

MAROLF ABOUT THE PHILOSOPHICAL MARGRAVIATE: COMMENTS ON THE *MARGES DE LA PHILOSOPHIE* OF JACQUES DERRIDA

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Abstract: In this paper we would like to grasp – in the context of our comments on the *Marges de la philosophie* of J. Derrida – the word of philosophical discourse as the movement of the metaphysical male element (light) deep into the dark abyss of the metaphysical female element, in order to swell the mysterious material carrier of light – the sign – to release it and give it over to attack; respectively, as to try and tear the life and death mystery out of it... In a philosophical hermeneutics, we realize that every word – including the philosophical word – originates in emptiness, so it cannot have an “empty margin”; but every word is “immersed” in various types of linguistic expression, which defines meanings contextually. So, we noticed, that when the author of *Marges...* writes about “the logic of the margin” – which, to us, does not seem “something so different” to the linguistic description of context as the tangle of “various forces”, deprived of “any center” – yet this subject of margin, being deprived of central forces, is at the center of Derrida’s considerations! This is similar to the situation in which we write about synchronous or articulate synchronous, but it is not the synchronous itself. Similarly, writings about the margin are not the margin...

Keywords: phenomenology, margin and center, philosophical hermeneutics, unknowable meanings, Derrida

“In this sense, if we can explain the architectonics of the human body totally, its ontological skeleton, and how it sees and hears itself, we will see that the structure of its mute world is thereby given the possibilities of language (emphasis – AP). Still our existence is seeing, which means ... as beings, we turn the world back on itself ..., and those who see each other and can be seen through the eyes of others and are seen by others through our own eyes, but it is particularly our existence as sonic beings for others and for ourselves, which contains everything needed, in order to give rise to speech about the world between one another. And, in this sense, to understand a sentence is not so different to receiving it into our sonic being, or, as is accurately said, to hear it [l’entendre]; sense is not lying on it as butter does

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on a roll (emph. – AP), as a second layer 'a psychic reality' expanded on a sound: a totality of that which was told, an integral of differential given by a chain of words. *On the contrary, to our eyes, the whole landscape is filled by words, as if it has been invaded, however, it is a particular type of speech, and to speak in its 'style' is for us to use metaphor* (emph. – AP). ... And one should understand that between these perspectives there is not a dialectic inversion, *we cannot agree on them by any synthesis* (emph. - AP): there are two aspects of a reversibility, which is the final truth.”

Maurice Merleau-Ponty¹

INTRODUCTION

In general, phenomenology reveals that carrying out the activity of transcendental reduction by the thinker needs some preparation, and relies upon the suspension of that which is ceasing, in order to grasp the sense of the world from a distance. On the other hand, however, in the opinion of the author of *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*², the one who is carrying out this reflection is responsible for what is said (written) about what shows itself from itself...

The version of phenomenology practiced by Merleau-Ponty bears fruit in terms of the proposition of corporeal ontology, within whose framework it is considered to be “the magic movement of the metaphor”, which had an influence in shaping the philosopher’s language. The French philosopher writes about this language: “[it] is not ordered by the philosopher, words are not arranged, but they are matched to each other by the philosopher according to a principle, as if there is a natural interlacing of their sense through the magic movement of the metaphor.”³ So, the language of philosophy could, on the one hand, as it were, arise from the language of things themselves, on the other hand, as it enters into the language.⁴

A PERVERSE STORY

The bad-tempered brat of philosophy bravely climbs up to the attic of the world. He wants to prick the balloon of philosophical presumption

¹ Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1964). *Le Visible et l'invisible, suivi de Notes de travail*. Paris: Éditions Gallimard. Polish translation by M. Kowalska: *Widzialne i niewidzialne*, Warsaw, 1996, pp.157-158.

² Edmund Husserl (1936). *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*. Polish translation by S. Walczewska: *Kryzys nauk europejskich i fenomenologia transcendentna*, Toruń, 1999, p.15.

³ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *op.cit.*, p.131.

⁴ See Aleksandra Pawliszyn (2009). *Ontologiczne studium metafory*, Gdańsk, p.89.

by a hand wound round a pen. By an unnatural movement before the world he sits as a talking head, bending the law to his own purposes to create a hierarchy and to evaluate something, which seems to him unconnected with world philosophy. Well-educated, our extremely sharp *pup* sees that the hot head of Hegel too rashly omitted the transcendental aspects of Kant's philosophy and did not concentrate enough on the question of the thinking entity, opening up the field to play a trick on the movement of dialectical progress. From among a *swarm* of side-drums, from musty nooks and crannies, this clever kid extracts a rattling, dilapidated printing press, which becomes a drum with which to bully Hegel, and likewise – grasped by Hegel as a historical process – philosophy...

It seems, however, that Husserl is the one who provokes him the most – Husserl, like Kant, observed from the limits of the human world, radicalizing that aspect of reflection to the point where transcendence becomes an ontic transgression⁵. So, “a bluff simpleton” pilfers phenomenology of its transcendental methods, and, pretending that he does not use them, starts to talk in a depraved style to himself: metaphysical nonsenses about a hypostasis which calls itself a philosophical discourse about a vigilant surface, about a limit, which prophesies something, about a notion becoming the owner of a notion, about a surprising indirectness, etc.

WRITING ABOUT WRITING

And who is the one who writes about writing, making himself the hero of his own story? He reminds me of a Marolf⁶-sneerer, who, by his mimicry, confirms his naïve presumption about his sovereignty, which *de facto* seems to be a form of constraint by pressure to sneer at the sage.

Let us think over the question: if Kant in *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* considers the border character of the noumenon, generating a new dictionary of transcendental notions for European discourse – notions

⁵See Aleksandra Pawliszyn (2011). “Transcendentality as an Ontic Transgression”, in A.-T. Tymieniecka, *Transcendentalism Overturned. From Absolute Power of Consciousness until the Forces of Cosmic Architectonics*, Analecta Husserliana, Volume CVIII, Dordrecht/Heidelberg/London/New York: Springer, pp.103-111.

⁶According to Władysław Kopaliński (1988). *Słownik wyrazów obcych i zwrotów obcojęzycznych*, Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna, p.320: “Marolf is a hero of an apocryphal novel about King Solomon, which from the 5th century to the 12th had a serious character; later, it was a humoristic work about a smart, coarse trickster, playing jokes on the sage of throne”.

without references to things – is it the same as him becoming the possessor of this border? Does writing about borders mean to possess them? And, is writing about absolute otherness, by the nature of writing itself, exhaustive of otherness? What, in such cases, with “*the factual subject*”⁷ of Derrida’s questioning of text – perhaps it is “factual” only in the written word? And how – as we read further – are these works as “a flood-gate opened to double understanding”⁸ (why only double?) not to become in the future a “mechanical” reading of Derrida?

Unbearable, rather, is that which is speaking and that which is writing... And here is the challenge to every speaking and writing human being, to cut into and catch through the human learning endowment the profile of the eternal changing of the universe, the architectonics of one’s own world. So, let us repeat, perhaps it is not necessary to keep so convulsively to Hegel, who, to some measure, ignored the transcendental dimension of Kant’s considerations, in order to touch, as a child, that which is untouchable – but not at all that which is unknowable...

THE BORDER AND THE MILITARY MARGRAVIATE

It seems then, Kant’s considerations on the borders of human learning do not establish any margraviate⁹, but rather realize the human being’s lack of power over that which escapes the possibilities of human learning. So, the border is not “a margraviate” in the meaning of a military area defending the border, as it was for the medieval Franks and German state. One could refer to Derrida’s idea, rather describing it, and instructively here for us, through the metaphor of a tympanic membrane indeterminate in detail, which plays the role of a blood supply model of learning, swallowing the countless diversity of the universe. A diversity which always tempts and frightens the human being dancing over the abyss...

Therefore, the border grasped in the above sense is not *a hard piece of entity* but, as it were, a waving *tissue of corporeality* whose status

⁷Jacques Derrida (1972). *Marges de la philosophie*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit. Polish translation by J. Margański: *Marginesy filozofii*, Warsaw, 2002, p.22.

⁸*Ibidem*, pp.22-23.

⁹As can also be read in *Słownik wyrazów obcych i zwrotów obcojęzycznych*, p.320: “margraviate in the Frankish state and in medieval Germany was the organizing of a military line, margraphy.”

can be described as a scrap of landscape, where the sun's caresses are stirring waves on the sea's smoothness – as if the dynamic of existence is tearing away at a tense body of water. What stability is revealed here? It is not the stability of something made of concrete, but rather a smile running away from time – running after the inscrutable sense of matter...

On the other hand, one should draw attention to the fact that, if we are treating the margin, the border, as a “margraviate”, we also set in motion a military-war type style of thinking and with that participation in military-war phallogentrism. One can also find this type of thinking in Derrida, when he writes: “How to seize the *tympanum* and how to tear it from the philosopher's hands, in order to leave there a sign unknowable to him, in which he does not find himself. A trace which he can only realize *after the fact*, in which he does not speak his mind nor turn around his own *axis*: here I can probably talk about absolute knowledge.”¹⁰ Is it then that the *tympanum* is going to be torn from the philosopher, so that he cannot turn “around his own *axis*”, nor catch his breath in his own world, so that he will stay open to the approaching of something unexpected? In this way thunder works, lightening, and the power of the divine *logos* – and as it is said, the “nasty philosopher” of Ephesus. And so, does Derrida here want to be the divine impulse which would initiate what he derided earlier: namely, absolute knowledge?

THE IMPULSE OF PHILOSOPHIZING

In general, it is my conviction that European philosophy is the result of the desire to measure swords with that which is uncontrollable – with the inexhaustible variety of the world; desire, generated by a fascination with and terror of the pressure of the ever changing universe – the human being, balancing on the edge of life and death.

One could say that philosophy has arisen from the human terror of the abyss of nonexistence and the absurdity of existence, which has created such an attitude to the world's events, and which initiates and secures the freedom of the human being – a creature both frail and fragile, shimmering as a colored butterfly on the stem of existence, which in a while will be gone... One could also say that philosophy is the dimension of the human being's existence where the human being journeys with death – and where fear, despair, pain and suffering flow

¹⁰Jacques Derrida, *op.cit.*, pp. 23-24.

in plenty within him (one might also say that the sphere of the world flows into this suffering – referring to Husserl's description that “the sphere of the world flows in subjectivity), waking in the human being a kind of dignity of the loser, which is, in the essence, the dignity of the human being who lives...

One could say even, that the dignity of the loser sometimes makes him wander like a victor – forming here an illusion, and generating too much concentration on the human being as an operative entity. Meditation on this situation reveals that this has happened, perhaps, because the human being is not a god and his essence is the experience of error, in order that he will not have to directly choose the proper route through his own existence. Where is there a place for “anti-philosophy” here? How could someone also “foresee the first letter”¹¹, which does not exist, because nobody has produced it – because we are always still in the middle of the word¹²?

PHILOSOPHIZING IS NOT A “MECHANICAL” READING

It also seems that one cannot write about a philosopher's works in the philosophical tradition, for example Hegel's, as “a writer's press”, containing statements “already imprinted”, because someone who “reads mechanically”¹³ is not a philosopher?

Is it rather, that “only secondary thinkers, those who one cannot call philosophers, confine themselves to their own definitions, putting to death the problematic *telos* of philosophizing by words”¹⁴, so, exactly those people who “read mechanically”, and are, therefore, not philosophers... Is as if the “fresh multi-directional readings of Hegel's *Aufhebung* is Derrida's “invention”¹⁵ of Hegel?

¹¹*Ibidem*, p.7.

¹²See in this case the statement of Paul Ricoeur, in his article “Le Symbole donne à penser” (1959): “Contrary to philosophies still searching for a starting point, consideration of the symbol starts from speech as a whole, from existing sense, from the middle of speech which has been spoken and in which everything has been told and in a particular way; it wants to be, simply, thinking into everything and with everything, that which is assumed; the first sentence is not the finding of the beginning for itself, but the regaining of memory into the middle of the word.” Polish translation by S. Cichowicz: “Symbol daje do myślenia”, in *Egzystencja i hermeneutyka. Rozprawy o metodzie*, Warsaw, 1985, p.58.

¹³Jacques Derrida, *op.cit.*, p.8.

¹⁴Edmund Husserl (1935). *Die Krisis des eurpäischen Menschentums und die Philosophie*. Polish translation by J. Sidorek: *Kryzys europejskiego człowieczeństwa a filozofia*, Warsaw, 1993, p.106.

¹⁵Jacques Derrida, *op.cit.*, pp.73-99.

Thus, the word of philosophy – the word of philosophical discourse – is the movement of the metaphysical male element (light) deep into the dark abyss of the metaphysical female element, in order to swell the mysterious material carrier of light – the sign – to release it and give it over to attack; so as to try and tear the life and death mystery out of it...

THE TRUTH OF ANYTHING CANNOT BE REDUCED TO THE GAPS OF A PRINTING PRESS

What is our existential human sensitiveness to the experience of living in a burning world¹⁶? Perhaps it is a kind of sensation, as if, through the moist, velvety skin of a grape, one can touch a dead body, and that the slightly bitter crack of seeds induces one's existence until the moment it teams up with the unexpectedness of events, and instructs us that nothing living can be mechanical, and the truth of existence cannot be reduced to the clattering of a printing press... And just what is it about a grape's skin – a fine membrane separating that which is inside from that which is outside – that differs from the fine membrane of the ear? Something is finishing and it instills – in order to reinforce that which is unlimited – sounds without limit...

THE LOGIC OF THE MARGIN AND THE CENTER

We remind that presences in the work of art, the surplus of sense slipping from the conscious intention of the author, intrigued many thinkers, especially those from the circle of philosophical hermeneutics. They also comment on the sense to be taken from the sphere of that which is articulated, and what it means, so that for them philosophical activity is more than discourse¹⁷. So, Derrida's texts, written with the intention of investigating philosophy "beyond the sphere of what philosophy wants to say"¹⁸ (do not forget that we attribute the will to speak to the concrete human being, e. g. to Derrida), do not, in general and in terms of the declared intention of their author, differ from the hermeneutical declaration given above.

Let us also remind the hermeneutics' emphasis that every word – including the philosophical word – originates in emptiness, so it cannot have an "empty margin"; but every word is "immersed" in various

¹⁶I am referring here to the aphorism of Heraclitus, B30.

¹⁷See Aleksandra Pawliszyn (1993). *Skryte podstawy rozumienia. Hermeneutyka a psychoanaliza*, Gdańsk.

¹⁸Jacques Derrida, *op.cit.*, p.22.

types of linguistic expression, which defines meanings contextually. The author of *Marges* writes about “the logic of the margin” – which, to me, does not seem “something so different” to the linguistic description of context as the tangle of “various forces”, deprived of “any center”¹⁹ – yet this subject of margin, being deprived of central forces, is at the center of Derrida’s considerations! This is similar to the situation in which we write about synchronous or articulate synchronous, but it is not the synchronous itself. Similarly, writings about the margin are not the margin...

THE CAPTURED WORD BEFORE THAT WHICH IS UNEXPECTED

Let us reflect on this: if we are now brushing against the limits of our possible sensitiveness to the world, entwined in its essence with the mysterious activity of language, does it, when it is caught by a material carrier, sometimes become a fossilization? It seems too, that Derrida thinks in this way, something which is suggested by descriptions of the workings of a printing press, placed in *Marges*²⁰.

So, how does the human being manage with this fossilization of the word? It seems that it is possible through an attempt to breach the wall of consolidated meaning by the pulsating changeability of existence, which, as if from itself, forces us to be vigilant before the blackened paper – the written word, a pigeon-hole, a word mummifying a necrotized sense; a vigilance which through the power of human existence becomes the source of an audible voice, which blows at the existential shell and makes the echo of still unknowable meanings sparkle...

In summary: Are we indicating “something” when we name it “an authentic difference”? Not as a “thing”, but rather as an impulse on the border (about which Kant has already written)? Therefore, it is not the point to place under the word “a difference” a “corpse wrapped in glory”, but to be open to “a hitherto inaudible noise”²¹, that which is unexpected by the dictionary of transcendental terms.

RECORDING A MARGIN

And this is an entanglement of tubes of oxygen – not twisting ear-vaginal tissues, but the entanglement of the real inflow of air into an

¹⁹*Ibidem.*

²⁰*Ibidem*, pp.24-26.

²¹*Ibidem*, p.27.

escaping life – here is the border. Around us the air of silence carries an indefatigable defiling of existence – the indefatigable singing of the abyss driven by the mechanisms of electrodes into a machine pumping oxygen.

Through the sweating skin there is an overflowing of a hosanna of non-realizations...

And this is entanglement of tubes twisting on the surface which hides thousands of dangers – millions of deaths stuck on the still living epithelium of an ear. In the hour, the minute, the second of death – in the moment of death, does anybody hear? If for someone philosophy is only a discourse, then they certainly do not, cannot hear...

But what if the language of philosophy does emerge from things themselves? What if it is a special language – one which blazes, looking at the breathless elevation of a face? A face, moreover, which goes on, straining for air, and by its suffering, as it were, forces life without intermission, also without fear in the eyes, which paralyzes every piece of the realization of our existence...

And now a complete arousal from illusions about a sensible life occurs. Telegraph poles collapsing to the earth, falling onto each other – it were. I do not know why my being is trembling, when the universe gathers together what is sobbing in my heart, which is not obdurate. And how to be in that which is, to be with that which is, without that which exists any longer? Is it better to measure with the depths, which ravishingly escape into an abyss of nonexistence?

In spite of everything, however, one should try to be with that which is, without that which is not, cannot be, even if only for a day; cut off from that which is not contained in the “after” – in what “is” exactly the margin – something which cannot be experienced by anyone who has never enjoyed delight in life.

The margin cannot be known by anyone whose life has never howled at the brutal separation from another human being, whose being was the universe; who has not heard, barely audible from the voice of an entity, grasped by the trembling timbre of existence, that which is a restrained collapse, calling to soften that which is ostentatiously loud; who has never been alone, knowing, that he has never spun the thread of his own life with the skylarks, to sit around, lilies of the valley in the background...

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