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## HOW TO OVERCOME THE DEATH OF PHILOSOPHY ?

In his last book, published at the end of 2009, Pierre Aubenque undertakes to review the notion of the deconstruction of metaphysics and reminds us that : “it was one of the commonplace of the philosophy of the second half of the twenty century, at least in Europe”<sup>1</sup>. This practice of deconstruction finds support in the Heideggerian discourse that sees the study of the history of philosophy as completed by the necessity of the deconstruction of metaphysics. This conception, which rests on the general thesis of history as a process, that has now arrived at its conclusion, has a number of eminent representatives in France (such as Derrida) as in Germany (W. Janke, R.Boehm) or in Italy (F.Volpi, G. Vattimo, F. Leoni). The disciples of Heidegger attach great importance to the study of the texts of the history of philosophy, but meaning is sought there for the sake of demonstrating the end of philosophy, as practiced for two millennia. The study of its history coincides with the proclamation of the death of the discipline.

This affirmation of the death of philosophy is not only expressed in the Continental tradition that Heidegger or Derrida embody. In fact, this theme is also found in the analytic sphere, where the idea of the death of philosophy is equally omnipresent. Indeed , in *This New Yet Unapproachable America*, Stanley Cavell recounts the following anecdote: "one of the most influential American teachers of philosophy... declared... that there are only three ways to make an honest living in philosophy: learn some languages and do scholarly work, learn mathematics enough to do some real logic, or do literary psychology."<sup>2</sup> Far from deploring this situation, in which philosophy is taken up by another discipline, Cavell affirms that it matters little to him, in the final analysis, whether the practice that he engages in writing his books is determined to be philosophical. In a similar vein, J. L. Austin predicted (and at the same time hoped) that philosophy would finish by disappearing to the benefit of linguistics<sup>3</sup>. In the same way, Quine in his 1969 article, "Epistemology naturalized," shows that this naturalism is indissociable from the project of the dissolution of philosophy in a natural science. Likewise, for the current "postanalytic" movement, it is obvious, as Rorty wrote, “that there is no longer any reason to defend philosophy as an autonomous discipline”<sup>4</sup>.

In a word, we seem today to have arrived at a moment in history dominated by the idea that philosophy is an obsolete discipline, like alchemy, and ought to disappear. Of course, this idea does not reflect the diversity of the most recent philosophy<sup>5</sup>. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the idea of the end of philosophy has been one of the most important themes, present since its first appearance in the thirties in both Carnap and Heidegger. If continental and analytic philosophy seem to oppose each other at every turn, they have nevertheless a common thread: the death of philosophy, in one of two forms : either the abandonment of a

<sup>1</sup> *Faut-il déconstruire la métaphysique*, PUF, Décembre 2009, p. 3

<sup>2</sup> Stanley Cavell, *This New Yet Unapproachable America* (Albuquerque, NM: Living Batch Press, 1989), p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> J. L. Austin, "Performative-Constative," in *Philosophy and Ordinary Language*, ed. Charles E. Caton (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1963), p. 42. Philosophy will become "tomorrow perhaps grammar or linguistics. I think that in this way philosophy will overflow more and more widely from its original channel."

<sup>4</sup> Richard Rorty, *Consequences of pragmatism (CP)* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), p. xxxvii.

<sup>5</sup> Indeed, certain philosophers from the analytic world, from Whitehead to Lewis, aim to bring this much decried notion of “metaphysics” back to life through studying the ultimate structure of the world. This is possible thanks to seemingly ancient concepts of essence, existence, propriety, object, world and possibility. Likewise, a philosopher such as Brandom takes inspiration as much from Kant as from Hegel and from that does not mean to disqualify philosophy and its history. Likewise still, certain continental philosophers, like Jean-Luc Marion, think of phenomenology as the revival of philosophy after the death of metaphysics, thus distinguishing in it from the philosophical practice of the old onto-theological structure of metaphysics. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the idea of the end of philosophy has been one of the most important themes of philosophical writings of the second half of the twentieth century

practice as “destruction” of a disciplinary field, or "deconstruction" in the sense of a patient appropriation of the tradition with an eye to overcoming metaphysics. It is this idea of philosophy’s coming to an end that I would like to question, examine and discuss. To do this, I will analyze the claim that philosophy has ended and I will show how this idea always contains, despite the apparent diversity of its actual articulations, the same type of logical contradiction. I shall analyze this type of contradiction, or logical pathology, and finally I will claim that the concealment of this pathology is the condition of possibility overcoming the overcoming of philosophy. My aim here is to retrace some metamorphoses of a single theme, the death of philosophy, in order to see whether a different thesis could be proposed, and if so, how.

### **I) The End of Philosophy or the Paradoxes of Speaking**

I will focus my inquiry on the most radical anti-philosophers, (those we can call, with Vincent Descombes, the "post-contemporary philosophers,"<sup>6</sup> like Rorty and Quine. Then I will show how, beneath their manifest differences, they reveal the same invariant structure. The more loudly that the death of philosophy is proclaimed, the more that this structure appears as its trademark.

#### *I.1. Rorty’s antiphilosophy*

In his introduction to Consequences of Pragmatism, Rorty is concerned with the "return" to the fathers of "American pragmatism". So if a “return” to earlier American thought is needed, for Rorty, this is because thinkers like John Dewey or William James had wanted to get it over with "all" philosophy, not to propose a different philosophy. Rorty wrote, I quote : “The pragmatist views science as one genre of literature—or put the other way around, literature and the arts as inquiries which are on the same footing as scientific inquiries”<sup>7</sup>; and Rorty puts Blake and Fichte into the same category. Putting disciplines into the same framework like this, is to be understood, for Rorty, in a fundamental way as "eradication" of the very notion of truth. The notion of truth, which gives philosophy its structure, and unites ideas as opposed as those of Plato, Husserl and Russell, must be forgotten in the post-philosophical era that Rorty calls for. This is why Rorty finds a connection between "Dewey and Derrida, James and Nietzsche," in that all call for the end of philosophy. Following the example of French deconstruction, but earlier, "Dewey thought of philosophy, as a discipline or even as a distinct human activity, as obsolete" and "found what he wanted [*going beyond philosophy*] in turning away from philosophy as a distinctive activity altogether, and towards the ordinary world." The disappearance of any notion of truth is thus the characteristic trait of this postanalytic thought. Pragmatism is at the same time a relativism that "eradicates" any notion of truth, and a historicism, that recognizes its own thought as a convention accepted by the standards of our culture. Rorty's stance is tantamount to saying that absolutely no proposition, argument, position, or idea is "true" anymore, nor is it "better" than another. In conclusion : “there is no longer any reason to defend philosophy as an autonomous discipline.”

As Hilary Putnam notes<sup>8</sup> and as Rorty himself recognizes sometimes,<sup>9</sup> this position is self-refuting. This self-refutation almost always takes the form of what K.O Apel, following

<sup>6</sup> I borrow this expression from Vincent Descombes in Lire Rorty, p. 57, to designate all those who call, in an explicit and proclamatory way, for the abandonment of philosophy or, in Rorty's terms, the accession of "anti-philosophy" or "the post-philosophy era."

<sup>7</sup> Rorty, CP, p. xxv

<sup>8</sup> Hilary Putnam, "Why reason can't be naturalized," pp. 229-247 in Realism and reason: Philosophical papers, volume 3 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 234. Putnam notes that, "the situation is complicated, because cultural relativists usually *deny* that they are cultural relativists" (p. 235). He adds, "I count Richard Rorty as a cultural relativist, because his explicit formulations are relativist ones" (p. 235). In fact, as we have already seen, Rorty's position is indeed to say that there is no truth, no superior point of view, and no arguments that are better than others—whatever we may call his position, there is no doubt about its substance. Like Putnam, we thus must answer affirmatively the question, "Is Rorty trapped in the same bind as the Relativist, then?" (Putnam, Realism with a human face, p.24).

<sup>9</sup> Rorty, "Pragmatism, Relativism, and Irrationalism," Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association 53:6 (August 1980), pp. 717-738.

others, has termed performative or pragmatic contradiction. The most obvious example of this type of proposition is the statement, "I am not speaking," which must assume the opposite of what is being said in order to be able to say it (I must speak in order to say "I am not speaking"). Put differently, the contradiction here is located between the contents and the status of a discourse : on this point, as Aristotle said against the Sophists, every direct challenge to the notion of truth lays itself open to this type of contradiction, because to deny the notion of truth is to posit at least the truth of the statement of denial. Now, Rorty's position sinks into paradoxes of this type. Let's delineate the most important:

1) Rorty never ceases to argue. He offers proofs, objects to reasons, refutes some things and criticizes others. Thus, he sees "contradictions" in one argument, "weaknesses" in another; he finds one thesis to be "hardly reasonable," while another is "untenable." One could easily multiply the examples of this kind of evaluation because all of Rorty's books are based on them. But, if no argument is really better than another, why argue? How can Rorty refute a given position, and defend his own with grounds, reasons, and arguments, if all arguments are the same, that is, if, in the end, none has value? There is here a palpable contradiction between the contents of a statement ("No argument is better than another.") and a discursive practice ("I will make arguments to demonstrate this claim to you.") ?

2) Likewise, if we took up again the classic example of the truth, Rorty's discursive attitude can be well characterized as that of one who claims to say something is true, in opposition to another such position that he views as false. His practice of writing presupposes a particular stance: *a claim to truth* which the contents of his discourse denies. This "claim to" is intrinsic to his mode of writing. Certainly, there are many human activities (writing poetry, praying, etc) that do not depend upon this sort of claim, but those are not what Rorty has chosen to do in his books. Rorty claims that the Critique of pure reason is wrong, that analytic philosophy is a network of counter-truths, etc. Briefly, as Putnam underlines, Rorty's problem is that he tells us "that *from a God's-Eye View there is no God's-Eye View*"<sup>10</sup>. This is the first significant insight that this examination of the theme of the end of philosophy has yielded. The "end of philosophy" engenders a paradoxical discursive attitude because it consists in affirming a matter while simultaneously denying it. But, before we turn to see whether this performative contradiction can be found in other versions of the end of philosophy, we must first better establish the argument that Rorty's thought as a whole falls under this contradiction

Indeed, a possible way out would lie, in Rorty's claiming, that he does not "claim" what the reader believes he has claimed. To put this clearly, it would be a matter of declaring that, "You think that I claim that this position (Kant's, Russell', etc.) is false, but in fact, I was playing another language game, for example, poetry or parody. Rorty attributes this position to Derrida<sup>11</sup>, who is also implicated in these pragmatic paradoxes, as Habermas has shown. In Rorty's eyes, texts like Of grammatology or The post card are weavings of metaphors, interlaced tales which only have status as pure fiction. Could Rorty's interpretation of Derrida be applied to Rorty's works? Would Rorty allow such a treatment of his books ? I cannot be sure how Rorty would respond, but, whatever he would say, Rorty's alternatives, like Derrida's, are simple: *Either* their initial intentions are not to produce a stylistic work (literature, poetry, a novel) but indeed to assert theses subject to deliberation and debate (philosophy, theory, an essay), and then their positions contain a logical pathology that can be spotted at every level, *or else* they are writing literature. If the latter is the case, their proposition that "philosophy has reached its end" should not be treated as an assertion.

<sup>10</sup> « Rorty et le relativisme », in Lire, op. Cit Rorty p.37

<sup>11</sup> In Contingency, irony, and solidarity (henceforth cited as CIS) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), and elsewhere. In the same vein, see the article, "Nietzsche: un philosophe pragmatique," Magazine littéraire (avril 1992), pp. 28-32. [expanded version of "On Bloom's Nietzsche," pp. 13-17 in Nietzsche and Allan Bloom's Nietzsche: a symposium, ed. Werner J. Dannhauser (Urbana, IL: North American Nietzsche Society, 1989).]

What are we to conclude at the end of this analysis of the first occurrence of the proposition asserting the end of philosophy? That the proposition is impossible to utter without performative contradiction. Rorty cannot avoid this strange logical pathology that destroys the interior of his own discourse, making independent arguments unnecessary<sup>12</sup>. Rorty's position constitutes, in its very radicality, the horizon for discourses that deny philosophy. We saw this when we briefly evoked the position of Derrida. This contradiction, between the content and the status of a philosophical claim, between the content of the proposition « truth does not exist » and the pretention to truth that is contained in this assertion, between what is said and the fact of saying it, or between the said and the saying, is not only the predicament of all sceptical or relativist positions, but seems inherent in the very position which declares the end of philosophy. Indeed, if we take a position which is seemingly opposed to scepticism, such as naturalism, we again find this same contradiction between the content and the status of discourse. Let me show it, very briefly, about Quine :

### *I. 2 Quine's naturalism as dissolution of philosophy in positive science*

Quine's article, "Epistemology naturalized," proposes the dissolution of philosophy in a natural science. This idea of "merging" or a "rubbing out of boundaries"<sup>13</sup> in favor of the natural sciences, this concern to make philosophy into "a chapter of psychology and hence of natural science,"<sup>14</sup> constitutes the condition *sine qua non* of Quine's naturalism. In order, as he hoped, to make epistemology "[fall] into place as a chapter of psychology and hence of natural science"<sup>15</sup>. So Quine proposed a program that can be broken down into different steps:

(1) Define a criterion of scientism on the basis of a constituted science, for him : psychophysiology.

(2) Show that a given discipline, or domain of study, does not implement the general criterion of scientism defined in step (1). Thus the discipline that studies the phenomena of intentionality (or, if you prefer, phenomenology) does not meet this criterion. It follows that this discipline should disappear. To put it more concretely, for Quine, phenomenological statements but also psychological statements, like certain ordinary (dispositional, modal) sentences, common statements like "I believe that...", "I desire," etc., are not extensional "and thus do not satisfy the criterion of scientism defined by extensionality."<sup>16</sup>

(3) Reduce every statement of a domain considered to be non-scientific (here, for example, phenomenology) to a statement of the chosen science.

Quine realizes this program by setting up a strict behaviorism that could be defined as the attempt to reduce "mental" phenomena (like "believing" or "learning a language" or "feeling pain") as responses conditioned by identifiable *stimuli* in our environment. In Word and object, Quine developed this behaviorist approach to meaning, founded on the theory of conditioning (stimulus meaning).<sup>17</sup> His program is thus very simple: reduce each psychic phenomenon to a behavior and each behavior to a prior action of the environment. Naturalization means that all the old philosophical problems will be relegated to psychology, which is not the study of autonomous "mental states" but the recording of behaviors,

<sup>12</sup> Which could be done, as well. For example, the framing of pragmatism as "anti-" presupposes at a minimum that the objectionable positions ("essentialism," "representationalism," and "foundationalism") are not Don Quixote's windmills.

<sup>13</sup> Quine uses both of these phrases in "Epistemology naturalized," pp. 69-90 in W. V. O. Quine, *Ontological relativity and other essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 90.

<sup>14</sup> Quine, "Epistemology naturalized," p. 82.

<sup>15</sup> Quine, "Epistemology naturalized," p. 82.

<sup>16</sup> As Fiset and Poirier write, these statements must thus "be eliminated from a well-regulated scientific practice." *PEEL*, p. 146. See Chapter V of this book on intensional and extensional statements, and on Quine's view that only the latter correspond to the criterion of scientism and thus non-extensional statements constitute a "trademark of non-scientism."

<sup>17</sup> Behaviorism was initiated by the psychologist John B. Watson, who studies animal behavior in terms of stimulus-response and wanted to show that the psychic phenomena of consciousness or the so-called interior life were reducible to external stimulus behavior and response. This theory is at the origin of materialist and determinist theories of meaning for which language is an ensemble of reactions to non-linguistic stimuli determined by external stimuli. B. F. Skinner and Quine are the principal representatives of what Fiset and Poirier also term "eliminativist behaviorism."

themselves physiological reactions to physical phenomena. Philosophy is reduced to psychology, and psychology to physiology.<sup>18</sup>

Yet again, this position contains a tension between a proposition's status and its contents, and thus this position presents what we have called the paradoxes of enunciation.

Indeed, firstly:

1) To say that only extensional statements are true is not, in itself, an extensional statement. So this shows us, either : that there are statements which escape truth as strictly defined by Quine, or that the statement itself cannot be considered true<sup>19</sup>. Karl-Otto Apel uses the same type of argument against logical positivism, showing how this philosophical movement, for which only empirical and analytic propositions are true, cannot account for this claim, quite simply because this proposition is neither empirical nor analytic.

2) By this naturalism, Quine means to reject the foundationalism which is traditionally attributed to Descartes' project of first philosophy, but which defines every classical "philosophical" endeavor. Indeed, this foundationalism presents itself as the project that aims to determine which conditions must be met by a belief (proposition, idea, judgment, statement, etc.) in order to be accepted as true knowledge. But, to specify a criterion of scientism by means of a stipulation of extensionality, and to determine on that basis that "psychological statements are not extensional and consequently will not meet the criterion of scientism,"<sup>20</sup> is definitely to determine what conditions a proposition must meet to be accepted as true knowledge (for example, a sentence will be such if it is extensional). Whether this criterion is borrowed from an empirical science rather than an *a priori* system does not at all change the move's structure—to determine what will be accepted as true knowledge and to differentiate it from what will be rejected as false (that is to say, "mythological," or "metaphysical," or even "Cartesian," "foundationalist," etc.). It follows that Quine is unable to avoid precisely what he rejects. It is as if his philosophical practice had invalidated what he had said thereby<sup>21</sup>.

This examination of Quine's thought shows that the system contains a tension between a proposition's status and its contents—which we already saw in Rorty. This is important for our analysis, because it reveals more and more clearly a common characteristic of discourses claiming the end of philosophy. Whether this end is proclaimed in the name of skepticism or in the name of its apparent contrary, scientism, this assertion is always marred by the same peculiarity—its impossibility to be said! And so we are now able to draw out the conclusions of this first discourse that explicitly calls for the end of philosophy.

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<sup>18</sup> This is why, Quine tells us,

"Epistemology, or something like it, simply falls into place as a chapter of psychology and hence of natural science. It studies a natural phenomenon, viz., a physical human subject. This human subject is accorded a certain experimentally controlled input—certain patterns of irradiation in assorted frequencies, for instance—and in the fullness of time the subject delivers as output a description of the three-dimensional external world and its history. Quine, "Epistemology naturalized," pp. 82-83.

<sup>19</sup> As Putnam notes : "The difficulty, which is faced by all version of positivism, is that positivist exclusion principles are always self-referentially inconsistent. In short, *positivism produced a conception of rationality so narrow as to exclude the very activity of producing that conception...* The problem is especially sharp for Quine"

<sup>20</sup> PEEL, p. 146, about Quine.

<sup>21</sup> One might object that Quine is skeptical in order to relativize his positivism, that he understands his naturalism in the light of skepticism. In short, if he specifies a condition for deciding between what is true knowledge and what isn't, then, to put it most charitably, *in the end* that condition can be changed and is thus not unconditioned. Let's consider this last aspect of the possible defense of Quine. Quine would say, in fact, that a given statement is true "for the moment," for him because he maintains it, but at a later stage of his life, or of the evolution of society, or even of the species' evolution, this statement will be false. On this point, he writes, in one of his last works, "a sentence is analytic if the native speaker learns to assent to it in learning one of its words." Thus, "in learning our language, we each learn to accept certain sentences straightaway as true."<sup>21</sup> Quine returns to the conventionalism peculiar to skepticism that we have examined at length in Rorty. But Quine is thereby subject to the same objections as skepticism. Indeed, what is the status of this assertion that today's truth is tomorrow's error? A convention? Should we say that *this* proposition ("today's truth, tomorrow's error") appears true to us today because we are at a certain moment in the evolution of the species? *At every stage of the proof, in applying itself to itself, the proposition is self-refuting.* We find here a structure analogous to what we discovered in Rorty's radical historicism; if everything that depends upon history can change, we have no reason to accept *this* proposition ("everything depends upon history") should be accepted as true or even as more likely than its exact opposite. In brief, either the proposition is self-refuting or it has no way to refute the claim that its contrary is preferable. We can no longer argue for the value of our point of view if we make it dependent upon the most complete contingency. Quine's system leads, in the final analysis, to these forms of contradiction.

### I.3 Results

The principal lesson of our analysis is the following : the end of philosophy can neither be self-proclaimed nor self-diagnosed in a coherent manner. Indeed, each of the positions we've considered rest upon the impossibility of asserting its contents without sinking into a performative contradiction. Yet, we must remember that performative contradictions are by definition always false—not because of their meaning (as in the analytic proposition "every bachelor is married"), but because of the status of their utterance. In addition, like in logic, the contrary of a statement that is always false is necessary. So statements whose contraries cannot be said without self-contradiction would therefore be necessary. Within the category of performative contradiction, defined as statements which cancel themselves out by the fact of being uttered, two types of contradiction can be found: (1) There are contradictions which relate to the empirical conditions of a discourse. In this case, the contents of a discourse and the empirical conditions which make that discourse possible are performatively contradictory, as in the statement "I was on the boat that was shipwrecked with no survivors." (2) There are contradictions, which relate to the conditions of the actual argumentation itself, for example when I say "The truth does not exist." This is the classic self-refutation of radical skepticism, the necessary suicide of the consistent sophist. No discourse can, without contradiction, argue for a refusal of argumentation. In a word, there is only one alternative: refuse these contradictions or condemn oneself to silence. The philosophers that we have discussed falls in this type of contradictions where the content of saying and the act of saying are contradictory. Karl-Otto Apel has suggested that this pragmatic paradox weighs on all contemporary analytic philosophy, and he has argued that it has never taken the trouble to address this contradiction. Without taking up this claim in its entirety, I have, at least, shown that, on a very particular point—namely, the theme of the end of philosophy—performative contradiction is omnipresent and radical. It follows that this proposition that philosophy has reached its end cannot be maintained in a consistent manner.<sup>22</sup> Unless one were to embrace this contradiction and claim to "desire incoherence"—this is a stance that we will discuss.

Indeed, I could, for the purposes of my demonstration, continue to show how such and such a thinker of the analytical paradigm, such as Cavell or Austin, sink into this sort of contradiction when they are attempting to proclaim the end of philosophy. Equally, I could show the continental paradigm (with Derrida, as Habermas showed), or again with Heidegger contain so this same paradox

And indeed, phenomenology, at its beginning understood by Husserl to "save" philosophy, become a synonym, at the end of the century, for "the end of philosophy"? The current phenomenological studies only whistle the tunes of "anti-philosophy," "post-philosophy," and "literature"—terms that would have astounded its inventor. Nevertheless, to cut it short, I prefer to envisage a continental philosopher who has asserted this contradiction and has very precisely linked it to the affirmation of the end of philosophy. To accept the end of philosophy is to accept the performative contradiction, to assert this paradox of enunciation. His study shows us more than any other how the two dimensions, "the paradox of enunciation and the end of philosophy" are well and truly linked, regardless of the philosophical configuration in which we find ourselves.

This contradiction between the "said" and the "saying," between a discourse's subject and its status is a contradiction that only Levinas was audacious enough to face. I would like to continue my analysis, and at the same time verify my thesis, by looking at this act of courage.

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<sup>22</sup> Unless one were to embrace this contradiction and claim to "desire incoherence"—this is a stance that we will discuss in the next chapter, and is not held by the authors I've discussed so far.

## II ) The undoing of philosophy as an acceptance of contradiction.

### II.1) "Saying," "said," and "unsaid" in *Otherwise than being*<sup>23</sup>

In *Otherwise than being*, Levinas develops his theory of signification ("the very signifyingness of signification"<sup>24</sup>) starting with the categories of the "said" and the "saying." Like he had done since *The theory of intuition*, he means to break with Husserl's "objectivism" and thus to link himself to a rejection of the semantic intentionality developed by the father of phenomenology. Indeed, for Husserl, the "said"—conceived as a topic, as what is said, thus as an object—tends to become sovereign. His project would be to eclipse the "saying" for the sole benefit of the "said." For Husserl, the correlation between the "saying" and the "said," Levinas writes, is only "the subordination of the saying to the said,"<sup>25</sup> "the said which dominates the saying which states it."<sup>26</sup> But because "apophansis does not exhaust what there is in saying,"<sup>27</sup> it is necessary to reexamine the entire Western theory of signification, which hangs on the theory of objectivity, strict corollary of "representationalism" and of the imperialism of "objectivity".

But, it will be asked, if the "said" is the object, the topic, the content, what is the "saying"? Is it the act of a speaking subject? Evidently not. Levinas' critique of the objectivism of Husserl's *Logical investigations* does not mean to effect a revival of the transcendental subjectivity of *Ideas*, nor does the reversal of semantic intentionality lead to a restoration of the act of a sovereign subject. Nor can the "saying" be interpreted, following Austin and Searle, as the illocutionary force implied in any propositional content. His critique of representationalism must not be understood as the illumination of a "speech act"<sup>28</sup>, as an assertion of the pragmatic against the hegemonic claims of the semantic. But what, then, is this "saying"? "Saying" is first of all speech addressed to an other, turned towards the other, anterior to any "said"—that is, to any intentionality towards an object. "The saying that states a said is... a pure for-another, a pure giving of signs."<sup>29</sup> We know that in Levinas, the relation to the other is originally primary, foundational, that the other constitutes me deep down in myself, before myself. This foundational intersubjectivity has nothing in common with the communicational exchange, a relation between two equal consciousnesses, that Habermas will develop. If I am, first of all and before anything else, a response to the other, this response is passivity, suffering, or even, Levinas tells us here, "exposure." Step by step, saying becomes "the supreme passivity of exposure to another."<sup>30</sup> This exposure to an Other leads quite clearly to the dismissal of the *cogito*, but also of any idea of communicative action in a symmetrical intersubjective relation. This "exposure" by which I offer myself to another makes me infinitely vulnerable. This fragility is born in the "sincerity" with which I give myself to the Other. Unconcealed, sincere, exposed—I am thus liable to be wounded, or even annihilated by this gift of myself to the other: "The one is exposed to the other as a skin is exposed to what wounds it, as a cheek is offered to the smiter."<sup>31</sup> "Led to sincerity, making signs to the other,"<sup>32</sup> a simple "'here I am',"<sup>33</sup> a "gift of myself,"—with this sincerity of saying,

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<sup>23</sup> Three concepts put forward in Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than being, or beyond essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1998).

<sup>24</sup> Levinas, *Otherwise than being*, p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> Levinas, *Otherwise than being*, p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> Levinas, *Otherwise than being*, p. 7.

<sup>27</sup> Levinas, *Otherwise than being*, p. 6.

<sup>28</sup> [Transl.: In English in the original.]

<sup>29</sup> Levinas, *Otherwise than being*, p. 62.

<sup>30</sup> Levinas, *Otherwise than being*, p. 47.

<sup>31</sup> Levinas, *Otherwise than being*, p. 49.

<sup>32</sup> Levinas, *Otherwise than being*, p. 144.

<sup>33</sup> Levinas, *Otherwise than being*, p. 145.

I take the risk of an offering without insurance, "the limit of the stripping bare,"<sup>34</sup> "tearing from oneself,"<sup>35</sup> "absolute non-coincidence," "towards the skin," "trauma."<sup>36</sup> This saying as "saying to the other," this sincere and thereby infinitely dangerous "saying to the other," is anterior to and the condition for any "said about something." "This saying has to be reached in its existence antecedent to the said, or else the said has to be reduced to it"<sup>37</sup>—this clearly moves in the opposite direction than does *Logical investigations*, for which signification depends upon the said, the topic, the object.

This saying which always already constitutes me, by which I come into relation with the Other in sincerely exposing myself to him, this "here I am" is like the trace of the infinite which traverses me and constitutes me. The "You" to whom I am the response, this "You" by which I become a "here I am" is in fact originally the call of God. At the end of this analysis of "saying," we are led to what Levinas calls the "glory of the Infinite." Saying is ultimately the way in which the infinite speaks itself in multiple ways in each of us:

That the glory of the Infinite is glorified only by the signification of the-one-for-the-other, as sincerity, that in my sincerity the Infinite passes the finite, that the Infinite comes to pass there, is what makes the plot of ethics primary, and what makes language irreducible to an act among acts. Before putting itself at the service of life as an exchange of information through a linguistic system, saying is witness; it is saying without the said, a sign given to the other... ..saying that does not say a word, that signifies, that, as responsibility, is signification itself, the-one-for-the-other. It is the subjectivity of the subject that makes itself a sign, which one would be wrong to take as a babbling utterance of a word, for it bears witness to the glory of the Infinite.<sup>38</sup>

The series of substitutions is clear that leads us from "saying" to "the response to the other," from this "response" to "sincerity" (which, Levinas notes, is not an attribute of saying but rather is the saying itself), and from "sincerity" to "the Infinite speaking itself." The other is not others as an earthly empirical subject, it is the Infinite of which others, by its face, are the trace.<sup>39</sup> The signifyingness is from the Infinite, my saying carries its trace, as Abraham's "here I am" carried in itself the call of God.

We can see that Levinas' theory of signification is quite the reversal of Logical investigations, a reversal in that saying precedes the said, the sign, the expression, the respondent's passivity, the observer's activity. Semantics is relativised not by a theory of acts (pragmatics) but by a conception of the sublime, the eruption of the Infinite, which disorganizes the relation between what is said and the fact of saying.

But here the question arises as to who says this, the question of the status of philosopher's discourse. Levinas, far from his successors' shunning of it, is willing to answer the question. Let us consider this point.

## II.2) II.2) *Accepting performative contradiction or "the defeat of Logos, the ruin of reason"*.

<sup>34</sup> Levinas, *Otherwise than being*, p. 49.

<sup>35</sup> Levinas, *Otherwise than being*, p. 74.

<sup>36</sup> Levinas, *Otherwise than being*, p. 111, et al. On this non-coincidence with oneself or the contradiction of thinking as trauma in Levinas, see Rudolf Bernet, "Le sujet traumatisé," *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* 105:2 (2000), pp. 141-161; Bernhard Waldenfels, *Grenzen der Normalisierung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1998); Hans-Dieter Gondek, "Trauma: über Emmanuel Levinas," pp. 443-470 in Eliane Escoubas and Bernhard Waldenfels, eds., *Phénoménologie française et phénoménologie allemande/Deutsche und Französische Phänomenologie* (Paris: L'Harmattan/Offenburg: Dokumente Verlag, 2000); Michel Haar, "L'obsession de l'autre: l'éthique comme traumatisme," pp. 525-538 in Catherine Chaliel and Miguel Abensour, eds., *Emmanuel Lévinas* (Paris: L'Herne, 1991); and finally and especially Guy-Félix Duportail, *Intentionnalité et trauma: Levinas et Lacan* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005), esp. chapter two. Duportail analyzes this notion of non-coincidence with oneself in *Otherwise than being* to show how its explication, its legitimation and its continuation are found, *in fine*, in Lacan's notion of "trauma."

<sup>37</sup> Levinas, *Otherwise than being*, p. 46.

<sup>38</sup> Levinas, *Otherwise than being*, pp. 150-151.

<sup>39</sup> On this point see Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and infinity: an essay on exteriority*, trans Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1969).

Even if, Levinas tells us, the objection has "overcome skepticism" since "the dawn of philosophy,"<sup>40</sup> it is necessary to face it and ask:

What about our discussion, narrating, as though they were fixed in themes, the anarchy and the non-finality of the subject in which the Infinite would pass? They are thus found to answer in the end not with responsibility, but in the form of theoretical propositions, to the question "What about...?" They do not answer the proximity of the neighbor.<sup>41</sup>

Levinas does not only thematize this performative contradiction but what is more, he assumes it, he demands it by and in what he calls the "philosopher's unsaid." The philosopher must accept this gap, not try to fill it in by arguing here for an impossible to realize coherence.

To conceive the *otherwise than being* requires, perhaps, as much audacity as skepticism shows, when it does not hesitate to affirm the impossibility of statement while venturing to *realize* this impossibility by the very statement of this impossibility.<sup>42</sup>

The philosopher must accept this "unsaid" to better signify "the proximity itself in which the Infinite comes to pass."<sup>43</sup> Philosophy, by the demonstration of its defeat, by this unsaid that it accepts, by this coherence which it rejects, gives way to another mode of expression—revelation and prophetic speech:

...the revelation is made by him that receives it, by the inspired subject whose inspiration, alterity in the same, is the subjectivity or psyche of the subject. The revelation of the beyond being is perhaps indeed but a word, but this "perhaps" belongs to an ambiguity in which the anarchy of the Infinite resists the univocity of an originary or a principle. It belongs to an ambiguity or an ambivalence and an inversion which is stated in the word God, the *apex* of vocabulary, admission of the stronger than me in me and of the "less than nothing," nothing but an abusive word, a beyond themes in a thought that does not yet think or thinks more than it thinks.<sup>44</sup>

The performative contradiction thus becomes a trace of God, an expression of the sublime. Remember that in his treatise On the sublime<sup>45</sup> Longinus already regarded the rhetorical figure expressing the sublime to be an oxymoron, the union of opposites. Performative contradiction allows one to conceive the infinite in the finite, the unsayable at the very heart of what is said. Performative contradiction would be the "appearance of the Infinite," an appearance that, in Kant's terms, is given in the impossibility of its appearance, like in the second Commandment, for Kant the most sublime passage in the Old Testament.<sup>46</sup> But—and this is the decisive point for understanding Levinas' passage from philosophy to religion—contradiction, oxymoron, is the stylistic figure most often employed in the Psalms; it is the privileged mode of expression of prophets who, in the face of God's word and the prohibition to represent it, resort to this expression that destroys expression. To say the infinite in the finite is to introduce the inexpressible in the expression and thus to destroy the expression at the very moment that it is made. Such is the structure of the words of the prophets; such is the theory "of saying" that Levinas proposes. The series of substitutions in Otherwise than being—just as in Nine Talmudic readings,<sup>47</sup> which, significantly, followed this book—leaves no doubt: Levinas articulates a performative contradiction, he accepts and reverses it, by making our impossibility into the outstripping of the trace of God in us. We are rejecting philosophy for religion, Husserl for Isaiah, significantly called upon in the pages

<sup>40</sup> Levinas, Otherwise than being, p. 7.

<sup>41</sup> Levinas, Otherwise than being, p. 155.

<sup>42</sup> Levinas, Otherwise than being, p. 7, emphasis in original.

<sup>43</sup> Levinas, Otherwise than being, p. 156.

<sup>44</sup> Levinas, Otherwise than being, p. 156.

<sup>45</sup> Longinus, On the sublime, translated by W. Hamilton Fyfe, revised by Donald Russell (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (Loeb Classical Library), 1995).

<sup>46</sup> Immanuel Kant, Critique of judgment, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 1987), p. 135.

<sup>47</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, Nine Talmudic readings, trans. Annette Aronowicz (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1994). [Transl.: This translation combines two French texts, Quatre lectures talmudiques (published in 1968) and Du sacré au saint: cinq nouvelles lectures talmudiques (1977). Since Otherwise than being was published in 1974, the claim that follows is in error.]

of Otherwise than being that assert a performative contradiction.

### II.3 : Results

This examination is of capital importance in that we see here how the non-resolution of a performative contradiction requires the abandonment of philosophy to the benefit of religion. It is not at all my aim to condemn this recourse to religion, which others have shown to constitute "the very heart of Levinas' thought,"<sup>48</sup> nor to criticize a style that tends to revive the words of the Biblical prophets against the *apophansis* of Greek philosophy.<sup>49</sup> My task was only to analyze the structure of a discourse that was meant to be critical of philosophy, and here too I was able to establish that this discourse takes the form of a performative contradiction. Levinas—who asserts, assumes, and even calls for this contradiction—proves it.

The conclusions of these analyses are completely identical with those of the first moment, namely, performative contradiction that mark every discourse relative to the end or the supersession of philosophy. Of course, phenomenology—at least in Levinas—does not *suffer* but rather *proclaims* a performative contradiction, taking the defeat of *Logos*, the ruin of reason, all the way to the end, warning of a lurch into religion. But this distinctively Levinasian feature must not mask what is important for our initial inquiry, namely, that the end of philosophy cannot be articulated without contradiction. It can certainly be wished for, so that the time of prophets and religion will come, so that the unrepresentable will happen and God will arrive, but it cannot be discursively uttered.

### III) Overcome the overcoming of philosophy?

First we must return to the type of propositions, which create performative contradictions. As Russell noticed already, this contradiction is linked to propositions which must be applied to themselves and, consequently, which are reflexive, self referential and not only referential. Against Russell, who wants to forbid these propositions, we must consider this type of propositions which must contains a "reference to self".

#### III. 1) *Applying a proposition to itself.*

To have to apply to itself without self-contradiction is a requirement first for propositions relative to the concept of truth. I have shown this, throughout my discussion, on the basis of some examples: skepticism and naturalism. Given that, it does not seem that the mention of the predicate of truth in a proposition, would be the only case of a proposition's necessary reflexivity. Thus, to cite only one further example : when a thinker asserts that "every man's thinking is the reflection or the product of his social environment or of his contingent history," he is simultaneously and in the same respect saying that the proposition, that he has uttered, is the product of *his own* specific and contingent social environment. In

<sup>48</sup> Gondek, "Trauma: über Emmanuel Levinas," p. 456.

<sup>49</sup> Derrida writes, "We live in and of difference, that is... 'the underlying rendering of a world attached to both the philosophers and the prophets'" (Derrida, *Writing and difference*, p. 153 [Transl.: quoting Levinas' *Totality and infinity*, p. 24]). That said, if I intend not at all to criticize Levinas' recourse to religion, I can express certain doubts about the practices of the numerous disciples who take up or imitate his style without leaning upon the prophets, even though this reference seems to me to give Levinas' text its meaning. To speak of literature is to mask the religious aspect (Chopin); to replace the specific religion that Levinas consults with gnosis (Depraz, Grelet) is not to see that oxymoron—the inexpressible in the expressed, the invisible in the visible, the unsayable in the sayable—is inherent in prophetic discourse, whose status and structure has been struggled with by religious commentaries throughout the centuries, and that Levinas' text takes up very specifically. Briefly, it seems to me that Levinas' recourse to the prophets is not one "module" among others, which could be replaced by another (gnosis, literature, flesh, desire, or the Other). Thus, the problematic of incarnation introduced by Christianity because it says "the infinite in the finite" could only take up as such the theme of the oxymoron, inherent in the discourse before the incarnation. In a word, one subject cannot be substituted for another as if Levinas' theme did not have coherence in its very demand for incoherence. In my sense, the prophetic, and *thus* oxymoronic, style is the very content of Levinas' religious thought, which, he himself says, is no longer philosophy.

doing so, he cannot avoid this dilemma: On the one hand, because he admits that his proposition is the expression of a contingent moment, he can no longer claim that it is universal. That proposition thus becomes the expression of a contingent individual, himself the product of a historical moment and a particular social milieu, and no longer a proposition valid, beyond this precise place and this particular time. Or, on the other hand, he acknowledges that his proposition has exceptions, in particular at least that very proposition, but, once again, he cannot claim that this proposition is universal because, at least for that individual's proposition, "it is not the case". However that may be, in both cases, *his proposition is unassertable because it fails to apply to itself*.

This analysis reveals two groups of self-referential propositions: The first arises when a proposition must apply to itself directly, that is, at the level of the very content which is said ; this is the case for propositions that aim to define truth. The second is when a proposition must encompass the authority that pronounces it. Let's try to clarify this second type, starting with a comparison of several propositions.

In the proposition "All swans are white," the authority of the utterance (for example the naturalist in the original sense of that term) claims the truth of what he says. This truth can be demonstrated or invalidated by different means, but the proposition does not have to apply to the speaker himself, who does not claim to be a swan. If we do find a claim to universality implied in this proposition, the required universality concerns exterior things or beings ; to put it in terms of personal pronouns, the universality is relative to "them" (I could replace the term "swans" with "they"). These propositions pose no problem here, for even though they make a universality claim (which the "all" indicates), they do not require a test of self-application nor do they encompass the authority of the utterance.

If we now consider first-person propositions like "I have toothache," or "For a long time I used to go to bed early" (Proust), here we indeed have a direct reference to oneself, not a statement concerning an impersonal "he" or "she." Nevertheless, in this case, the speaker does not claim that the entire world has toothache or has the same habit as the narrator of Remembrance of Things Past. A universality claim is not included in this proposition. The "I" that speaks, can thus be readily identified with a given empirical subject here and now.

But if we turn to propositions of the type : "all humans, subjects, or speaking beings are  $x$ ", we seem to have both the universality of the first case and the necessary self-referentiality of the second. Indeed, the proposition applies both to the "they" ("all humans, or all speaking subjects," contained in the predicate) and, at the same time, must include the one who utters it. The relevant personal pronoun, here, is thus not the "I", nor the "he" or "she." Not the "I," for the proposition claims that it concerns all humans;<sup>50</sup> nor the "he" or "she," because it must include the one who utters it. Clearly, neither is it governed by a singular "you", nor by a plural "you", for, once again, the "I" must be included. Thus the authority of the utterance is a "we", that has the peculiarity of combining the two dimensions: the universality claim and self-referentiality.

In summary, we have discovered two kinds of propositions that must apply to themselves: propositions concerning truth and (to put it most succinctly) propositions concerning humanity. We have also seen that, within this second group, the speaking authority is the "we", defined as "all the others and "myself." That said, if we have been led in the course of this analysis, to distinguish two groups of propositions, the latter nonetheless belong to the same genre of propositions that must apply to themselves or include themselves. What causes a performative contradiction in the second group of propositions, that I've analyzed? The fact that the authority of the utterance excludes itself, from what it says. The

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<sup>50</sup> The problem could obviously be raised about Descartes' "I," which does not refer to the empirical individual René Descartes. This "I" is thus a universal "I" but for all that is not a "we," because to say "we think" would be going too far with regard to the argument of the evil genius.

double characteristic of making a universality claim and of including oneself in this universality is thus the mark of this group of self-referential propositions.

Propositions which must be applied to themselves are propositions concerning validity and truth in general, and propositions concerning humanity (or subjectivity, or a kind of beings in the world, or speaking beings, or if we want to be even more minimalist and naturalist, a certain species of mammals, the species that the speaker belongs to). These propositions which concern truth, humanity, thought, speech, etc are most often propositions of philosophy. These propositions are necessarily governed by a pronoun, the "we," which is regulated by definite usages and a precise grammar. If propositions of Science are governed by the "he" or "she" or "it" (swans, planets, electrons, triangles) and claim to universality, if propositions of literature are most often governed by "I" as empirical singularity, philosophical propositions seems governed by the "we", which implied the application to itself. We see clearly that "forbidden self referential propositions" is equivalent to "forbidden propositions about truth and propositions which want to say "we". I can show now more precisely how it is possible to consider self reference as the law of philosophical discourse.

### III.2) *The law of reflexivity, condition of philosophical discourse.*

The type of contradiction, which I have analyzed, brings to light a certain kind of identity. This type of non-contradiction or identity is not a contradiction of formal logic (the tautology  $a = a$ ), nor a physical contradiction between two opposing forces (that we usually called "opposition"). It is not a contradiction between a proposition and the given that it should translate (the classic definition of non-formal identity as adequacy between a proposition and its external referent). This identity is the identity between an act of saying  $x$  and what is said by  $x$ . This identity reveals a specific kind of rationality or reasoning, in that it does not come under either the mathematical reasoning, favored for example by Spinoza (deduction of propositions from a unique principle), or the logicism or formal calculus dear to Leibniz (which contemporary logicians will redevelop), nor Cartesian evidence, nor the Kantian typology of judgments, nor empirical statements.

In addition, from this identity, we can define philosophical truth as requiring, at a minimum, adequacy between a statement's contents and the status of its utterance<sup>51</sup>. On this model, the displacement effected in the concept of truth is patently clear. Truth as *adequatio* is certainly maintained, but it is no longer adequacy between propositions and things, facts, or even phenomena (reference *ad extra*), but rather adequacy between the proposition's contents and its status, the only thing likely to indicate the discourse's adequacy to itself (self-reference). We thus have at our disposal a criterion for determining falsehood<sup>52</sup>. Any proposition will be false, and any system erroneous, that contravenes the necessary adequacy between saying and doing, in a word, that contravenes the demand for self-referentiality. In other words, if the contents of a philosophy (its definition of self-consciousness, of science, truth, knowledge, the good, politics, law, etc.) sets self-referentiality aside, then that philosophy is condemned to sink into fundamental contradictions. We can thus concretely see how this discovered identity provides a minimal touchstone for any future philosophical truth, for a future system will only accept those propositions whose contents do not contradict the fact of its being said.

It follows that the law of self-referentiality is what is likely to give philosophy its specificity. It is not a matter of copying philosophy's procedures from those of mathematics

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<sup>51</sup> Indeed, the opposite of a demand for identity cannot be assumed by a speaker without immediately sinking into a performative contradiction. We thus have here an extremely constraining model (taken up again by Apel), for it is a proposition whose opposite cannot be argued for nor even said without self-destructing.

<sup>52</sup> As for the logical principle of non-contradiction, which Kant called a negative principle of truth, we should understand that it does not suffice that a proposition is free of any performative contradiction in order to be acceptable. On the other hand, a proposition is certainly false if it contravenes pragmatic identity.

or any other settled science. In a word, it is not a matter of bringing philosophy's reasoning in line with the positive sciences, and even less of dissolving it within them. These different disciplines do not employ the same mode of rationality, the same mode of truth and are not governed by the same pronoun. Thanks to the foregrounding of a third kind of identity (an identity that is neither analytic identity, the law of formal logic, nor identity between a proposition and an exterior object, identity aimed for by the physicist), philosophical discourse has a principle. This principle avoids confusion with the other rational procedures at work in other sciences (geometry, biology, arithmetic, formal logic).

Self-reference, so conceived and strictly defined, thus allows philosophical knowledge to be freed from the sterile choice between promoting the same rationality as the positive sciences or embracing scepticism, whether this skepticism takes the classical form of a declaration of the impossibility of philosophy or takes the form of literature or deconstruction.

Now, we must however respond to an objection. To claim that self reference is the very principle of philosophy, from which philosophical inquiry may once more live beyond its critics, requires a response to Levinas. Indeed, if it is possible to show the illegitimacy of the sceptic's or scientist's point of view, since de facto their comments auto-destruct on their own, how can we respond to someone who calls for contradiction? Can we want to contradict ourselves? Such is the challenge set by the analysis of Levinas. This is the objection which we must again come up against, before we may conclude.

### III.3 *To want contradiction or Identity ?*

Identity as defined here, is, I would say, a condition of philosophy, posited as something to which we must subsequently conform. *Quid Juris?* Isn't there something utterly arbitrary in positing this identity as a principle that shall govern our future statements (that is, in making it a principle that determines the non-acceptability of statements that are not in conformity with it)? It is important to understand here that what is posited as a principle is a demand (the demand for non-self-refutation). It is a model, an ideal to be constructed or achieved (the statements that we will accept must all be unmarked by this kind of contradiction). I thus posit performative non-contradiction as a standard, and I make it the principal motor of the series of future propositions. But my objector could again reply that if a philosopher wanted to contradict himself, wouldn't that choice be as good as the opposite? To this objection, I can only respond affirmatively—but we must still understand in what this objection is really saying: if a philosopher wants to destroy his own propositions or to destroy what he is saying at the very moment he says it, he can ; in a word, if a philosopher wishes to commit suicide, he can. Indeed, really anyone has the concrete option of positing contradiction as desirable, and as such, will seek it in the future. Those who wish to posit contradiction as an ideal will do so, but we have seen that they cannot do so from within philosophy, nor even from within rationality, because they cannot argue for the necessity of positing a contradiction. Levinas can want the defeat of *Logos*, the ruin of reason. We can want the opposite. Both positions here seem based on the choice which is not founded ultimately.

However, we can give another argument which neither opposes the positions nor considers them as cancelling each other out, (either by affirming the choice of the philosophy on the one hand, or the demand to go outside of philosophy on the other). Indeed, if we take a moment to go back to Levinas' text, we can ascertain that what he is speaking about is the relation "I", and "You" or Thou). Here, we are dealing with a singular and absolutely non-interchangeable relationship between a concrete subject that is incarnate and specific, and a "You" as "thou" beyond it. From the start of his work, Levinas, as opposed to Husserl, was hearing about the "concrete man" and reproached Husserl for his "intellectualism". But to speak about the

relation “I” and “Thou” is not the same thing as considering “us” (all of you and me, with you all). These two voices are not necessarily incompatible nor antinomic; they are different, they are not situated on the same level and do not concern the same spheres. Why should we oppose them and why should the accession of one reduce the other to ruin? In what way should the consideration of concrete relation (I, Thou) invalidate the general relation governed by a “we”? It seems to me that there is no need for one to disappear at the expense of the other. We could well say that the individual, concrete relation, felt here and now by an individual subject (for example the subject that Kierkegaard opposes to the Hegelian subject) concerns religion and its sphere, whereas universal relation comes under philosophy. Far from an irreducible opposition, here the possibility of a relationship of neighbourhood is drawn, without the destruction of one sphere to the detriment of the other. From there, the proclamation of the death of philosophy is no longer necessary, even from Levinas’ point of view. We have different spheres: science, most often governed by the « he », literature, governed by the « I », religion which thinks in terms of the relation « I and Thou” and philosophy which is more attached to the “we”. These spheres can co-exist and exchange but nothing orders the destruction of one amongst them, nothing requires that philosophy disappears in science, literature or religion. To put it in more analytic terms : even admitting, with Wittgenstein, that philosophy is only *one* language game *among others*, the question nevertheless arises what are the rules that structure it. And yet, within this language game of philosophy, we find certain propositions that must encompass themselves under penalty of self-destruction. Our task can be to circumscribe a type of propositions and to determine the grammar that governs them, and after to think the truly link with another language game, without inclusion as destruction (philosophy must become science, literature or religion).

### Conclusion

Although it is currently supported by many, it seems that the very idea of the end of philosophy must be abandoned. The reason is simple. The idea of the end of philosophy cannot be asserted, because the very fact of asserting it destroys it. There is no need to go beyond philosophy, and philosophy does not need to merge into any other discipline. On the contrary, philosophy must rediscover the specific law that structures it and determines how it should work. Thus, it seems that today we should not try to "deconstruct" philosophy—as suggested by Heidegger or Carnap. We should rather "begin philosophy anew", as Husserl wished in his *Cartesian Meditations*. To begin philosophy anew means to assume its aim, to revive its *telos*, to perform anew its ideal in an ever-recommencing act. As Husserl wrote: “*De facto*, that may never go beyond being a mere claim ; at all events, the claim involves an ideal goal”<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> *Cartesian Meditations*, translated by D. Cairns, Kluwer Academic publishers, p. 11.