composer in even more furious manner, with the *Case of Wagner* as the one of the last Nietzsche's texts, and one already verging on madness – proving that their breakup remained a major issue for Nietzsche until his last days of lucid life.

The fragment cited seems indeed Nietzsche's major middle-stage programmatic self-expression, which set the agenda of his later studies and critiques. A clear connection between "becoming oneself" and "being no longer ashamed of oneself" is noticeable – these are not separate tasks, it might be argued. This seems, however, only relatively true – in circumstances in which being ashamed of oneself is not accidental, not limited to justified cases of having done something wrong (and Nietzsche, we should be reminded, in all likelihood has never done anything morally appalling or mean, nothing to be reasonably ashamed of, as his general conduct of life was rather kind and generous) – but an overwhelming feeling consuming the entire individual, permeating his personality and identity. He wanted, nevertheless, to see it as an external influence upon him, hence the figure of "him who always wants to put others in shame". Let us call him "shamer". He must be seen as bad. The opposite is to spare shame, the most human, noble thing. We could remark that while there are reasons to dislike shamers, and they are controversial persons, to place them on the top of the bad seems, again, very relative to individual circumstances – who do you have to be to deem shamers the worst? And, also, referring to 271, who do you have to be to believe that pity is your greatest danger? (It will later, after being repeated in

[9]Sander L. Gilman, „Otto Eiser and Nietzsche's Illness: A Hitherto Unpublished Text", in: *Nietzsche Studien* (2009), 38: pp. 396-409. "At my instigation, Dr. Eiser's widow took special care of one of Richard Wagner's letters to her deceased husband. As she told me, 'The contents of this letter are known only to me' (…) Richard Wagner wrote this letter when he learned that Dr. Eiser had met his young friend [Nietzsche] and gave him medical advise. In a fiathful, truly fatherly way, he shares his hypothesis about the cause [i.e. masturbation] of Nietzsche's illness with his mutual medical friend. 'Why did Nietzsche break away from Wagner?' Eiser once said: 'I alone know, because this break took place in my house, in my examining room, when I informed Nietzsche about the letter with the best of intentions. The result was an outbreak of rage, Nietzsche was beside himself, the words that he found for Wagner cannot be repeated. At the moment the break was sealed." - E. Kretzer, "Erinnerungen an Dr. Otto Eiser", 1912. This excerpt cited from: http://www.thenietzschechannel.com/correspondence/eng/nlett-1877.htm

Zarathustra as his ultimate temptation, turn out to be "humanity's greatest danger" in BGE and GM).

Zarathustra's Shame

The relation between shame and pity in Nietzsche reveals a certain dialectics, with either term undergoing within it a movement of reversal. This can be traced in the fragment from Zarathustra, p. I, "The pitiful":

> *Man himself is to the discerning one: the animal with red cheeks.*
> *How hath that happened unto him? Is it not because he hath had to be ashamed too oft?*
> *O my friends! Thus speaketh the discerning one: shame, shame, shame—that is the history of man!*
> *And on that account doth the noble one enjoin upon himself not to abash: bashfulness doth he enjoin on himself in presence of all sufferers.*
> *Verily, I like them not, the merciful ones, whose bliss is in their pity: too destitute are they of bashfulness.*
> *If I must be pitiful, I dislike to be called so; and if I be so, it is preferably at a distance.*

Importantly, in the original German version, shame and bashfulness are one word: "Scham", and "to abash" is "to shame" ("schämen" in both cases). The translator decided, however, and not without reason, to discern the two kinds of shame, as clearly there is a diametric change in the meaning of the term – from the shame of being pitied to that of pitying. So to "spare shame" is to realise that pitying puts to shame, and to turn ashamed of this shaming the other (or, "the sufferer") - that is, to pity them "at a distance" (without letting them feel our pity), and not to let oneself enjoy one's shaming/ pitying the other.

However this might seem complicated, if not confusing, Nietzsche seems intuitively correct in that any act of true compassion (let us use this word instead of "pity") should not be about emphasising how sorry we feel for the other; it must be sensitive and discreet, not to offend the other's self-esteem. And that very often pitiers fail to act in such discreet manner, to the detriment, and even greater shame, and pain, of the pitied. This is why a noble man is abashed in the presence of the sufferers – they are more embarrassing than pity-worth to him, while the ignoble pitiers are not embarrassed to manifestly pity and, by the same token, humiliate. To shame is to make weaker, and the noble one will not do that. In other words, shame here turns into shame of shaming – nothing is more shameful than shaming. Pity, on the other hand, turns out to be a form of shamelessness, but not innocent, in the merciful, marked by his "bliss in pity".[10]

[10] D. Burnham, M. Jesinghausen, *Nietzsche's Thus spoke Zarathustra*, Edinburgh U.P., 2010, p. 81: „Shame is something like the consciousness of inadequacy, of failing to live up to one's values or achieve one's goals. To incite or even notice such shame is itself shameful. If the sufferer receives pity, it is a public acknowledgement of failure or deficiency. Thus, pitying is only productive of more suffering, both directly and indirectly through revenge. From that follows the secondary shame of the one who pities (...)"

One can observe, yet, that Nietzsche himself was a sufferer, and a great one; in much likelihood he has suffered more than average human being, as his health has been miserable for most of his lifetime, and he needed a lot of support from his close ones while at the same time being affected by regular painful lows, physical and mental. That suffering was his foremost experience is also confirmed in GS 268: "heroic" is to confront one's suffering as one's hope, and there is no doubt this heroism was Nietzsche's own purpose, the virtue he willed. He was a sufferer to the extent that one might suppose that the entire dialectics occurs in his own consciousness, the pity being primarily self-pity, and the shamer, or pitier, too, being himself in the first place. This schizoid consciousness seems more evident in the fragment ending the second part of Zarathustra: "The stillest hour". Here an instant of late night falling asleep turns into a personified figure of the "terrible mistress", and the following discussion occurs in sleep – there is not much doubt that Zarathustra is speaking to himself. And since we intuitively tend to understand Zarathustra as Nietzsche's alter ego, there will be no much controversy in assuming that these are all voices speaking within Nietzsche's self – even if formulated in extremely metaphoric way.

> *Yesterday towards evening there spake unto me MY STILLEST HOUR: that is the name of my terrible mistress.(...)*
> *Do ye know the terror of him who falleth asleep?—*
> *To the very toes he is terrified, because the ground giveth way under him, and the dream beginneth.(...)*
> *Then was there spoken unto me without voice: "THOU KNOWEST IT, ZARATHUSTRA?"—(...)*
> *And at last I answered, like one defiant: "Yea, I know it, but I will not speak it!"*
> *Then was there again spoken unto me without voice: "Thou WILT not, Zarathustra? Is this true? Conceal thyself not behind thy defiance!"—*
> *And I wept and trembled like a child, and said: "Ah, I would indeed, but how can I do it! Exempt me only from this! It is beyond my power!"(...)*
> *O Zarathustra, thou shalt go as a shadow of that which is to come: thus wilt thou command, and in commanding go foremost."—*
> *And I answered: "I am ashamed."*
> *Then was there again spoken unto me without voice: "Thou must yet become a child, and be without shame."*

There is no room here to argue that the entire *Thus spoke Zarathustra*, with all of its symbolic figures, from animals to kings, and from the rope-walker to the ugliest man, plus many other in the book's menagerie, priests, eremites, disciples, etc., is basically a stage set to represent Nietzsche's inner struggle with himself, and that they all represent, each on its own, some aspect of his complex identity, which apparently was far from whatever the psychology of today would call "integrity" - his was one of "dis-integrity", it might be argued. Without, then, going so far, we may still assume that in reference to shame this actually is the case: Nietzsche might have been his own most vicious shamer, and the whole critique of shaming is basically directed inwards rather than outwards.

Of course, he did experience being put in shame by actual others, not just those ones within himself, but he did not cope with this external influences by communicating or negotiating with those others – he only broke up with them; with one more complicated case of being broken up with by Lou Salomé. That event took place while Nietzsche was writing the first part of *Zarathustra*, whose subsequent parts emerged during the next two years (1883-1885). In the Spring of 1882 he met the young, twenty-years old Russian woman, later to become famous writer. The traumatic event has been described by many authors, so we shall just be reminded here of the circumstances relevant for our theme. The situation indeed placed the philosopher in the crossfire of shame, embarrassment and, finally, guilt feeling. There was the embarrassment of being in love with someone who is not in love with him, and the shame of the official proposal twice rejected. There was an idea of a *ménage a trois,* including the other man in love with her, his friend – soon to be ex-friend – Paul Rée. An offer which Lou Salomé disclosed to Nietzsche's sister, who, in her turn, told their mother about it, and also described to her the whole context as scandalising and extremely embarrassing – did she say anything about Nietzsche's and the two others' famous photograph with them bound to a cart driven by her holding a whip? It might have been the case, as Lou Salomé was very indiscreet about the image, showing it to just everybody during the Bayreuth Festival (another aspect of the whole embarrass). Then came the blow from mother: "You're a disgrace to your father's grave", upon which he left home slamming the door. And lastly, after suffering all this, he was dumped by Lou and by Rée, who preferred her company to his: the two just fled overnight; thereby leaving him completely alone. This time he was not the agent of breakaway, but was broken up with by those he considered closest – it must have been a shame he was particularly ashamed of. And afterwards he put a lot of effort into breaking up with his own affection for Lou, and strived to not feel ashamed by the shame it apparently has been. Interestingly enough, this did not stop him from writing embarrassing letters to her, alternating anger with self-pitying, and even going as far as suggesting his suicide. He did not stop from blaming her of being egoistic, shameless, immoral and even too much willing power. He did not spare her shame [Letters to Lou Salomé, Dec. 1882 {eKGWB: BVN-1882-347, 348, 351, 352, 360, 362}]

Was it the case that even after breaking-away from his shamers he still did not feel liberated, and far from having "clear conscience"? Was it the case, moreover, that his shame was too powerful, that it was so strong to have him feel weak, and totally so, in his stillest, that is, perhaps, most honest hour? Was it "beyond his power"?

Shame and Guilt

If this was actually the case, then we might understand the next step of Nietzsche's critique, which is mostly about explaining the power of shame. This challenge will get him to contemplate the idea of guilt, and to develop his more anthropological, or else referring to humankind, rather than personal only, point of view. It included, on the one hand, what we could name Nietzsche's "determinism"[11] - his explicit and repeated rejection of the idea of "free will" [HAH I: 106, GS 127, BGE 21, TI: "The four great errors", 8, "Reason in philosophy", 5; A 14] - and, on the other hand, a philosophical

[11]This is not a „standard" determinism, and scholars dispute whether it is not „fatalism", but for the sake of this study it is important only to note his disbelief in „free choice". See: R. Lanier Anderson, *Nietzsche on Autonomy*, in: OHN

narrative of the origins of conscience, which will find its most systemic treatment in the *Genealogy of Morals*, with many remarks and ideas already exposed in *Beyond Good and Evil*.

As to the first, the "free will" issue, Nietzsche's stance seems clear: since there is no free will, moral responsibility, and guilt, are mere illusions. There is no need to present Nietzsche's arguments on the matter, what is important for us is that determinism provides an ontological "innocence" - since everything happens out of necessity, nothing could be different from what it is, and nothing, either, is to be blamed, or regretted, or to cause shame [HAH I: 39, 106, 107]. This is also a Spinozian message [GM II: 15].

Secondly, apart from the ontology of innocence, there is also "history", so he provides an extensive account of how, once, conscience, and, thereafter, bad conscience originated in the human being as such. In order to explain to himself why he was so overwhelmed with shame, he resorted to a concept we might name "culture of guilt". The whole second essay is about this and "related matters": those of "responsibility", "debt", "punishment", "crime", "torture", and the stake is generally to show how all of these developed through a cruel and painful human evolution – Nietzsche somehow realised, on this way, that they also were specific milestones of the animal becoming human animal. The narrative also echoes the old myth of "lost innocence" and the Rousseauian topic of the innocent savage – of course, with an imporant anti-Rousseauian sting: Nietzsche's "savage" - he called him "beast" [GM I: 11] - is innocent while, or despite, being cruel and violent, rather than being capable of primordial compassion.

Not surprisingly, the "beast", together with the "child", represented for Nietzsche primary models of "being free from shame". Both are very risky, and double-sided, metaphors of what he aspired to become – either suggesting a certain "return" to the natural, and "immaculate", sinless, to use religious (or, more precisely, Christian language). Obviously, this sinlessness should be the opposite of the Christian idea of repentance, redemption, and forgiveness, as it is the longterm Christian influence that endowed humans with guilt, and, what is more, its specialty – an infinite, irrepayable guilt (in connection with "primordial sin"). And yet, there is a remarkable likeness between Nietzsche's "sparing the other shame" and Christ's saying "do not judge", or the former's idea of forgiving the other, and not blaming them. Nietzsche, however, saw Christianity as the major reason why man's history was that of "shame, shame, shame", and the Christian forgiveness as fake, dishonest and hypocritical – the Christians, typically, "forgive" because they have no better way of taking revenge on their wrongdoers, and the actual meaning of Christ's "do not blame" is: "blame yourself." [GM III: 15] Their forgiveness is an expression of their weakness and relies, also, upon the belief that God will eventually punish those they "forgave". And the visions of these infernal punishments for the sinners Nietzsche will be happy to extensively quote from Tertulian's and Aquinas works [GM I: 14, 15]

The ultimate revealing conclusion Nietzsche made in GM, is, we remember, that blaming/shaming is the weapon of the weak against the strong; and as much as altruism is a necessary virtue of the weak, the main subject of shaming is "egoism" [GM Preface: 5-6]. This, however, is the natural, primordial feature of the human animal, which, by the priest-imposed shift towards devaluating that original nature, becomes an ill animal, one self-weakening and self-diminishing.

The stake of this narrative is to demonstrate that, in the ultimate instance, guilt feeling, and a fortiori that of shame, too, are not objective things. They are an invention, a fictional, phantom idea made up to reverse the hierarchy of the strong and weak, and what is more, they are produce of ressentiment, which explains their venomous power. It is also to give reason why, from the individual point of view, the feeling is so overwhelming and deep inside oneself – it is not a personal matter, but an effect of history of human degeneration (or else, nihilism, will-to-nothingness), a cultural environment which makes one ill in the first place, and challenges one to overcome their illness by means of not less than reinventing the culture, or more precisely moral culture – that is changing it entirely into one facilitating innocent shamelessness rather than ill-conscience.

Nietzsche, for that matter, has been controversially successful in the pursuit of liberating himself from any shame. In fact, his case could perhaps show that such a pursuit, when taken to the extreme, can turn into madness, if it is not a mark of some mental disorder in the first place – at least to the extent that irrational shame is a "neurotic" quality. Nietzsche's last months in autumn/winter Turin of 1888/1889 could be recounted as history of how one become shameless, free from any concern for "what will people say", as well as expressing the most flamboyant self-praise, megalomania, and a growing conviction that he was all humanity's healer, and a historic breakthrough, not lest that he had cured himself. There developed, too, in him some identity distortions, or perhaps to use Deleuze's concept, "becomings" - Nietzsche signed his letters with various names, ranging from Dionysus, to Julius Ceasar, and to some murderers of the time, currently covered by the press he read, and, last but not least, to the king of Italy [Letters of December 1888/January 1889]. Even the mere number of the letters, e.g. on Jan. 4th he wrote thirteen, indicates how alienated he was. Apart from his writings, his conduct, too, was increasingly weird, very likely to the embarrassment of many witnesses: he wore clothes off size and in bizarre colors, he was incessantly grinning for days; he introduced himself unconventionally ("Sono dio" - "I am god") or just accosted persons in the street.[12] He wept while listening to music, and he has been *twenty* times to opera to hear Bizet's *Carmen* [CW: I]. We will be reminded, too, of his unusual moustache that from some point appeared overgrown, or unkept, covering his mouth wholly (how did he manage it while eating, especially that he had a habit of eating two raw eggs for breakfast and for dinner?)[13], as if he had nothing to say; we might invoke, too, how a year earlier he wandered happily around earthquake affected city of Nice, laughing at frightened crowds gathering for safety in public spaces [Letters to Franziska Nietzsche, H. Koselitz, R. v. Seydlitz of 24 Feb. 1887].

It seems an indispensable feature of not being ashamed of oneself: in the last instance it means that one can feel unashamed even while being extremely embarrassing – and more, one is even happy to shamelessly experiment in public with diverse embarrassing displays, and to amplify their intensity. If the "Turin

[12]S. Prideaux, *I am dynamite...*, op. cit., p. 321-323.
[13]J. Young, *Friedrich Nietzsche...*, op. cit., p. 316.

horse"[14] event really has happened, then it could have been another such display (it was likely very weird and embarrassing in that epoch of ubiquitous horse use to protect an animal from the fiacre's whip). It could be argued, then, that Nietzsche, even if not very successful in other aspects of his philosophical project – as it could hardly be admitted that he indeed healed himself, whatever he claimed, or that he managed to invert the path of manhood, as he willed – did, in fact, realise this one end, that of becoming shameless and innocent like a child or beast.

Exit Remarks

Instead of any definite conclusion to these observations, let us remark, finally, that the greatest shamer and guilt-imposer, the priest – whom Nietzsche's father was, and whom Nietzsche himself, as said, was supposed to become – is for him the figure of both his personal, and, more generally, humankind's destiny; so through this symbolic character Nietzsche could connect his individual history to that of humanity, making his case a certain microcosmic representation of the historico-anthropological macrocosmos, and himself an ultimate representative of the manhood as such and, more specifically, a singular illustration of manhood's necessary task of overcoming their actual condition – that of being ill due to their morality, sick of their accepted, but life depreciating values.

Lastly, from the psychoanalysis perspective, by breaking up with priesthood, Nietzsche, in fact, broke up with his father; something, apparently, that he could not do "literally", as was the case with his mother (of course, eventually, the breakup with his mother did not actually happen or was erased by the reality of Nietzsche's special care requirements). It is remarkable how the philosopher, although so fiercely critical towards the priests, never said anything directly disrespectful about his father-minister, quite the contrary, his picture of father, even as a preacher, seems idealised, pious and very favourable – which contrasts strikingly with Nietzsche's contempt for this estate, and also with his contempt, explicitly uttered, for mother and sister, the two persons on whom he was most dependent and who, without much doubt, have been always caring for and sustaining him, at least in material terms (it might be only doubted if the two women were capable of supporting or even understanding his intellectual struggles). Which very likely made him ashamed in the first place, and not least because his home and raising were parochial, conservative, and petty-bourgeois. Such surroundings could have otherwise been fertile to breeding the feeling, especially in the so called Victorian era.

Nietzsche's treatment of the subject of shame/guilt feeling as a psychological problem, rather than exclusively moral condition, and one that can be a mark of ill mental health, not just of being a sinner, which with much likelihood had not had precedents, as well as his insights into the matter, including those that connected ill-being with "sexual purity" or chastity (and Nietzsche, let us not forget, defied chastity and sexual ascesis multiple times [Z:I, *Chastity*], despite being himself ascetic in this area), undoubtedly anticipated Freud's psychoanalysis. In a way, it might be observed

[14]G. de Pourtales, *Nietzsche in Italy*, trans. W. Stone, Pushkin Press, London 2022 [first publ. 1929].

here without further development, Freud rephrased and reinterpreted a lot of Nietzsche's insights concerning what he would examine under the notion of neurosis, and using the figure of the neurotic, with its, exposed very clearly by psychoanalysis, immense, but irrational guilt feeling – notwithstanding the idea, even if transformed, of "being no longer ashamed of oneself" conceived as a matter of mental health - this being Nietzsche's authentic, yet somehow overlooked in standard accounts, legacy in humanities.

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Reclaiming the History of the Epigenesis of Scientific Knowledge: From Aristotle's Theory to Kant's Abstract Epigenesis of Pure Reason and Piaget's Genetic Epistemology

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Scholarly debate persists over whether Aristotle explicitly used the term epigenesis (ἐπιγένεσις). What is beyond doubt, however, is that he originated the concept itself, already implicit in his distinction between potency (dynamis, δύναμις) and act (energeia, ἐνέργεια). Aristotle conceives the generation of an organism as a staged process emerging from an embryo that contains the possibilities of a future being, but not a preformed one. This generation from something that already exists is epigenesis: "upon" (epi) what is given, a new form arises. The concept became increasingly important in the history of thought, especially after the English biologist Conrad Hal Waddington coined the term epigenetics, now a discipline of immense scientific relevance. In this article, we emphasize the fact that Immanuel Kant, in a brief but remarkable moment of his work, took Aristotle's notion of epigenesis and transformed it into an abstract model for the generation of knowledge, one capable of reconciling the opposed presuppositions of Rationalism and Empiricism in the history of ideas. As he writes in the Critique of Pure Reason:

> *There are only two ways in which a necessary agreement between experience and the concepts of its objects can be conceived: either experience makes these concepts possible, or these concepts make experience possible. The former cannot apply to the categories; consequently, only the latter remains (which presents us with a system, as it were, of the epigenesis of pure reason.*

This expression has received remarkably little attention in the nearly 400 years since its appearance and, when discussed, is usually interpreted as a mere analogy to organic epigenesis, a biological concept formally established only in the seventeenth century by William Harvey. Against that prevailing tendency, we do not interpret Kant's phrase assertion as an allusion to the biological development of the human organism, as he himself does in the Critique of Judgment (§81), in discussing Blumenbach. Rather, we understand the "epigenesis of Pure Reason" as a genuine epigenesis: singular, abstract. Kant does not describe the process in detail; he merely indicates it for posterity. This abstract epigenesis cannot imply physical development or transformation. Rather, it signifies an expansion in the field of application of the a priori structures of Reason. For Kant, what is given a priori to human nature, namely the categories and forms of judgment, does not change, evolve, or alter. Here, the prefix epi should be understood in its etymological sense: that which grows out of an immutable origin. The set of possibilities for predication and for the construction of judgments, always identical and always given a priori in Pure Reason, never modifies; it only expands its domain insofar as the Verstand (german word that does not equates to English "Understanding") deepens its structuring engagement with the world of phenomena. What is given a priori to the human being encounters in experience, in the world of phenomena, that which can be assimilated in light of its own a priori possibilities. Much later, Niels Bohr would demonstrate that Pure Reason can construct models of physical reality even in the absence of phenomena accessible to

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immediate observation, thereby extending Kant's concept of the a priori at its core. The great physicist preserves, above all, Kant's interpretation of the construction of knowledge as a "Copernican inversion": it is not phenomena that determine the origin of scientific knowledge; rather, our capacity and possibility of knowing determine what we can know—just as it is not the Sun that revolves around the Earth, but the Earth that revolves around the Sun, as Copernicus demonstrated. In this sense, Kant's theory of scientific knowledge reaches into the realm of quantum physics, a fact acknowledged by distinguished physicists in the twenty-first century. Thus, the dynamis (δύναμις) conceptualized by Aristotle around 400 BCE attains its Energeia (ἐνέργεια) in the twenty-first century, accompanied by his master Plato, who created the concept of dialektikē (διαλεκτική), which explains how a thought can depart from ancient Greece and arrive, unbroken, in our own time. It is in the twentieth century, finally, that Jean Piaget's Genetic Epistemology emerges: as a theory that shows how the epigenesis of scientific though recapitulates phylogeny, synthesizing Aristotle's organic epigenesis with Kant's abstract epigenesis.

Keywords: *Organic Epigenesis; Epigenesis of Pure Reason; Genetic Epistemology; Theory of Knowledge*

Method

In constructing this text, we employed the method of structural analysis, applied to a corpus of writings by Aristotle and Immanuel Kant that address the concept of epigenesis and are listed in the bibliography.

Aristotle Organic Epigenesis

Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775–1854) *reminds us that great care must be taken when interpreting thinkers such* as Aristotle. In Historical-Critical Introduction to the Philosophy of Mythology (1842), he writes:

> Aristotle cannot be understood by remaining statically attached to him. One must also know what he does not say and walk for oneself along the paths he walked, grapple with the difficulties he grappled with; in short, one must go through the whole process he went through and perceived in order to understand what he says. Mere historical knowledge is not possible in relation to any philosopher, least of all in relation to Aristotle.

Aristotle is one of the pillars of Western civilization. Much has been written about him, and even more has been studied concerning his doctrines, methods, reflections, and creations. A large part of science has been developed either with Aristotle or against him, but in either case his presence remains fundamental to the construction of scientific thought. Hence the relevance of Schelling's remark.

So why turn to Aristotle? Bertrand Saint-Sernin, philosopher, professor emeritus of Philosophy of Science and Theory of Knowledge at the Université de Paris-Sorbonne (Paris IV), and member of the Collège de France, underscores the importance of Aristotelian thought for modernity in his book Reason in the 20th Century:

> Husserl subverted chronology, he legitimized a kind of philosophical ubiquity that allows one to go from Kant to Descartes and from Descartes to Hume, or to look for a hero of modern philosophy in a thinker of Antiquity. For this reason, he justifies a return to Aristotle. If we have made this about-face, it is because it seems to us that the Stagirite is modern in his way of approaching the problem of categories, causality, action, and justice. But, above all in the treatise On the Soul, he analyzes, with a clarity and precision never surpassed, the way in which we try to think simultaneously in the world of the senses and in the universe of forms. For the reason of Aristotle or Plato up to our in these days, it is the faculty of imagining Forms. Aristotle established an open list of categories; his aim was to apply them to the knowledge of Being; he showed, however, that our mind cannot form ideas without our body being touched by sensations. For this reason, he remains to this day an incomparable guide for reflection on science and action. He does not fixate on anything, he prescribes nothing; what he does is to clear before our eyes the natural history of the mind. (Bertrand Saint-Sernin 1998, p. 180)

A summary overview of Aristotelian philosophy within the context of life sciences. Before turning directly to Aristotle's treatment of epigenesis, it is useful to *consider what knowledge, science, experience, and reason mean within Stagirite's* philosophy.

Aristotle addresses these themes in works such as *Metaphysics, Analytics, Physics, and On the Soul.* Let us consider what he teaches:

> By nature, animals are born endowed with sensation; however, this does not engender memory in some, although it does in others. And for this reason, these are more prudent and more apt to learn than those who cannot remember; those incapable of hearing sounds, like the bee and other similar animals, if these exist, are prudent without learning; those who, in addition to memory, have this sense, learn instead. The other animals live with images and recollections and participate little in experience. But humankind possesses art and reason. And from memory arises experience for men, for many recollections of the same thing lead to the construction of experience. (Meth. 980b – 981a).

In the Metaphysics, Aristotle sets out the foundations and methods of his philosophy. He begins with reflection on natural phenomena perceptible to the senses, such as those mentioned above. In Book I, he further clarifies the role of knowledge grounded in experience and the role of knowledge arising from proper reflection. Consider what Aristotle says about the relationship between experience and reflection:

> Experience seems, in a certain way, similar to science and art, but science and art come to men through experience. For experience makes art, as Polus of Agrigento said, and inexperience leads to chance. Art is born when, after many experimental observations, a universal notion arises about similar cases. For having the notion that Callias, afflicted by such an illness, was well treated by such a remedy, and the same with Socrates and many others considered individually, is proper to experience; but knowing that it was beneficial to all individuals of such a constitution, grouped in the same class and afflicted by such an illness, for example, the phlegmatic, the bilious, the febrile, corresponds to art. (Meth. 981a -10).

The passages above answer the familiar claim often attributed to Aristotle that "all knowledge is derived from experience. A close reading of the Stagirite shows, on the contrary, that he observes nature, establishes relations among observable phenomena, and defines a reality grounded in thought and in scientific rigor. Let us continue with Aristotle:

> Well, for practical life, experience does not seem to be in any way inferior to art; it is known that experts are even more successful than those who, without experience, possess theoretical knowledge. And this is because experience is the knowledge of singular things and art of universals; and all actions and generations refer to the singular. It is not man, in fact, whom the doctor heals, except accidentally, but rather Callias or Socrates, or another of those so-called, who is also a man. Consequently, if someone has theoretical knowledge without experience and knows the universal, but ignores its singular content, he will often err in the process of healing, for it is the singular that can be healed. (Meth. 981a – 981b 25)

Let us continue with Metaphysics:

> We believe, without doubt, that knowledge and understanding belong more to art than to experience, and we consider those who know the art wiser than those who are experienced, thinking that wisdom corresponds to knowledge for all. This is because some know the cause and others do not. For the experience, know what, but not why. Those, on the other hand, know why and the cause. (Meth. 981b)

Still in Metaphysics, Aristotle demonstrates, or rather, exemplifies the categorical relationship between experience and thinking:

> Thus, we do not consider foremen wiser because of their practical skill, but because of their mastery of theory and their knowledge of causes. Ultimately, what distinguishes the wise from the ignorant is the power to teach, and therefore we consider art to be more of a science than experience, for the former can teach and the latter cannot. (Meth: 981b 5).

In our view, Aristotle treats categories as indispensable instruments for apprehending reality, reflecting upon it, and discerning the truth contained within it in universal form. In that sense, categories enable the *anima* to conceive Being. For the philosopher, categories make it possible for being to achieve cognitive expression. As Aristotle writes:

> In essence, Being receives as many meanings as there are categories, for the significations of Being are as numerous as the categories. Now, among the predicates, some indicate substance, others quality, others relation, others action or passion, others place and time. Being is therefore found in the sense of each of these modes" (Meth. V 7, 1017a 20 – 30).

Aristotle enumerates the categories as substance, quantity, quality, relation, place, time, position, possession, action, and passion. In his account, substance is something fixed and unchangeable, whereas the others form an open list and are therefore susceptible to extension and variation.

Aristotle may rightly be described as a polymath, given the extraordinary range of subjects he addressed with such depth. In the field of the empirical sciences, and especially the natural sciences, Stagirite produced a long chain of propositions grounded in field research, careful observation, and the objectification of phenomena. In that sense, one may say that he laid the foundations of the philosophy of science. Our purpose in this article is to highlight the Aristotelian concept of epigenesis and its relevance to science, especially to the biological sciences.

Organic Epigenesis (επιγένεση) by Aristotle

According to biologists such as Waddington and to several historians of science, the concept of epigenesis was introduced by Aristotle (384–322 BCE) in ancient Greece. Aristotle proposed that organisms do not emerge fully formed from the outset, as preformationism would later claim, but develop gradually. The form of a living being emerges progressively from an initial undifferentiated substance. The concept was subsequently advanced and reinterpreted over the centuries. In the modern period, the English physician William Harvey (1578–1657), famous for describing the circulation of the blood, reinforced the epigenetic approach by asserting that all living things come from an egg (ex ovo omnia). Studying embryos of different species, Harvey concluded that the structures of organisms are formed gradually through an ordered developmental process. Mazliak (2013, p. 153) summarizes Harvey's view of epigenesis as follows:

> The epigenesis of embryos was stipulated by William Harvey regarding the following aspects:
> 1. The parts of the fetus are formed one after another.
> 2. The most important parts of the embryo develop first from a functional point of view.
> 3. Each organ is formed a new, without prior miniature development in the embryo.
> 4. Epigenesis therefore rejects the idea of any preformed adult characteristic already present in the egg. In all these respects.

William Harvey aligns himself firmly with Aristotle. Epigenesis is a concept created by Aristotle and later reinforced by Harvey to explain the developmental process of a being after its constitution or origin.

Today, once syngamy has been conceptually and experimentally understood, that is, the evolution of something that already exists, Aristotle's intuition may be restated in modern terms: only what exists can change. This process is built gradually, in stages, within a teleological perspective and therefore toward a definite end, unfolding within the mathematical magnitude called time.

With the idea of epigenesis, Aristotle sought to explain what he observed in the study of animals, namely their origin and development. The result of those investigations contributed to what later came to be called embryology; indeed, many scholars of biology regard Aristotle as one of the founders of embryology. His studies of the life sciences are contained chiefly in On the Generation of Animals, History of Animals, On Generation and Corruption, On the Soul, and On the Parts of Animals. Guided by these texts, and by relevant chapters of Physics and

Metaphysics, the present reflection on epigenesis has been developed. Aristotle classified beings as animate and inanimate, oviparous and viviparous; he described species and organized them in ways that anticipate taxonomy.

Through several lines of reflection, he displayed an extraordinary capacity for observing nature and transforming observation into science in the modern sense. For him, animate beings, endowed with anima, possess their own locomotion, reproduce, grow, develop, and, in some cases, think at different levels. Epigenesis explains how living beings are to be studied through their physical, instinctive, and intellectual characteristics in a developmental process unfolding gradually along the axis of time.

In Arthur Platt's 1912 translation of On the Generation of Animals, Aristotle describes the four causes, hylomorphism, and the transformation of potentiality into actuality within the realm of the life sciences. In the History of Animals, across ten books and 237 chapters, Aristotle records the breadth of his knowledge of living beings and reflects on what a being is and on the stages of its development. According to Aristotle, living beings are not formed all at once; rather, they pass through a developmental process that culminates in their final form. He argued that the characteristics of an organism arise from a complex combination of environmental factors and inherited traits, and that they develop according to an organizing principle he called anima, the form of living beings.

Against preformationism, Aristotle holds that living beings develop gradually from simple and undifferentiated forms to complex and specialized ones. Their elements are not preformed in advance; they emerge over time through growth and differentiation until they reach their final form in a teleological trajectory determined by the anima proper to each type of being. In these writings, which result from careful reflection on biological phenomena, Aristotle follows a teleological path oriented toward a result, and in so doing establishes the critical and demonstrative gaze of science. In De Generatione Animalium (GA 727b 17–18), for example, he emphasizes the four causes involved in the formation of the individual: formal cause (the form of the organism), material cause (menstrual blood/female fluid), efficient cause (semen), and final cause (the completed organism). Although these biological notions are obviously outdated after more than 2,400 years, Aristotle's account remains conceptually important, especially in the way it relates form and matter and conceives form as the source of each being through *anima*. In his works one can observe his method of thinking: establishing relations, comparing, verifying, and objectifying the phenomenon under study. His only research tool was his intellectual capacity (nous).

How does Aristotle describe the evolution of living beings from the conceptual Perspective of epigenesis?

> Now it would appear irrational to suppose that any of either the internal organs or the other parts is made by something external, since one thing cannot set up a motion in another without touching it, nor can a thing be affected in any way by another if it does not set up a motion in it." De Generatione Animalium – On the Generation of animal's trad. Arthur Platt 1912, p.23.

The philosopher points to two distinct aspects of reality: first, the contingency of things *(contingentia rerum);* second, the interconnection of things *(colligatio rerum).* In the first case, he emphasizes that things touch one another *(cum et tangere);* in the second, that things are linked or associated *(cum et legere).* The first circumstance points to what is fortuitous or accidental; the second to what is necessary.

> Something then of the sort we require exists in the embryo itself, being either a part of it or separate from it. To suppose that it should be something else separate from it is irrational. For after the animal has been produced does this something perish or does it remain in it? But nothing of the kind appears to be in it, nothing which is not a part of the whole plant or animal. Yet, on the other hand, it is absurd to say that it perishes after making either all the parts or only some of them. If it makes some of the parts and then perishes, what is to make the rest of them? Suppose this something makes the heart and then perishes, and the heart makes another organ, by the same argument either all the parts must perish or all must remain. (De Generatione Animalium – On the Generation of animals -trad. Arthur Platt 1912, p. 23).

Here both temporality and reflective logic are evident, since any explanation of things that move and consequently move others must involve something other than chance and must confirm, through experience, the truth of what is being proposed. Human development has long been studied, and since the conceptual construction of syngamy it has been understood as a continuous process. It unfolds in stages: cell division, cell migration, growth, and cellular rearrangement. Differentiation, which begins at the molecular level, also plays a fundamental role. These steps transform the fertilized egg (zygote), a totipotent stem cell, into a multicellular organism the human being. All of this is modulated over time:

> Therefore, it is preserved and does not perish it is a part of the embryo itself which exists in the semen from the beginning; and if indeed there is no part of the soul which does not exist in some part of the body, it would also be a part containing soul in it from the beginning. How then, does it make the other parts? Either all the parts, as heart, lung, liver, eye, and all the rest, come into being together or in succession, as is said in the verse ascribed to Orpheus, for there he says that an animal comes into being in the same way as the knitting of a net. That the former is not the fact is plain even to the senses, for some of the parts are clearly visible as already existing in the embryo while others are not; that it is not because of their being too small that they are not visible is clear, for the lung is of greater size than the heart, and yet appears later than the heart in the original development. Since then, one is earlier and another later, does the one make the other, and does the later part exist on account of the part, which is next to it, or rather does the one come into being only after the other?" (De Generatione Animalium – On the Generation of the animals Trad. Arthur Platt 1923, p. 24).

How is the origin of humankind explained today? Consider the sequence ordered along the axis of time and causality. The process begins with fertilization, preceded by several events before the union of the oocyte with the spermatozoon. The oocytes produced through ovulation are received by the Fallopian tube and settle in the ampulla where they are fertilized by the spermatozoa expelled during sexual intercourse. Hundreds of millions of spermatozoa are deposited in the vagina around the uterine opening. Several thousand spermatozoa reach the fallopian tube, and many of them reach the vicinity of the oocyte. When a spermatozoon penetrates the oocyte, it completes the second meiotic division. This results in the so-called mature oocyte and the polar body. The nuclear structure of the oocyte forms the female pronucleus. The formation of the male pronucleus occurs after the spermatozoon penetrates the oocyte and the sperm's tail separates from the head. Fertilization occurs with the fusion of the pronuclei, and the male and female chromosomes unite in metaphase of the first mitotic division of the zygote. During the passage of the zygote through the fallopian tube, it divides and forms approximately 32 smaller cells, the blastomeres, which will constitute the morula. Next, a cavity forms within the morula, transforming it into a blastocyst. This is composed of the embryoblast, which will form the embryo, the blastocyst cavity, and the trophoblast, that is, the outer cell layer. The trophoblast covers the embryoblast and the blastocyst cavity and forms extraembryonic structures such as the placenta. Soon after, this structure adheres to the endometrial tissue and becomes fixed. From the formation of the zygote, the epigenetic process begins. When we compare the description of the origin of the embryo in the Aristotelian description and in the present day, we see causality and temporal modulation expressed in such a way that we can understand the concepts of genesis and epigenesis. The notion of microscopic and macroscopic structures is also perceptible in the Aristotelian text, something that shows the high degree of reflection of the Stagirite, since he realizes that in addition to the visible structures there were invisible ones that could only be known at that time through the reflection contained in the scientific syllogism. Obviously, the stages of human development in the Aristotelian description are outdated. The philosopher, however, described the general conceptual sequences in the temporal and inferential aspects. The Stagirite's reflection on the generation of animals also contemplates the concepts of inference and causality that organize the proper reading of the concepts contained in the phenomena of generation and the understanding of the microscopic and macroscopic worlds.

Thus, the philosopher tells us:

> That the former is not the case is clear even to the senses, for some parts are clearly visible as already existing in the embryo, while others are not; that it is not because they are too small that they are not visible is clear, for the lung is larger than the heart and yet appears later than the heart in the original development. Since, then, one is prior and the other posterior, one makes the other, and the posterior part exists because of the part that is beside it, or rather, one only arises after the other? I mean, for example, that it is not the fact that the heart, having arisen first, then makes the liver, and the liver again another organ, but that the liver only arises after the heart, and not by the action of the heart, as a man becomes a man after being a boy, not by his action. One explanation for this is that, in all the productions of Nature or art, what already exists potentially is brought into existence only by what actually exists; Therefore, if one organ were to form another, the form and character of the later organ would have to exist in the earlier one; for example, the form of the liver in the heart. Otherwise, theory is also strange and fictitious. (De Generatione animalium – On the Generation of animals – trad. Arthur Platt 1912, p. 24)

The sequential explanation of inherited epigenetic structures organizes the logic of demonstration and therefore of causality, which lies at the heart of the reflective process, as Aristotle states:

> Yet again, if the whole animal or plant is formed from semen or seed, it is that any part of it should exist ready made in the semen or seed, whether that part be able to make the other parts or no. For it is plain that, if it exists in it from the first, it was made by that which made the semen. But semen must be made first, and that is the function of the generating parent. So, then, it is not possible that any part should exist in it, and therefore it has not within itself that which makes the parts. But neither can this agent be external, and yet it must needs be one or other of the two. We must try, then, to solve this difficulty, for perhaps some one of the statements made cannot be made without qualification, e.g. the statement that the parts cannot be made by what is external to the semen. For if in a certain sense they cannot, yet in another sense they can. (Now it makes no difference whether we say 'the semen' or 'that from which the semen comes', in so far as the semen has in itself the movement initiated by the other)." Aristotle, (De Generatione Animalium, - Trad. Arthur Platt 1912)

The idea of movement is linked to the function of the *anima*. Movement exists only where something exists; change is possible only where substance exists. In this sense, *anima* is what gives form to the being of what exists. Aristotle, from an axiological perspective, adapts the scientific syllogism to the conceptual construction of epigenesis.

> It is possible, then, that A should move B, and B move C; that, in fact, the case should be the same as with the automatic machines shown as curiosities. For the parts of such machines while at rest have a sort of potentiality of motion in them, and when any external force puts the first of them in motion, immediately the next is moved in actuality. As, then, in these automatic machines the external force moves the parts in a certain sense (not by touching any part at the moment, but by having touched one previously), in like manner also that from which the semen comes, or in other words that which made the semen, sets up the movement in the embryo and makes the parts of it by having first touched something though not continuing to touch it. In a way it is the innate motion that does this, as the act of building builds the house. Plainly, then, while there is something which makes the parts, this does not exist as a definite object, nor does it exist in the semen at the first as a complete part. But how is each part formed? We must answer this by starting in the first instance from the principle that, in all products of Nature or art, a thing is made by something actually existing out of that which is potentially such as the finished product." (Aristotle, De Generatione Animalium, trad. Athur Platt 1912, p. 24)

The philosopher also describes in detail the process of formation and development after birth, as well as the persistence of this development in the adult individual, always modulated by time. Aristotle (GC 320a 10–15) explains what he calls growth in living beings, especially in human beings. Growth, as is evident, arises from what exists at least potentially:

> Thus, it remains to undertake a discussion about growth, investigating how it differs from coming to be and from alteration, and how it occurs in each thing. Likewise, regarding diminution, how it occurs in each thing that diminishes. Let us begin by examining whether what differentiates them is restricted to the respective domain of each one, providing examples: their differentiation occurs because the change from

> this to that, as a substance in act arising from the substance in potentiality, is coming to be (generation), while that which involves magnitude is growth, and that which involves a passive property is (alteration), with the latter two involving the change from being in potentiality to being in act.(Aristotle (GC 320a 10–15))

Aristotelian epigenesis therefore demonstrates expansion and growth based on a being that exists not only physically but also within cognitive, social, and affective dimensions.

Freire (2022), in an article on epigenesis and epigenetics, presents epigenesis from another perspective, namely in "Doctrinal Forensic Medicine in an Epistemological Biopsychosocial Study of the Concepts of Epigenesis and Epigenetics."

> According to Aristotle, there would be an initial element, something simple, unique, therefore a "principle" that would promote the generation of something more complex. One could argue, as a thesis, that he described autocatalytic RNA, or rather, ribozymes, which are RNA molecules with a nucleic acid structure associated with an enzyme. These substances are RNA molecules that act as catalysts, that is, they slow down the activation process of an energy reaction and, like protein-based enzymes, have a structure that specifically binds to a substrate and facilitates its conversion into a product. This primitive RNA played the role of both producing protein and conducting information, as well as leading to RNA maturation, which produced new nucleotides and thus, as is understood, enabled DNA. (FREIRE 2002, e220613 – DOI 10.47005/220610.)

The complexity of the doctrinal construction of epigenesis. From these complex conjunctions there emerges the possibility of subsequent relations for example, the genotype/phenotype relation which, through fractionation, repetition, further fractionation, copying, translation, and alteration over time, may have generated the earliest living organisms, moving from molecule to cell. If there was movement, it unfolded in time, here understood linearly in terms of antecedent and consequent; hence Aristotle's famous definition: "*this, then, is time: the number of a movement according to the preceding following"* (Phys. 219b 1–2). From a geometric point of view, this can be represented by a line segment. Time would thus have been the driving force of the evolutionary process, allowing the structuring, regulation, and transformations that gave rise first to molecular organization, then to the cell, and finally to complex structures such as organs and living beings, produced by long chains of interaction and communication. In naming and reflecting on form, matter, causes, act, and potency, Aristotle speaks of the "principle" and of its indemonstrability, that is, of something primeval and immediate, prior to later demonstrations and immediate causes.

The Stagirite established a "principle of development" when he observed the embryo's evolving form, its internal movement, its nourishment, and its growth under the direction of the form and matter of the similar being that generated it. A plant generates another plant just as an animal generates another animal like itself. It is also worth emphasizing the ordered and caused character of alteration, which shows that development occurs in continuity with its origin rather than as a mere copy. There is evolution toward another identity while preserving origins and hereditary traits. Reflection on the persistence of original characteristics alongside alterations modulated by time has given rise to numerous later propositions concerning epigenesis.

The Treatise on the Soul (Perí Psychês – Περὶ Ψυχῆς) in the reflection on epigenesist Another Aristotelian work in which concepts related to epigenesis are present is On the Soul (De anima). There epigenesis is approached through reflective and psychological methods, and once again its syllogistic character becomes apparent. But what, after all, is the soul in Aristotle's terminology? Aristotle (DA 415b 8) teaches: *"The soul is the cause and principle of the living body"* In the context of Aristotle's philosophy, epigenesis may also be related to the idea that the capacity to think, or to reason, develops and expands over time. Aristotle holds that the human soul possesses different faculties, including the rational soul, which is responsible for thought and reasoning. Just as the body develops from a simple initial state, so too can the capacity for thought be understood as something that develops and becomes refined over time. Aristotle (DA 40415b21) writes that *"alteration and growth exist according to the soul."*

The capacity to think, according to Aristotle, is characteristic of the rational soul and proper to human beings. This faculty is not innate in fully developed form; rather, it unfolds through experience, education, and interaction with the world. Here one may also introduce Piaget's concept of reading experience. Summarized in the briefest terms, reading experience is the process by which the individual interprets, organizes, and modifies knowledge through interactions with the world, using assimilation and accommodation to construct and expand cognitive structures. It is a continuous and progressive activity, occurring in stages corresponding to the development of human thought. This reflection brings us back to epigenesis. Intellectual development can be compared to epigenesis insofar as it involves the passage from an initial potentiality to a realized actuality. Epigenesis, then, applies not only to the physical development of organisms but also to the intellectual and moral development of human beings. Through experience, education, and reflection, individuals cultivate their rational capacities, attain deeper understanding, and develop greater critical power. This dynamic view of human development reflects the complexity, potential, and consequent action inherent in human nature, as Aristotle describes it. As noted above, Aristotle approaches epigenesis from a broad perspective that includes embryonic origin and development as well as the evolution of organic and cerebral functions, all attributed to anima, the principle that gives form to the being.

It is important to stress that when epigenesis, understood as a general principle of development, fails to occur, the result may be underdevelopment and/or pathology. How, then, is the evolutionary process of the ability to think described today, from its beginning after existence? The answer lies both in embryology and in neuroscience, especially in the period of parental imprinting and in the critical period of human development. Is there, then, an epigenesist of Pure Reason, as Kant suggested?

The soul is the cause and principle of the living body. But these things are said in many ways, and the soul is similarly a cause according to three definite modes, for the soul is from whence and in view of which this movement proceeds, being also a cause as the substance of animate bodies. Now, that it is a cause as substance is clear. For, for all things, the cause of being is substance, and being for those who live is living, and of this the soul is the cause and principle. Moreover, actuality is a determination of what is in potency. In the context of Aristotle's philosophy, epigenesis can be related to the idea that the capacity to think, or reason, develops and expands over time. Aristotle proposes that the human soul possesses different faculties, including the rational soul, which is responsible for thought and reasoning. Just as the body develops from a simple initial state, the capacity to think can also be seen as something that develops and refines itself over time.

Aristotle (DA 415b21) shows the movement, alteration, and growth that exist through the soul: *"But, in fact, the soul is also where local movement first originates, although this power does not subsist in all living beings. But even alteration and growth exist according to the soul."*

The capacity to think, according to Aristotle, is a characteristic of the rational soul, exclusive to human beings. This faculty is not innate in its complete form, as it develops through experience, education, and interaction with the world. One could add here the concept of reading experience created by Piaget (1996). To paraphrase and summarize Piaget in extremis, reading experience would be the process by which the individual interprets, organizes, and modifies their knowledge based on interactions with the world, using the mechanisms of assimilation and accommodation to build and expand their cognitive structures. It is a continuous and progressive activity, occurring in stages corresponding to the development of human thought. This summary reflection on the Piagetian concept reflected above takes us back to the process of epigenesis, which has already been discussed. The process of intellectual development can be compared to epigenesis, insofar as it involves the progression from an initial potential to an actuality, that is, fully realized action. Epigenesis, therefore, applies not only to the physical development of organisms, but can also explain the intellectual and moral development of human beings. Through experience, education, and subsequent reflection, individuals cultivate their rational capacities, achieving a deeper understanding and greater ability for critical reasoning. This dynamic view of human development reflects the complexity, potential, and consequent action inherent in human nature, as described by Aristotle. As we saw above, Aristotle addresses the concept of epigenesis from a broad perspective that involves both the origin and embryonic development, as well as the evolution of organic and brain functions, which he attributed to anima, that is, the one that forms the being, conceptually speaking. It is important to emphasize that if epigenesis as a general principle of development does not occur, it can lead to underdevelopment and/or pathology. How is the evolutionary process of the ability to think described and conceptualized today, from its beginning after existence (epigenesis)?

The answer to this question lies in the embryological perspective and extends to the parental imprinting period or the critical period of human development from the viewpoint of neuroscience. Is there an Epigenesis of Pure Reason as Kant suggested? The structure of thinking is constituted within the central nervous system. It is important to highlight that the term structure here specifically carries the meaning defined by Piaget (1896/1980) who states:

> In an initial approach, a structure is a system of transformations that incorporates laws as a system (as opposed to the properties of its elements) and that preserves or enriches itself through the very process of its transformations, without exceeding its boundaries or resorting to external elements. In short, a structure consists of the characteristics of totality, transformations, and self-regulation." (Piaget 2003, p. 8).

Modern embryology explains the initial structure of the central nervous system as the instrument that later makes possible various brain functions and thoughts. This system originates in the ectoderm, where a dorsal thickening forms the neural plate around the third week of intrauterine life. This plate is induced by another neural structure, namely the notochord and the paraxial mesoderm. The process then unfolds in an orderly sequence: the neural plate folds to form a neural groove with folded structures on both sides; around the fourth week these folds fuse to form the neural tube. The brain develops from the upper end of the neural tube, which initially gives rise to the forebrain, midbrain, and hindbrain. Here a causal chain becomes visible: the forebrain gives rise to the cerebral hemispheres; the midbrain remains as such in the adult; and the hindbrain gives rise to the structures at the base of the brain, namely the pons, cerebellum, and medulla oblongata. This embryological description of the early central nervous system is intended to show the evolutionary and organizational process of a biological structure that begins in syngamy and persists throughout the formation and definitive organization of that system.

Based on Aristotle's reflections on causality, his logic in describing biological phenomena, and modern neurophysiological and embryological explanations, we can consolidate the concept of epigenesis in the modern era.

Kant's Epigenesis of Pure Reason

Kant's use of the term epigenesis in reference to Pure Reason was certainly inspired by the concept of epigenesis first articulated by Aristotle as the passage from potentiality (dynamis) to act (energeia), though transformed in a distinctive way. An epigenesis of Pure Reason cannot imply development or transformation in the biological sense; rather, it signifies an expansion in the field of application of what is already given. For Kant, what is given a priori to human nature Pure Reason does not change, alter, or evolve.

The epigenesis of Pure Reason (Vernunft), therefore, signifies the expansion of the field of application of Reason's possibilities for constructing judgments in the world of phenomena through the *Verstand,* that aspect of Pure Reason which communicates with experience. It is, in Kant's own terms, an abstract epigenesis distinct from Aristotle's, except insofar as it traverses a necessary path in the construction of the knowing subject. In our view, this is not, as many claim, merely an analogy or metaphor.

This abstract epigenesis preserves the literal meaning of the Greek term: (epi) plus genesis, that is, a development that continues after the constitution or "birth" of the being, yet without introducing anything new beyond the possibilities already given a priori, namely the categories of Pure Reason, which are the product of transcendental deduction. In the Critique of Pure Reason, Kant explains that he characterizes the way in which concepts can refer *a priori* to objects of the world as a transcendental deduction because he wishes to distinguish it from an empirical deduction, which shows only how a concept was acquired from experience and not its necessity, since necessity is given a priori in the categories. The twelve categories contain all the *a priori* possibilities available to the human being for constructing judgments, and thus for constructing concepts within the domain of scientific knowledge.

They are:

1. Quantity: Unity, Plurality, Totality.
2. Quality: Reality, Negation, Limitation.
3. Relation: Substance, Causality, Community.
4. Modality: Possibility, Existence, Necessity.

Kant is speaking here of the possibilities of predication that is, of affirming something about the knowledge of the world. This totality of possible predications, and thus of possible judgments, remains always identical; it does not expand. What do expands is *Verstand's* capability multiplies its structuring operations. What is given a priori to the human being, Pure Reason (Vernunft), encounters in experience, in the world of phenomena, that which can be assimilated according to the possibilities enclosed within the *Verstand.*

What distinguishes *Verstand* within Vernunft as a whole is its capacity to unite subject and predicate in the formation of judgments in encounter with experience. These judgments, let us emphasize, are possible a priori, without deriving their form from experience. Hence the expression "categories of the Understanding." Pure Reason is thus an organon that provides a priori the principles of all possible scientific knowledge. In Kant's time this meant classical physics. It is important to note that for Kant the universality of physical knowledge means its necessary validity for all knowers, not for every domain whatsoever. In ethics, it is Practical Reason that comes into play. There are domains of life to which theoretical reason does not apply. In our own time, classical physics *has been joined by quantum physics, yet classical physics remains valid for* the objects to which it applies. When speaking of the conditions of all possible knowledge in Kant, we must also emphasize the role of mental representation, without which such knowledge would be impossible.

The *Verstand* does not operate in isolation; it requires the faculty of *Einbildungskraft,* the capacity to form images of what is perceived in experience. Kant distinguishes *bild,* images of what exists in the phenomenal world, from *Vorstellung,* images merely imagined. Imagination, understood as the faculty of representing what is perceived in experience, is responsible for the "necessary unity of the synthesis" of phenomena observed in empirical reality. In this respect it is called the transcendental function of imagination.

Sensibility and *Verstand* must be linked through this transcendental function; without it we would have phenomena but not objects of empirical knowledge not what Kant calls experience. For Kant, a representation is not yet knowledge, but knowledge always presupposes representation. In Kant's abstract epigenesis, experience, the world of phenomena, constitutes the other pole by virtue of which knowledge becomes possible. For that reason, it is crucial to emphasize the place of experience within the epigenesis of Pure Reason. Kant states explicitly: *"The possibility of experience is what gives objective reality to all our a priori cognitions."* In other words, the knowledge attained through Pure Reason is knowledge of the empirical world the world we experience. Chronologically, although none of our cognition is derived from experience, but they arise only in relation to experience. Experience shows that a thing is in a certain way, but it does not tell us that it could not be otherwise. It does not supply logical necessity. Up to Kant, epistemology in the history of Western thought had repeatedly discussed the relation between reason and experience, identifying one or the other as the source of knowledge. Thus, arose rationalisms and empiricisms, beginning with the birth of Greek philosophy in Thales of Miletus and Pythagoras and continuing into modernity with Hume's empiricism and Descartes' rationalism.

Would have the demonstration of an epigenesis of Pure Reason overcome this millennial dichotomy, as Kant believed? In what way, and why? Kant believed that it could, and he expresses this view clearly:

> There are only two possible paths along which a necessary concordance between experience and the concepts of its objects may be conceived: either experience makes these concepts possible, or these concepts make experience possible. The former has no place with respect to the categories (nor, indeed, with respect to pure sensible intuition), since they are a priori concepts (to assert an empirical origin would be tantamount to a kind of *generatio aequivoca*); accordingly, only the latter remains (as it were, a system of the epigenesis of pure reason): namely, that the categories contain, on the part of the *Verstand*, the grounds of the possibility of all experience in general. (Our translation of p. 167 of the French edition of the Critique of Pure Reason)

The difference between epigenesis, Pure Reason, and *generatio aequivoca* may be stated as follows: Pure Reason is given and does not change. Epigenesis is the general principle governing the development of living structures, already present in Aristotle, *generatio aequivoca*, is not given because it does not exist; by definition, it is erroneous. Pure Reason and epigenesis are therefore different. The former does not change. The latter develops and therefore, by definition, changes. Equivocal generation does not exist; accordingly, it neither changes nor develops.

The passage above is one of those hidden treasures in the works of great thinkers. We take it to be such because it offers a way of overcoming the age-old dichotomy between Rationalism and Empiricism. That is no small matter, for it addresses a controversy that has persisted for more than two millennia. Yet this passage has often been dismissed as no more than a metaphor derived from organic epigenesis. In our view, however, the epigenesis of Pure Reason overcomes the dichotomy between Rationalism and Empiricism precisely because it shows how scientific knowledge necessary and universal is constructed from the possibilities of judgment as they come into contact with experience, with the world of phenomena. These are two indispensable poles without which knowledge would be impossible: Reason on the one hand and the world of phenomena on the other.

To make this entirely clear, we must return to Kant's celebrated assertion that *"Reason without experience is empty; experience without reason is blind."* What does this mean? It means that Pure Reason (Vernunft) contains a priori, independently of experience, all the possibilities available to the human being for forming the judgments that constitute necessary scientific knowledge. These possibilities may or may not be actualized; they can remain merely possible. In that case, Reason would be empty of knowledge. Reason ceases to be empty only when it encounters the world, that is, experience, through the Verstand, the aspect of Pure Reason capable of contact with the empirical world and of synthesizing sensations and representations into judgments and concepts.

This encounter is gradual. Without it, Reason remains empty; without Reason, experience remains blind. The *Verstand* brings with it the a priori possibilities of Pure Reason, articulated in the categories, and through them engages experience, forming judgments and concepts that constitute necessary and universal knowledge. The categories thus provide the a priori form that, through the *Verstand,* apprehends a content namely what is given in experience, the totality of phenomena, structured through judgments whose predicates are concepts. Phenomena are immersed in space and time, which are also given a priori, and it is this encounter that enables the *Verstand* to generate knowledge. Judgments whose form is given in the categories may be either analytic or synthetic. Analytic judgments are necessary and universal, but they do not expand knowledge because the predicate is already contained in the subject; for example, a triangle has three sides. Synthetic judgments, by contrast, expand knowledge, but taken in themselves are not necessary; for example, "this tree is in bloom."

According to Kant, however, our capacity to form judgments grants us, through the epigenesis of Pure Reason, a third and extraordinary possibility: the discovery of synthetic judgments whose connection between subject and predicate is both necessary and knowledge-expanding. If the connection is necessary, it is a priori; it does not come from experience, for logical necessity is not found there. "Heat expands bodies," for instance, expresses a necessary relation posited by Reason. This is the type of synthetic a priori judgment that, for Kant, constitutes science. Why? Because science arises when human intelligence discovers in experience that which cannot be otherwise, and when that "cannot be otherwise" is demonstrated with mathematical clarity.

With Galileo Galilei, this became explicit, and modern physics was born. From then on, we enter a universe of necessary judgments that expand our knowledge of the world and interweave to explain the cosmos. The principle of inertia and the law of falling bodies are standard examples. The synthetic a priori judgment is thus the extraordinary concept in which the epigenesis of Pure Reason culminates and through which scientific knowledge is constituted.

To understand Galileo's principles as examples of synthetic a priori judgments, one must at least grant that Kant is right to begin with the claim that every human being possesses a priori possibilities of judgment. Here we are concerned with Kant's theory of the epigenesis of Pure Reason, not with truth in itself. It seems clear that Kant sought to show that just as an organism has an epigenesis and not merely a genesis, so too necessary and universal knowledge has its own epigenesis, insofar as its application to the world of phenomena expands indefinitely. Yet this is an epigenesis in which the already existing categories do not themselves develop or evolve.

What expands is the meaning of the phenomena organized by the *Verstand,* in proportion to its increasing contact with the data of the sensible world. We therefore understand the whole system of the epigenesis of Pure Reason as Kant's own model of the construction of human intelligence.

In modernity, Jean Piaget would develop an entire theory of how necessary and universal knowledge is possible, based on what he himself called "evolutionary Kantianism" (1960). Before turning to that development, however, one must note the enrichment that Niels Bohr brought to Kant's theory of knowledge. The epigenesis of Pure Reason, understood as a model of the acquisition of knowledge, received unexpected confirmation in the history of ideas when Bohr created his model of atomic structure. The construction of that model extends Kant's concept of the *a priori*.

Kant had shown that knowledge arises from the possibilities of Reason as applied to the world of phenomena that constitute observable physical reality. Bohr showed that such physical reality need not be directly observable by the senses, for example, the position and velocity involved in electronic transitions within the atom. Human reason can nevertheless construct a model of that structure and thereby make it, as it were, cognitively observable through a theoretical construct. Bohr's model thus extends the a priori by showing that the possibilities of Reason apply not only to sensible experience but also to invisible and directly unobservable realities that may nonetheless be disclosed through abstract models. As two prominent contemporary physicists have noted, Bohr was, without explicitly naming Kant, profoundly Kantian. Why? Because he embraced Kant's revolutionary thesis concerning the very possibility of knowledge. Until Kant, speaking broadly, knowledge was often understood as the grasping of worldly phenomena. Kant proposed instead a Copernican inversion: it is not phenomena that determines the origin of scientific knowledge; rather, our own capacity for knowing determines what we can know. Bohr's model of atomic structure confirms this insight. If a phenomenon cannot be completely observed, one may nonetheless construct a model of its structure. Such a model is not the ultimate truth but an instrument, one that can and must be continually refined to expand our capacity to know and understand nature through the advancement of physical science.

Piaget's Ontogenetic Epigenesis

We may now turn to Jean Piaget's evolutionary Kantianism, which transposes Kantian theory into the domain of contemporary biology through his conception of epigenesist a notion that preserves the essence of the Aristotelian concept and reveals what he inherited from the philosopher of Königsberg.

In order to understand how Piaget's epigenetic ontogenesis translates the epigenesis of Pure Reason into biology, we must also recall the essential role of imagination in Kant the *Einbildungskraft* which provides the necessary unity, namely the synthesis of phenomena. Sensibility and Understanding must be linked through this transcendental function; otherwise they yield phenomena, but not objects of empirical knowledge, and therefore not experience. The manifold can be perceived only through an exhaustive synthesis carried out by imagination within consciousness. Pure synthesis is the foundation of the possibility of empirical synthesis and thus of perception itself. The categories, when applied to the physical world, correspond to the *Verstand,* our intellect or intelligence operating according to the possibilities of the brain in its relation to experience.

According to Piaget, the link between experience and intelligence is the semiotic function, the capacity to distinguish signifier from meaning and, more broadly, the ability to represent the world. This function emerges in human beings at around two years of age and corresponds, in Kantian terms, to the *Einbildungskraft,* the transcendental faculty of representation. For Piaget, intelligence produces judgments and concepts whose form arises from the functioning of the brain while their content derives from lived experience. The decisive difference from Kant is that, for Piaget, the construction of judgments and concepts unfolds within the organic ontogenesis of the human being, beginning with the infant's sucking reflex and developing through a continuous exchange between organism and environment, culminating in the acquisition of logico-mathematical reasoning. Each stage of this ontogenetic development constitutes the a priori condition for the next. Piaget calls this process "evolutionary Kantianism."

Thus, Piagetian organic epigenesis begins with sucking and ends with the brain's possibility of attaining higher logic and mathematics. This possibility is not necessarily actualized in every individual; its realization depends heavily on environmental conditions, and only some reach that stage. The environment therefore plays a decisive role, precisely because the process is an epigenetic exchange between organism and environment. At the same time, the logico-mathematical capacity of the human brain is not confined to formal logic or mathematics alone. It is visible, for instance, in the expertise of surgeons, who apply spatial, inferential, and systemic reasoning with extraordinary precision. Much of this capacity remains unconscious in non-mathematicians.

Conclusion

Human beings deploy it in many domains without explicit awareness, just as most remain unaware of the way their own brain's function. Piaget's theory does not incorporate dozens of Kantian concepts in a direct or systematic manner, in part because it remained tied to the state of neuroscience in his time, a field that even today leaves many Kantian notions insufficiently explained. One instructive example is the Kantian schema: the subtle human capacity to represent mentally a triangle defined by three edges with no thickness, an object representable only in thought. Kant grappled precisely with this possibility of Reason. The schema of the triangle does not exist outside thought; it is a synthesis of imagination, a figure of pure *a priori* imagination. This example shows the representation of something never encountered in experience and therefore points to *a priori* knowledge arising solely from what Piaget calls the endogenous functioning of the human species. That is a crucial insight for epistemology and for the philosophy of science. According to Piaget, the mental structures specific to the act of knowing are not given in advance, not even as a pre-established program. Rather, as he explicitly states, they depend directly on the **endogenous and hereditary functioning of the human species,** which is itself *a priori* to all possible knowledge.

We therefore believe that Piaget brings about a synthesis between the aristotelian concept of epigenesis and Kantian epistemology. In this way, Jean Piaget's evolutionary Kantianism carries into the twenty-first century both the epigenesist of Pure Reason and the epigenesis of our organic capacities, a notion Aristotle had proclaimed some 2,400 years earlier.

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The *Meitei* Mythic Facet as an Epistemic Entity

By Denita Chungkham[*]

Ancient civilisations had their own intriguing set of myths and mythologies, no matter how outlandish or perplexing they seem to be. Humans developed mythology to explain their place in the world they found themselves in, and the phenomena discerned in the natural world. Thus, they served an epistemic function. History is said to be the bridge that connects the past with the present and points the road to the far future. Likewise, myths act as the seminal bridge that forms a link between the world of humans with that of the gods or spirits, and additionally form the substratum of religion and culture. This paper aims to demonstrate that the Meitei myths fulfil an epistemic obligation for the Meitei community, which possesses a rich corpus of mythologies, a vibrant culture, distinct rituals, and colourful festivals. This paper shall attempt to understand the Lai Haraoba that executes the creation myths of the Meiteis as a performative worldview, as a philosophy performed.

Keywords: *Epistemic aspect of myths, Lai Haraoba, Meitei, Mythology, Worldview.*

Introduction

History bridges the distant past to the evolving present, which then points the road to the unseen future. Likewise, myths act as the cardinal bridge that links the world of humans with that of the spirits, divine and not-so-divine. They form the substratum of civilisation, religions, and culture; they define traditions and beliefs, thus creating an integral part of understanding a community's worldview. Myths unravel the history and reflect the philosophy of that particular community. They perpetuate the world and play a significant role in deciphering and interpreting the intricate structure of reality. The term “mythology” is derived from the Greek *muthos,* meaning “story” and *logia*, “knowledge”. The word “myth” originally meant “word,” understood as a definitive and authentic statement. “Myth is the 'word' that announces the true state of things, what is factual, what really happened” (Baumgartner et al. 1974). Myths are primarily regarded as narratives of the deeds and endeavours of the gods and spirits, as well as historical accounts with formative and creative values: an actuality loaded with power and authority. “For myth, the difference between the behaviour of the gods and that of man is only a difference in degree, not of principle. As a result, mythical thinking tends to see the divine and human spheres closely linked to one another. The world and work of the gods as reported by myth constitute both the essence and the norm for the world of man” (1974).

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Myths, unlike fables, make a truth-claim or at least a semblance of it. Fables are instructive tales that teach morals about human social conduct. They are transparently fictitious. Fables end with a specific moral message. In comparison, myths are without this didactic aspect. Myths are usually difficult to translate into direct prescriptions for action in everyday human aspects. Myths can be understood as an expression of how people feel about the world, about each other, and their bodies. Mythology and the human body are intertwined with each other. The human body plays an important part in mythology. Hence, the body is primarily taken as the point of reference. For instance, "Adam's rib" and "Achilles' heel" are myths that are associated with the human body. There are myths that are merged between the natural and the supernatural, embodying creative and alternative forms of missing or extra body parts. Additionally, some myths tell us about certain creatures who drift between human and beast, corporeal and incorporeal, mortal and immortal, sacred and blasphemous, spiritual and somatic. Mention may be made of the curious amalgamation of mythic creatures such as the sphinx, the winged angel, the centaur, the griffin, the goat-headed Satan, and many others. These blended combinations of human bodies and animal bodies symbolise enigma, absurdity, and incongruity. Myths also, in a way, dramatise the experiences of human lives. The magnificent Greek goddess Artemis guides the young to the entrance of adulthood. Little girls offer their childhood toys to the goddess when they transition to the phase of adulthood. It is also believed that married women give offerings to Artemis at the time of marriage and after childbirth. Myths play a significant role in understanding the world. In the myth of Achilles' heel, the sea Goddess Thetis dipped the body of her son, Achilles, when he was an infant in the sea, to bestow invincible strength and might. However, she did not dip the heel that she was holding. This became his vulnerable spot, and he died in the Trojan War, struck by an arrow in his heel. This myth of Achilles' heel signals a message and a philosophical vantage point — that humans tend to value what is vertical (the head, which faces the sky above, or something that is away from the ground or the earth), more than the horizontal (the heel which touches the ground or the soil or something which is in proximity with the earth). This indicates the hold that hierarchical thinking has on humans. This myth sheds light on how some parts of the body are ranked over others. This implies how undeniably true that the heel of the human body is perceived as the lowest and the most ignored part of the body. In Western philosophy, this can be explained as the understanding of the superiority of the mind over the body.

In this paper, I aim to demonstrate how the *Lai Haraoba* of the *Meitei* community embodies the culture of the *Meiteis* and how it reflects the epistemic aspect, as inscribed in the dance and music performed during the festival. I have utilised mythology as a philosophical tool to illustrate the relevance of myths in expressing my points.

A Brief Elucidation of the *Meiteis*

Manipur, affectionately referred to as 'the jewel of India' by the first Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, is an alluring beauty that encompasses over 20,000 square kilometres, featuring a mix of magnificent green valleys and lofty blue mountain peaks. The *Meiteis*, also known as *Meeteis*, are, according to the eminent Manipuri author, Ch. Manihar Singh, "By appearance, physical structure and commonness in their general attitude to life, the Manipuris settling both in the hills and the plain are Mongoloids, speaking diverse sub-branches of the Tibeto-Burman language" (2003, p. 5). *Meitei* society is an idiosyncratic amalgamation of the indigenous *Meitei* religion, that is, Sanamahism, and Brahmanic Hinduism. The cultural values of the *Meiteis* are distinct from mainstream Hinduism in the country. So, there has been a heated confrontation between the two religions for a long period of time. It is a historical fact that the *Meitei* population has undergone a massive wave of Sanskritisation in the early eighteenth century. But the intriguing element to ponder here is, in the analysis of Circar (1984, p. viii), "while Meitei society may be viewed as a field of conflict and compromise between two diametrically opposing forces— the process of Sankritization and the resistance to it from the indigenous tradition—because of the strong position of Meitei women in the extra-domestic world, Sanskritisation here (unlike in many Indian societies) largely failed in curtailing the role of women vis-a-vis men". The syncretisation of both Hinduism and the original religion of the *Meiteis is* quite remarkable. The two religions coexist to date, forming a new kind of religion and culture. This is reflected very evidently in the *Meitei* culture, dance, literature, and arts. The *Meitei* community is affluent in culture, arts, and literature written in the ancient *Meitei Mayek* script. The elegant Manipuri dance, derived from the Pre-Hindu religion, is one of the schools of Indian classical dance, which is adored and admired all over the nation and internationally (Parratt and Parratt 2002).

The social design of the *Meitei* society furnishes men as the predominant fathers and husbands. Nevertheless, the contribution of women in socio-economic spheres often challenges the subordination. The structure of a society is beyond complexities, which are covered with multiple layers of operations and frameworks, all ardently enmeshed in social, economic, cultural and religious webs. In Chaki- Sircar's observation, "There is an expression of feminism in Meitei patrilineal culture which encourages women to be individually self-reliant and collectively powerful without necessarily involving a sex war" (1984, p. 184). Nevertheless, one can observe the distribution of household chores to navigate how patriarchy is internalised in the gender roles practised: cooking, cleaning, washing, and maintaining the house are all handled by the women, while men are traditionally expected to earn money and secure the financial affairs of the family.

The Relevance of Myths

When discussing myths, it is crucial to understand their subject matter, origin, and, ultimately, their function. Robert A. Segal, in *Theorising About Myth*, brings to light Jung's definition of myths: "Myths are original revelations of the preconscious psyche, involuntary statements about unconscious psychic happenings and anything but allegories of physical processes. (1999, p. 67). Myths are to be considered as symbols, and not literally. Hence, the function of myths is to satisfy the psychological requirement for contact with the unconscious: not with the external world but with the human mind. Carl Jung believed that myths and dreams were expressions of the 'collective unconscious', which is the section of the mind that contains memories and impulses that are unaware to the individual. As per Jung, this is common to the whole of mankind. It is different from the personal unconscious, which is the experience of the individual. Jung asserts that the unconscious contains archetypes, or universal primordial images and ideas, which convey central ideas that embody the human species in its totality. To put it in other words, myths are expressions of knowledge and wisdom that have been represented in all human civilizations, either by evolution or through spiritual process. As per the Jungian outlook, the common origin in the collective unconscious gives an explanation of why myths from all around the globe have striking resemblances. If we look closely at Jungian analysis of classical mythology, the main gods and goddesses are expressed as 'archetypes' (an inherited idea in the psychology of Jung that is derived from the experience of the race and is present in the unconscious of the individual), which is a prevalent aspect in every human civilisation. So, in Greek mythology, the primary Olympian gods are portrayed as expressions of archetypes of various stages of life evident in the family life: Zeus, being the patriarch, and Apollo, the young man, depicting manhood and independence.

Myths reflect reality. And it can be said that the myth of Demeter and Persephone is still relevant today, although it has many interpretations by feminist philosophers. Demeter, the goddess of grain and agriculture, is worshipped along with her daughter, Persephone, the goddess of Spring. The "Hymn to Demeter" is presumed to have been used at ceremonies in celebrating the goddess's glory, at her shrine in Eleusis, in Athens, Greece. The hymn narrates the significance of Eleusis, which is the place where Demeter searches intently for her daughter, Persephone:

> Thereafter, for nine days, did the Lady Demeter
> wander all over the earth, holding torches ablaze in her hands.
> Not once did she take a ambrosia and nectar, sweet to drink,
> in her grief, nor did she bathe her skin in water. (Nagy 2012, lines 47-50).

According to the myth, Hades, the King of the Underworld, abducted Persephone. Demeter loved her daughter unconditionally, and she was infuriated when Hades took her away. There was a colossal conflict between Hades and Demeter. Zeus intervened to stop it. He proposed that Persephone stay with her mother for half of the year in Olympus and spend the remaining months with her husband in the underworld. This myth expresses a strong and indomitable bond between mothers and daughters and can be considered a source of strength and a bond of affection. But since there are many interpretations and revisitations of the myth of Demeter and Persephone, the Hymn is interpreted as an account of rape, which represents the intrusion of men into the peaceful lives and loves of women, the triumph of patriarchy, and the limitation of religion based on the feminine principle.

In the *Meitei* myth of '*Haloi Taret*', roughly translated as 'seven divine maidens', one can raise the inevitable question of how mankind and society at large perceive insurmountable female beauty and its assumed dangers and associated evil temptations. "Haloi Taret are a part of the belief system and the creation stories of the Meitei Cosmology. The narratives surrounding the mystery and magic of Haloi Taret represent them as a symbol of exquisite beauty, danger, and insanity" (Yumkhaibam 2019). *Haloi Taret* are spectacularly gorgeous female spirits of the ether who are invisible and lurk around the earth, especially at unusual hours of the day and night. It is believed that humans who have an encounter with *Haloi Taret* cannot think rationally; rather, they enter into a mysterious realm that only the affected humans/ victims and the *Haloi Taret* can access. They make their 'victims' lose their sanity and become bereft of their reason; however, they do not eliminate their fallen victims. Although they prey on both males and females, the Halois tend to prefer men more. "It is believed that humans' encounter with *Haloi Taret* stems from the *Haloi Taret* gaze…In this trajectory, both the particular individual as an object of Haloi Taret's gaze and the resultant encounter are partly chosen and partly accidental. In this sense, can we call the humans "victims"? (2019). Interestingly, the *Halois* use magic and create illusions to make food for the affected males: the purpose for executing such an act is to secure and retain them using food as a means to capture and cast them under a deep hypnotic spell. This can be explained by understanding the myth that the mysterious encounters of Haloi Taret with humans were initiated by them to satisfy their hunger for food. To further supplement this statement, "In the creation moments of the Meitei cosmology, while trying to create human form, various spirits and creatures were created before humans were ultimately created. Haloi Taret were among those creations. Finally, a question arose – how would these creations survive? Sitapa Mapu determined that in the natural scheme of survival, the other creatures would survive on the food offerings made by the humans". The notion that female beauty has been, since time immemorial, controlled, destroyed, manipulated, and intoxicated mankind at large has always been the narrative on which society propagates. This conception and understanding have fueled man in committing various dreadful crimes, sins, and atrocities against women, and have effectively controlled women's bodies, sexuality, and agency, and moreover, have created a stringent demarcation of 'bad' and 'good' women. In an intriguing remark, Rubani Yumkhaibam observes that, "The narrative of *Haloi Taret* is an astute reversal of the male gaze. Males are not free from the lurking power and gaze of *Haloi Taret*". And curiously enough, these overarching stunning beauties, by the name of Haloi Taret, can also be perceived as women who are not only exquisitely mesmerising, but also independent, self-sufficient, powerful, and fearless beings who can challenge man's power, rationality, authority, and control. Therefore, one can systematically and philosophically employ mythology to deduce how patriarchy and its intricate structure operate.

In his *Notes on the Balinese Cockfight* (1973), Clifford Geertz observes that the Balinese cockfight "is a Balinese reading of Balinese experience, a story they tell themselves about themselves". Weaving stories, telling and retelling them, involves deciphering them, interpreting them to make sense of a complex network of relations. These relations include the physical, the social, and the spiritual, among others. Likewise, the mythologies we inherit and perpetuate serve a function in making sense of our place in the world. It functions to explain and instruct how to act through the agency in which one is placed, and also indicates possible transcendence. Henceforth, the pertinence and applicability of myths are evident. To supplement my stance further, I would also refer to *Albert* Camus's esoteric book, *The Myth of Sisyphus*. To explicate his enigmatic concept of "The Absurd", the author paints the imagery of Sisyphus rolling the big boulder up the hill over and over again, only to roll it back up again, which is a symbolism that portrays the picture of the repetitive, meaningless and challenging life that we live. Nonetheless, Camus consoles by asserting that one must always think that Sisyphus is happy, implying to create our own meaning of life. The esteemed Novel laureate, existentialist philosopher and novelist, such as Camus, utilises the tool of mythical characters and myths to drive his philosophical argument of absurdity. This reflects how significant myths are, even though they seem to be outdated and archaic. Myths have an important place in discerning reality, although it depends on how one interprets them. Recounting Levi-Strauss's statement, "And it is only by treating the myth as if it were an orchestral score, written stave after stave, that we can understand it as a totality, that we can extract the meaning out of the myth" (2023).

The Exposition of the *Lai Haraoba*

The *Meiteis*/*Meeteis* predominantly settle in the valley of the state of Manipur, also known as 'the land of gems' (Kamei 2015), North-East India. They speak *Meiteilon*, which is classified as a Tibeto-Burman language. Myths form an essential part of *Meitei* culture: "The valley has a mythological significance for the *Meeteis*, and is interpreted in terms of the human body. Mount Koubru in the north-west, the mythological place of origin of the *Meeteis*, is seen as the head, the valley itself the body, Loktak as the belly, and the various rivers as its arteries" (Parratt 2017). One essential characteristic of commonality that connects one *Meitei* to another is their participation in the *Lai Haraoba*. "The *Lai Haraoba* mirrors the entire culture of the Manipuri people. It reveals its strengths and weaknesses, the beliefs and superstitions, and perhaps also the charm and happiness of the Manipuri people. It reflects the people at their interest" (Singh, 1961, p. 30). The *Lai Haraoba* is a social and religious festival of the *Meiteis*, which is reverently celebrated annually in different parts of the valley of Manipur at the herald of the summer season. Commemorated with multifarious Indigenous songs and enchanting dance movements, this festival of "the pleasing of the gods", which is fundamentally an act of worship, is kindred with the myth of creation. It is interesting to note that the *Lai Haraoba* is beyond archaic that it is difficult to trace its specific date of origin: "Its origin is lost in dim antiquity, though we come across a faint description of it in the manuscript *Panthoibi Khongul* in which there is an account of how the members of the *Khaba* community paid homage to *Nongpok Ningthou*, the presiding deity of the *Langmai* Hills and *Panthoibi*, his consort by erecting a temple" (Singh, 1996). The crucial aspect of the *Lai Haraoba* is reflected in the eloquent ritual dances performed by the *Maiba* (male high priest) and *Maibi* (female high priestess). Their graceful hand and body movements exhibit the cycle of creation of the lives of humans: from the foetus's existence in the mother's womb to birth, to habitation, and extend to the construction of houses, cultivation, and weaving of clothes to be offered to the gods. The festival of *Lai Haraoba* is an 'art of enactment': it is celebrated and enacted in the same manner every year and in the years to come (Yumnam, 2021). In the words of Gadamer, "Enactment is the festival's mode of being, and in the enactment, time becomes the nunc stans of an elevated presence in which the past and the present become one in the act of remembrance. For surely the festival of Christmas is more than a festival of the birth of the saviour who was originally present nearly two thousand years ago" (Gadamer 1986). It would be deemed correct to state that the *Lai Haraoba* is far more than a festival of pleasing the gods. It is art in itself, as the exquisite dance of the maibi is the provenance of the classical dance of Manipuri Ras, which is one of the prestigious classical dances of India. (2021).

It is intriguing to note that, "The female supreme *lai* Leimaren has a significant place in the Haraoba and is symbolised by the *leimaren chafu* (or *ishaifu*), a ritual pot, while the male counterpart, Atingkok, is almost a deus otiosus" (Parratt and Parratt 2018). The festival of pleasing the gods is celebrated in honour of the numerous deities of the Meiteis, which includes honouring the clan (*yek*) deities, or the gods of the local village, but the most significant haraoba is honouring all the larger clan deities, for instance, the gods *Pakhangba* and *Thangjing*. The pivotal tripartite performers and preservers of the *Lai Haraoba* are the *Maibi*, the *Maiba*, and the *Pena loishang*. Without these three, the *Lai Haraoba* festival is impossible. The *Maibi* plays a key role in the festival of pleasing the gods. One cannot naturally or by training become a Maibi, but one has to be chosen. The *Maibi* of the *Meitei* of Manipur has, in some interpretations, been understood as a shaman; however, the term '*Maibi*' has no exact parallel English translation. *Maibis* are exclusively adorned in white *phanek* (a long ankle-length wraparound), a white long-sleeved blouse, and a white *inaphi* (shawl); an additional white waist wrapper is also worn on top of the *phanek*, and the long black hair is decked with pretty flowers. To quote, "This dress, however, does not show the classic characteristics of shamanistic clothing, such as the use of animal skins and decorations, and masks. Nor do they act as 'masters of the spirits', or exorcise. Thus, it seems to us better to avoid the term shamanism in connection with the maibas and maibis" (Parratt and Parratt 1997).

Dance of the *Maibi* as Philosophy performed

As time progresses, the idea of what it signifies for an artwork to represent something, or to signify something, has drastically widened in the history of philosophical aesthetics. Although the art of dance is more intimately related to music and theatre, it is nonetheless a philosophy of representation.

In applying the concept of representation to dance, Carroll and Banes (1999) identify four types of representation in which one thing can "represent" something else: 1) unconditional representation (here cultural codes enable the audience to recognize the referent); 2) lexical representation (such as the use of gestures to stand for certain ideas); 3) conditional specific representation (where some particular background knowledge is needed to understand it as a representation); and 4) conditional specific representation (where the spectator is simply informed that *x* is supposed to stand for *y* and they therefore see it that way). (Conroy and Bresnahan 2025).

Although much of the literature review and anthropological approach has been extensively made on the *Maibi* phenomenon, its philosophical aspect hasn't been explored as it deserves. One can discern the idea that the subtle rhythm and dance movements of the *Maibi* reflect philosophical and metaphysical elements, as there is philosophy in performance. Dance and art are philosophies in themselves: "The metaphor of the cosmic womb from which the cosmos germinates has representation in the hand gestures of the Maibi in the Lai-Haraoba dance. Maibis perform the moment of the release of creative energy at the beginning of the cosmos" (2021). Not only do they preserve the oral religious traditions, but the *Maibis* also invoke the *lais* (gods) and make offerings to them. They act as mediums of the gods and are conferred with oracles, which they disclose to the people. In the *Lai Haraoba*, the *Maibi* executes a worldview. In the documentary "*Yelhou Jagoi*" by the renowned director Aribam Shyam Sharma, one can grasp the worldview executed by the *Maibi*. The *Maibi* uses 364 *khutheks* (hand gestures) in her dance to re-enact and recreate the myth of the creation of the universe. She dances eloquently, recapturing the release of the creative energy: her torso begins to move gently, breaking off the serene stillness and dancing slowly, retrieving the primal cadence. The dance starts with the depiction of the creation by seven female goddesses and nine male gods.

The dance gestures and announcements of the Maibis depict the growth of the child in the womb, his limbs and organs shaping slowly, his birth and his growing up; his activities – the building of the house, cultivation of the land, weaving of cloth, fishing, and so on (Sharma 1992).

Understanding a worldview is understanding reality: A worldview is not only associated with "a people's understanding of its social environment but also to its understanding of an even more inclusive environment, reality itself' (Schilbrack, 2004). The dance of the *Lai Haraoba* is led by the *Maibi*, and the *Meitei* community follows her dance steps and imitates her graceful movements. It is paramount to note that, "Here, through the act of dancing, the participants come to know that they belong to the community. As Schilbrack puts it, the ritual body, here, in this case, the dancing body, comes to know metaphysical truths "in the flesh". These metaphysical truths inform authentic existence" (2021). To participate in the celebration of the *Lai Haraoba*, the dances, and its rituals is to reflect and imitate how the Gods "act and behave" (2021). To further supplement this remark.

Such metaphysical knowledge, inscribed on bodies through ritual, is also practical knowledge. This ritual knowledge of reality is used to shape conduct, to get people to act "properly", as "we" act, as "true humans" act, or as the Gods act. In this way, ritual metaphysics is used to alienate a range of possible behaviours as not in accord with ultimate reality, and thereby to fabricate authentic human beings, authentic in the sense that their behaviour is authorized by the very nature of things" (2004).

Conclusion

In the *Lai Haraoba*, the body is engraved as texts through the medium of dance gestures and movements. "But these texts are metaphysical texts", for they are metaphysically informed bodies dancing in tune with the metaphysical truths that the bodies attempt to represent, express, convey, and manifest those truths through the art of dancing (2024). And dance is possible through the agency of bodies, which guides us in making sense of the world and reality. Furthermore, rituals have a noetic element. In the words of Yumnam, "Every time the *Maibi* performs in the *Lai Haraoba*, they are remaking a world of the Meitei which is already there. While dancing, they are actualizing each of the Meitei's worldviews. Each moment performed is a lived experience for the Meitei" (2018). Human bodies are not mere bodies, but rather are embodied with meanings and symbolisms. We grasp knowledge and comprehend it, not solely through our minds, but also through our bodies, senses, feelings, and through expressions of dance and motion. Therefore, one can conclude that the dance gestures in the celebration of the pleasing of the Gods of the *Meitei* community undeniably possess metaphysical as well as epistemological aspects. Thus, the *Lai Haraoba* acts as a pivotal source of knowledge for the *Meitei* community.

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