

## The Debate as a Mono-Dialogue – Comments on the Question of Philosophical Discourse

*It is almost a trite to say that in philosophy, questions matter most of all. Every question begets another question. “Its questions are more essential than its answers.” (Jaspers 1964, p.12.) Plato writes about a very important principle in his famous Seventh Letter, namely, the purpose of a debate. The idea of unwritten doctrine has been meaningful for centuries: “There does not exist, nor will there ever exist, any treatise of mine dealing therewith. For it does not at all admit of verbal expression like other studies, but, as a result of continued application to the subject itself and communion therewith, it is brought to birth in the soul on a sudden, as light that is kindled by a leaping spark, and thereafter it nourishes itself.” (Plato 1966. 341,c,d.) The ceaseless work referred to here is nothing other than ceaseless discourse, or ceaseless debate. This debate has been interpreted in many ways in philosophy. This lecture analyses the forms of indirect and direct communication (based on the Sophists) and the essence of revelation (Schelling), and concludes that a new form of communication, which we might call mono-dialogue, emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Primarily found in the works of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, it was not called this way by these authors.*

**Keywords:** *dialogue, mono-dialogue, revelation, sophists, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard*

### Introduction

I will start with a quote: “No, Socrates, I will not grudge it you; but shall I, as an old man speaking to his juniors, put my demonstration in the form of a fable, or of a regular exposition?” (Plato 1967.320.c.)

In fact, the great debate begins between the two most famous philosophers of the time, Protagoras and Socrates. The subject of the debate is the nature of virtue (ἀρετή) and its teachability. Although, the subject of the debate is irrelevant to our topic, its form is in the centre of our concern. In this paper, I am going to discuss three forms of expression: dialogue, mono-dialogue and revelation. In the first, at least two people are in opposition with each other, in the second, one person engages in a dialogue with himself, and in the third, one person declares himself to everyone else.

### Dialogue

It has always been an evidence to me that Socrates’ attitude towards philosophy is to consider it rather a *modus vivendi*, i.e. not incidentally a verbal one.

1 It is almost a trite to say that in philosophy, questions matter most than  
 2 anything else. Every question begets another question. Expecting answers from  
 3 philosophy is problematic. It is rather like expecting absolute poetry from a  
 4 poet, absolute music from a composer, or absolute painting from a painter. This  
 5 apparently contradicts Wittgenstein: “If a question can be put at all, then it can  
 6 also be answered.” (Wittgenstein, 1922. 6.5.) But only apparently. “What can  
 7 be shown cannot be said.” (4.1212.) Or when Wittgenstein wrote to Ficker:  
 8 “The material will seem quite strange to you, but in fact my work has two  
 9 parts, what I've written and what I haven't written, and the second part is the  
 10 most important.” (Ficker 1969. 35.) Is the second part really the most  
 11 important? Unsayable most important than sayable? Plato seems to be writing  
 12 about exactly the same thing in his famous *Seventh Letter*. The idea of the  
 13 ἄγραφα δόγματα, or unwritten doctrine, has been expressive for centuries:  
 14 “There does not exist, nor will there ever exist, any treatise of mine dealing  
 15 therewith. For it does not at all admit of verbal expression like other studies,  
 16 but, as a result of continued application to the subject itself and communion  
 17 therewith, it is brought to birth in the soul on a sudden, as light that is kindled  
 18 by a leaping spark, and thereafter it nourishes itself.” (Plato 1966. 341,c,d.)

19 The uninterrupted work referred to here is nothing other than  
 20 uninterrupted discourse. This continuous debate is also the essence of  
 21 dialectics: to formulate questions that imply further questions. There is great  
 22 power in knowing what you don't know. It's the beginning of practical wisdom.  
 23 If we are satisfied with the starting point of knowledge, we do not move on.  
 24 Søren Kierkegaard says that it is still a beginning. (“Men Ironien  
 25 er *Begyndelsen* og dog heller ei mere end *Begyndelsen*”) (SKS 1. p.259.) To be  
 26 sure of knowing is not only a stumbling block, but an embarrassing folly.  
 27 Socrates did not intend to impart knowledge (*quid*), but to teach us how (*quod*)  
 28 to try to formulate a question. And the how is more important than the what.  
 29 One possible form of the how is illustration (see the myth of Prometheus in  
 30 Protagoras), while another one is reasoning (Socrates). Therefore, the question  
 31 is: are there any other ways?

32 Philosophy is a form of verbalism. In essence, it is an attitude. Plato again.  
 33 „Besides, I share the plight of the man who was bitten by the snake: you know  
 34 it is related of one in such a plight that he refused to describe his sensations to  
 35 any but persons who had been bitten themselves, since they alone would  
 36 understand him and stand up for him if he should give way to wild words and  
 37 actions in his agony. Now I have been bitten by a more painful creature, in the  
 38 most painful way that one can be bitten: in my heart, or my soul, or whatever  
 39 one is to call it, I am stricken and stung by his philosophic discourses, which  
 40 adhere more fiercely than any adder when once they lay hold of a young and  
 41 not ungifted soul, and force it to do or say whatever they will.” (Plato 1925,  
 42 217.e, 218.a.)

43 In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some thinkers, such as Nietzsche or Kierkegaard, try to  
 44 return to the original form of philosophy. According to G. Vattimo, Nietzsche,  
 45 for example, carried out a "stylistic revolution" with his work *Zarathustra*.  
 46 Vattimo also says that the “revolutionary” force of *Zarathustra* lies in the fact

1 that "is not an essay, nor a tractate, nor a collection of aphorisms - that is, it is  
 2 not the form Nietzsche had used before. Nor can it be called lyric in the  
 3 strictest sense." (Vattimo 1992. p.59.) So, what is it? Vattimo tries to answer  
 4 this as follows: "It is mostly a form of long prose poetry, the forerunner of  
 5 which is presumably the New Testament. Therefore, it is composed in verses  
 6 that express the didactic and cultic purpose of the text." (ibid) This is this  
 7 novelty that the George circle (George, Bertram, Hildebrandt, Gundolf) sees in  
 8 Zarathustra, which makes Nietzsche an important player in the struggle against  
 9 linguistic devaluation.

10 H.J. Schmidt observes in agreement with Vattimo's analysis that  
 11 Kierkegaard is a "master of small forms" (Schmidt 1983. p.203.), and it is also  
 12 true of Nietzsche. The small forms, of course, do not simply mean short  
 13 analyses, but the preservation of the articulation of thought in speech.  
 14 According to Karl Löwith: Nietzsche's philosophy is neither a uniformly  
 15 closed system nor a multiplicity of aphorisms falling apart, but a "system of  
 16 aphorisms". (Löwith 1986.15.) *Zarathustra* is composed of "small forms" in  
 17 the same way as the monumental *Either-Or* by Kierkegaard. In both works,  
 18 there is a need for transcending speculative (Hegelian) analysis. Both have the  
 19 considerable merit of creating a new style, and breaking away from the highly  
 20 exciting and precise, but austere language of German idealism. The importance  
 21 of speech, or the importance of the verbal, is central even in the written text.  
 22 We simply "hear" Zarathustra's parables, like the ecstatic perorations of  
 23 *Eremita* by Kierkegaard, but each of them refers back to an ancient tradition  
 24 and to the greatest masters of argument and persuasion, to whom we owe the  
 25 creation of rhetoric: the sophist philosophers within Greek philosophy. In  
 26 Sophist philosophy, as Werner Jaeger writes, the ability to speak is crucial in  
 27 everyday life (Jaeger 1934. p.369.). It was not confined to the field of politics  
 28 in the narrow sense but had a broader spectrum. The development of the Greek  
 29 λόγος becomes a kind of inner necessity, in accordance with the meaning of the  
 30 Greek word. Accordingly, Jaeger rightly observes that, before the Sophists, we  
 31 cannot speak of grammar, rhetorics or even dialectics in the strict sense of the  
 32 terms, that is why the Sophists can legitimately be considered to be the  
 33 founders of these disciplines (Jaeger 1934. p.398.). Speech then becomes what  
 34 would later become an evident requirement: the expression of the unity of  
 35 words and thoughts. Rhetoric is not cool and measured, but passionate for the  
 36 sake of debate, even as its logical structure becomes more conscious.  
 37 Especially from Socrates onwards. Speech is a δισσοὶ λόγοι (contrasting  
 38 arguments) which carries with it the dual function of speech (Zeller 1928,  
 39 p.96.) . Although little is known about its content (since both grammatical and  
 40 rhetorical writings of the Sophists are lost), their essence can be reconstructed  
 41 from other sources. What is certain is that the purpose of speech was  
 42 persuasion seeking to present the argument from the side of the  
 43 counterarguments. The prospective orators had to find their own counter-  
 44 arguments and, building on them, refute their own claims. There were two  
 45 forms of exposition: the long, extended exposition, and the short dialogue  
 46 based on counter-arguments. Both are excellent examples of the dialogue of

1 Protagoras. However, here, it is Socrates who uses it against the Sophist sage.  
 2 (They tested all areas of persuasion, the simple explanation for this being that  
 3 their activities were not theoretical but very practical. This practical aim is  
 4 matched by the development of an increasing level of speech, of which  
 5 linguistic reflection is an integral part. To take an example, Hesiod or Solon  
 6 could not yet distinguish between a poet and an impostor, both of which were  
 7 covered by the concept ψεῦδος.)

8 Sophistical argumentation thus gives a very special role to the formal  
 9 cultivation of discourse, which in debates becomes increasingly logical.  
 10 Without this, the debate either strays into the formal maze of eristic, or  
 11 becomes a monologue hidden in dialogue. One of these can be observed in the  
 12 second generation of the Sophists, who also proclaimed with great enthusiasm  
 13 that their art could transform a weaker argument into a stronger in the courts.

14 Dialogue becomes a monologue when the other participant only has a  
 15 dramaturgical function, as it can be observed in their explicitly Platonic  
 16 'dialogue', where, let us say, a Glaucon plays only a formal role. Here the  
 17 dialogue ends. To put it more correctly, the dialogue is replaced by expository  
 18 communication: dialogue, taken in its former sense, ceases, or it is at least  
 19 transformed, when something new and not less interesting begins.

## 22 **Mono-dialogue**

24 I call this new form of communication mono-dialogue. Why? The  
 25 dialogue remains formal, but the debate based on opposing arguments of at  
 26 least two partners is transformed into a kind of internal debate. Nietzsche and  
 27 Kierkegaard are absolutely close to a formal system of non-real dialogue based  
 28 on the Sophist tradition. In these non-real dialogues, however, the rhetorical  
 29 elements are displayed in a different background. No one thinks seriously that  
 30 Zarathustra's realistic interlocutors are the agora's stiffly awaiting the  
 31 appearance of the tightrope walker (Nietzsche 2006. p.7.), or that Constantine  
 32 Constantius (Kierkegaard 1983. p.149., SKS 4,p.7.) has little interest in the  
 33 nameless young with whom he is having his "dialogue". However, monologue  
 34 is not a real designation, nor is it revelation. It is rather something that is  
 35 neither a dialogue nor a monologue, but a transitional or intermediate form in  
 36 between: let us call it "mono-dialogue". Zarathustra does not argue. His  
 37 argument is a so-called apparent pseudo-argument. Nietzsche is, of course,  
 38 arguing, but with himself. By creating an incognito, he creates a debating  
 39 partner. For him, the power of the word lies in the poetic form while the power  
 40 of persuasion does not lie in utterance, but in suggestion. In accordance with  
 41 the Heraclitan form that he admires so much, he does not make a clear  
 42 statement, but relates the interpretation to the interpreter, thus relativizing the  
 43 content of the communication, in other words, extends the possibility of  
 44 interpretation. Nietzsche says that no one understand fully his work  
 45 Zarathustra.

1 Indeed, there is no interlocutor in this text. Neither does the “old saint”  
 2 (Greis, der Heilige) we know, hiding in his forest, humming and singing  
 3 praises to his god and doing nothing else. (Nietzsche 2006 p.12, KSA 4. p.13.)  
 4 Indeed, there is no interlocutor in this text. Neither does the old saint we know,  
 5 hiding in his forest, praises to his god, and humming and singing, doing  
 6 nothing else. In no sense is he a partner of Zarathustra. At the same time, there  
 7 is no need for an interlocutor, since the speech is not a simple account of a  
 8 conversation that has taken place, as one might suspect in many Socratic  
 9 dialogues, but the discursive unfolding of a train of thoughts, and one feels it is  
 10 taking place before one's eyes. I have called this aforementioned non-real  
 11 dialogue a “mono-dialogue”. This means that even if the speech is sometimes  
 12 embedded in the form of a dialogue, it is not in order to pretend that there is a  
 13 real dialogue, but in order to play freely between the diversity of points of view  
 14 within a unity of thoughts, in order to clash arguments and give free rein to  
 15 thoughts to the fullest extent. The aim is to show polysemy and multiple facets,  
 16 it is not to fabricate a pseudo-dialogue. In addition to the use of an incognito,  
 17 the use of irony is a method that runs through a mono-dialogue. Kierkegaard’s  
 18 Scholars studying his works get it wrong by focusing on the external incognito  
 19 (who the author of the book is, what his name means, etc.) rather than on the  
 20 internal incognito in the text (e.g. the young man in *The Repetition*).  
 21 Kierkegaard engages in a dialogue with himself through numerous roles. To  
 22 put it more precisely: he explores the same question from several angles. The  
 23 pseudonym, along with the multiplicity of the characters, is a particular poetic  
 24 schizophrenia. Philosophy itself is a particular form of schizophrenia. Or, as  
 25 Schelling says: a form of madness (see Schelling, 2016, 468-477).

26 So, I think that a distinction should be made between external and internal  
 27 incognitos. The first is more formal in the sense that it is not substantive, not  
 28 tied to what is being said. The second, on the other hand, is substantive, closely  
 29 tied to the idea that is being expressed. As far as I know, there is no example of  
 30 the first in the case of Nietzsche, but the second occurs frequently and has a  
 31 great importance. It is a truism that Zarathustra is Nietzsche, and like all  
 32 truisms, this is only half true at best. It is a truism that Constantius is  
 33 Kierkegaard, and this is also a half-truth. In the incognitos that appear, it is  
 34 important to highlight the diversity of the perspectives. One speaks more freely  
 35 when seeing things from several perspectives, without having to stick to one  
 36 aspect, sometimes as Friedrich Nietzsche, sometimes as Zarathustra, or Søren  
 37 Kierkegaard, Constantius, and even the young man. And so on.

38 In comparison, the madman plays a special role in *Zarathustra*, as does the  
 39 ecstatic performer in the *Either-Or*. The madman is the true figure of the  
 40 mono-dialogue, as is the old saint. The madman, like the saint, “delivers” a  
 41 concrete discourse to Zarathustra who also argues with him. His figure is real  
 42 in a sense that he can speak in his own voice. He can speak where no one can  
 43 speak from facelessness, with few exceptions. The madman is Nietzsche's real  
 44 alter ego, or his interlocutor. He says: “Spit on the great city and turn back!”  
 45 (Nietzsche 2006. p.141. KSA 4. p.224.)

1 One of Kierkegaard's alter-egos, Constantius (SKS 4.), speaks in a similar  
 2 way when talking to the other, the young confidant (*Deres navnløse Ven*) (SKS  
 3 4. p.67.). In this case, the dialogue is different in that the narrative element is  
 4 accompanied by a fictional dialogue. Constantine Constantius (the most  
 5 steadfast, like a rock, Peter), i.e. Kierkegaard, wants to persuade his young  
 6 friend, whom he calls only "the young man" ("devoted, nameless friend")  
 7 (Kierkegaard 1983. p.212.), i.e. Kierkegaard, to complete a love story  
 8 according to a preconceived plan. Meanwhile, one important question is raised  
 9 by the possibility or impossibility of "repetition", whether it is the possibility of  
 10 recollection or repetition that makes life worth living.

11 Kierkegaard writes of himself - in an unabashed reference to Diogenes:  
 12 „In the excavation of Herculaneum and Pompeii, everything was found in its  
 13 place just as the respective owners left it. If I had lived at that time, the  
 14 archaeologists, perhaps to their amazement, would have come upon a man who  
 15 walked with measured pace up and down the floor.” (Kierkegaard 1983.p.318.)  
 16 In *The Repetition*, Constantius (an alter ego) descends to Earth from an  
 17 aristocratic height, like Zarathustra from his mountain - and has a conversation  
 18 with the “young man” (another alter ego). Constantius, or Kierkegaard, always  
 19 felt himself at a certain spiritual height. We do not know to what extent  
 20 Zarathustra (or Nietzsche) was serious about coming down from the mountain.  
 21 It is very difficult to say. It is as difficult as defining the nature of the  
 22 relationship between Constantius and the young man. What do we know  
 23 factually about this duo? We know that they know each other and the young  
 24 man both admires and hates the master. “You have demonic powers” (ibid  
 25 p.333.), or you are „more silent than the grave.” (ibid), etc., says the young.  
 26 Like the relationship between the old saint and Zarathustra. The saint lives at  
 27 the top of the mountain (not at the top, but not in the depths, either), and when  
 28 Zarathustra meets him on his descent, the address reveals that this acquaintance  
 29 has a history. “Back then you carried your ashes to the mountain: would you  
 30 now carry your fire into the valley? Do you not fear the arsonist’s  
 31 punishment?” (Nietzsche 2006. p.4.) An argument breaks out, but it ends  
 32 peacefully. And Zarathustra does not want to take anything from the saint -  
 33 indeed, he gives him nothing.

34 This is the end of the mono-dialogue, and the work ends with an apparent  
 35 monologue.

36  
 37

### 38 **Relevation**

39

40 „When the Eleatics denied motion, Diogenes, as everyone knows, came  
 41 forward as an opponent.<sup>2</sup> He literally did come forward, because he did not say  
 42 a word but merely paced back and forth a few times, thereby assuming that he  
 43 had sufficiently refuted them.” (Kierkegaard 1983. p.243.) – wrote  
 44 Kierkegaard. This is a demonstration, so no further argumentation is needed.  
 45 This is revelation.

1 The concept of revelation is very emphatically introduced into  
 2 philosophical discourse by Schelling. For him, the connection between  
 3 mythology and revelation is of particular importance. In my opinion, what can  
 4 be highlighted from the point of view of the discourse is that mythology means  
 5 the one who hides a secret (which is why the role of mysteries is so important  
 6 in it), while revelation means the one who reveals a secret. Schelling himself  
 7 puts it as follows: “The concept of revelation implies an inherent hiding. ....,  
 8 (Schelling 1990. p.10.)

9 Therefore, mythology is characterised by symbolic expressions. In  
 10 contrast, revelation is allegorical rather than symbolic, where the central point  
 11 is not nature, but man, and the teacher becomes more and more prominent.

12 The period itself (the 18<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries) uses the concept of  
 13 revelation in numerous senses, such as Jacobi’s, or Herder’s or Goethe’s  
 14 interpretation of the term. The concept plays a very important role in Lessing’s  
 15 thinking, who formulates it as follows: „Was die Erziehung bei dem einzeln  
 16 Menschen ist, ist die Offenbarung bei dem ganzen Menschengeschlechte.”  
 17 (What education is to the individual, revelation is to the human race as a  
 18 whole.) (Lessing 1858. p.1.) In other words, Lessing draws a parallel between  
 19 revelation (Offenbarung) and education (Erziehung), i.e. Lessing relates  
 20 revelation as education to the whole human race. “Education is revelation that  
 21 affects the individual; and revelation is education which has affected, and still  
 22 affects, the human race.” (ibid)

23 Lessing sees revelation as a process in which humanity is becoming  
 24 increasingly perfected. Revelation is therefore an act, an action, which  
 25 everyone must go through and experience. Thus, the person of the teacher  
 26 becomes more important than the action of teaching.

27 Zarathustra also teaches, in other words, he reveals. When he returns to the  
 28 mountain, he gives again this final conclusion in a monologue: “I spoke my  
 29 word, I break under my word: thus my eternal fate wills it – as proclaimer I  
 30 perish! The hour has now come for the one who goes under to bless himself.  
 31 Thus – ends Zarathustra’s going under!” (Nietzsche 2006. p.178.)

32 We see that mono-dialogue is now replaced by revelation. Hence, there is  
 33 a biblical language. In the second half of Kierkegaard's oeuvre, the incognito  
 34 disappears, and so does the series of pseudonymous works. A martyr about to  
 35 die has no need for an inner dialogue, and for a pseudonym, either. On the  
 36 contrary: the martyr wants to fulfil his destiny under his own name. That is  
 37 why he is a martyr. Thus, Kierkegaard publishes works under his own name.  
 38 His last work, *The Moment* (SKS 13. Nr 1-10.), is an ecstatic revelation. He  
 39 sends the last pages to the printing press from his deathbed. For him, it is  
 40 finished. Nietzsche also abandons mono-dialogue and makes revelation. Like  
 41 Zarathustra, he breaks down and weeps his pain in Turin, buried in the neck of  
 42 a horse. (Appel 2011, p.224.)

43 Zarathustra, the herald, and Constantius, the adviser, cannot convince  
 44 anyone in this work. Both are apparently doomed to failure. Apparently, the  
 45 magical power of words is worth nothing. No result. But one might ask: what  
 46 exactly would the result be? What might we consider it to be? Would it be if,

1 for example, the saint forgot to keep humming, or the young man sponged out  
 2 his imaginary lover? Or would we march up the 'hill' in massed ranks? Would  
 3 that really be an achievement? And reassuring?

## 6 Conclusion

8 The point is made by Nietzsche in an unknown place in the work (as if he  
 9 were speaking to Constantius): „Behold, we know what you teach: that all  
 10 things recur eternally and we ourselves along with them, and that we have  
 11 already been here times eternal and all things along with us.” (ibid)

12 In other words, we have been here, and we are here to stay. In the deepest  
 13 sense of the word, the breaking of the verb (*Wort, logos*), the falling away, the  
 14 destruction, is true, as the one who descends can only "bless himself"  
 15 (Nietzsche). Like Constantius, he believes in reconciliation, even though he  
 16 knows well that it is as impossible in his life as it is in Zarathustra's.

17 Then what remains? Nothing, but the magic power of words, the never-  
 18 ending test of persuasion. I wrote this once, and I can't write it any better today:  
 19 this is the beginning of the final descent of Zarathustra and Constantine  
 20 Constantius - a descent that has continued to this day.

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