

# After the death of God, the death of the unconscious?

## *Announcements and misunderstandings in the civilization of care and empathy*

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Who, during their life, has never come across the words with which Nietzsche proclaimed the “death of God”? Even those who have not, those *who* refused such appointment or who by chance missed it cannot however not be called to account by the weight it bears on our time: as these words are an “event”, imposing themselves on us with their communicative power and pervading the very *Zeitgeist* of our time. So much so that any refusal to listen to them, any choice to close the mind to their sound, is in any case impotent and ineffective, unable to reduce them to silence. Words that speak, therefore, whether you can or want to hear them or not.

Nietzsche’s is a difficult proclamation to tolerate, it requires time to be understood and metabolised and, like anything that cannot rest on a common semantic and existential hinterland, it risks being difficult to understand: as understanding is possible only if the mind does not perceive itself as radically extraneous to the contents of the phenomenon it is called on to observe, so extraneous that it cannot in any way listen, even with disinterest. As Heidegger states, to understand we must be able to pre-understand<sup>1</sup>: beyond pre-understanding, all discourse is difficult to translate, and words are charged with dissonance and opaqueness that place such discourse on the horizon of the most radical divergence, if not madness.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. M. Heidegger, *Essere e Tempo* (1927), Milan, Longanesi, 1976.

And it is to the figure of a madman that, at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Nietzsche turns to in order draw the attention of humanity to the advent of an event that would soon afflict it: the death of God.

Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market-place, and cried incessantly: "I am looking for God! I am looking for God!" As many of those who did not believe in God were standing together there, he excited considerable laughter. "Have you lost him then?" said one. "Did he lose his way like a child?" said another. "Or is he hiding? Is he afraid of us? Has he gone on a voyage? Or emigrated?" Thus they shouted and laughed. The madman sprang into their midst and pierced them with his glances: "Where has God gone? – he cried – I shall tell you! We have killed him: you and I! We are all his murderers! But how have we done this? How were we able to drink up the sea? [...] Do we not feel the breath of empty space? Has it not become colder? Is it not more and more night coming on all the time? Must not lanterns be lit in the morning? Do we not hear anything yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? [...] That which was the holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet possessed has bled to death under our knives. Who will wipe this blood off us? With what water could we purify ourselves? [...] Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we not ourselves become gods simply to be worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whosoever shall be born after us – for the sake of this deed he shall be part of a higher history than all history hitherto!" Here the madman fell silent and again regarded his listeners; and they too were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern to the ground, and it broke and went out. "I have come too early" he said then; "My time has not come yet: The tremendous event is still on its way, still travelling – it has not yet reached the ears of men [...] and yet they have done it themselves!"<sup>2</sup>

In these powerful and sorrowful lines, Nietzsche gives the philosopher the lantern which belonged to Diogenes: no longer to seek in man some clue or trace of that *humanitas* that was yet to take shape, but rather to seek in man the presence and testimonial of the lost god. In both cases, that which gives value to the object of research, is its fundamental invis-

<sup>2</sup> Cf. F. Nietzsche, *La gaia scienza* (1900), Milan, Mondadori, 1976.

ibility and incomprehension, despite the fact that it refers to an event that is in full progress. Invisible to men, in Diogenes' case, was the specific of a human condition that is still being planned and realised, and which aims to remove humans from their surrounding natural environment, giving them a different ontological and existential statute. Invisible to men, in Nietzsche's case, was the lack of that foundation which was the assumption and "guarantee" of this ontological specificity: God, indeed.

In one case, like the other, the message does not reach its recipients, by whom it is substantially misunderstood: men do not understand the meaning of an event, of which they are in any case responsible for having created. Paradoxically, misunderstood as much by those who believe as by those who... have never believed! But as the topic is not the god as such, whose eternal quintessence can be affirmed or denied, but his being and unfolding throughout the history of humanity before events and values which keep humanity bound to baptisms, proclamations of births, prophecies of decline and even death.

Nietzsche proclaims the death of God with an Evangelical spirit, with words and tones, as we have seen, that maintain the flavour of the parable: he lends a voice to that component of Christianity that removes God from isolation and launches him into the world and into history, forcing him into incarnation, and to die at the hand of humanity. His proclamation was anticipated by almost two millennia by the figure of Christ. And yet, from the reactions of the listeners, it still appears new and obscure, difficult to understand, so much so that the accompanying predication is, now as then, exchanged for that of a madman. The moving, sorrowful words he proclaims ring strange to the ears of the listeners, meeting with the indifference of those who oppose them only with simple irony, followed by surprise and bewilderment. The disbelief shown on their faces seems to exclude the possibility that God may die, as in their minds God can only be or not be, and the fact that He is or isn't is a hypothesis that men are not able to affect.

There would be nothing strange in proclaiming God dead after Christ came down to Earth and after the drama of his crucifixion. The proclamation could indeed seem celebratory and, to some extent, foreseeable, as it is already entwined in the very history of our cultural and religious traditions. Why therefore when faced with such a high and long-lasting tradition does it appear so incomprehensible? Why, the madman asks, has

the time not yet come? Perhaps because Christianity misunderstood the message of Christ. More of Nietzsche's words:

The whole life of the Christian is [...] exactly that life from which Christ preached deliverance [...] The Church is just as much a symptom of the triumph of the Antichrist, as the modern State and modern Nationalism [...] The Church is the barbarisation of Christianity [...] Christ [...] stands opposed to every sort of word, formula, law, dogma, whatever is established killeth [...] He speaks only of inner things [...]<sup>3</sup>.

How, in the thoughts of Nietzsche, can we not hear the echo of the words spoken some decades earlier by Kierkegaard, in the pages of *L'Ora, atto di accusa al cristianesimo nel regno di Danimarca*, in which he proclaimed the historical failure of Christianity, after having been the greatest, indeed most immense, spiritual revolution of all times? While the opinion expressed by the German philosopher on the figure of Christ is more ambivalent and contradictory than that formulated by his Danish colleague, however also in this case it is a question of giving voice to the grandeur of the Christian message that historically has not been protected and indeed is the object of systematically recidivist betrayal.

From Jesus' predication, it is clear to Nietzsche that the kingdom of heaven is a "condition of the heart –, not something that comes 'upon the earth' or 'after death' [...] The 'hour of death' [...] the 'hour', time, physical life and its crises, simply do not exist for the teacher of the 'glad tidings'<sup>4</sup>. For the follower of Christ, the centrality of the sentiment of love is such that leads him "not to defend yourself, not to lay blame [...] But not to resist evil either – to love it"<sup>5</sup>. A very strong message, therefore, that sent via Jesus, to fuel faith in life and the sentiments of hope and positive expectations that derive therefrom. Preoccupied with knocking down the boundaries and fences in which we live our lives, separated one from the other. A message that seems to embody that value of empathy which, still today, constitutes one of the most advanced features of our

<sup>3</sup> Cf. F. Nietzsche, *La volontà di potenza* (1888), in *Le grandi opere*, Roma, Newton Compton, 2011, p. 2078.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. F. Nietzsche, *L'Anticristo* (1888), in *Ibidem*, p. 1848.

<sup>5</sup> *Ivi*, p. 35.

model of civilisation<sup>6</sup>. On the contrary, Nietzsche continues, the Church was devoted to

breaking the strong, killing great hopes, casting suspicion on joy in beauty, turning the instincts of the strong, domineering and turned-out well types into uncertainty, agony of consciousness, and self-destruction, inverting all love of the earthly and of domination over the earth into hatred of the earth and the earthly<sup>7</sup>.

In the light of these statements, it is not rash to suggest that the message of Christ was an object of repression: cancel out and forget his existential potential, confined within marginal and hazardous niches of experience that are incubators of dissent. By domesticating the figure of Jesus, Christianity has contributed to making humanity a “sublime abortion”, reducing its developmental spectrum to “minimal terms” and turning a species essentially capable of love and, thanks to love, to the domination of itself and the earth into a mediocre and indifferent herd. For this reason, man must go under:

Man is something that shall be overcome. What have you done to overcome him? All beings so far have created something beyond themselves; and do you want to be the ebb of this great flood and even go back to the beasts rather than overcome man? Man is a rope, tied between beast and overman—a rope over an abyss. A dangerous across, a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous shuddering and stopping. What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not an end: what can be loved in man is that he is an overture and a going under.<sup>8</sup>

In going under, man can discover the repressed parts of Christianity, making them surface from the most authentic parts of his own personality, experimenting the “danger”, opening up to greatness, but in doing so the greatness of Christ, as we will see, could be insufficient and be merely a

<sup>6</sup> Cf. M. Fabbri, *Controtempo*, Parma-Spaggiari, Junior, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. F. Nietzsche, *Al di là del bene e del male* (1886), in *Le grandi opere*, cit., p. 1529.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. F. Nietzsche, *Così parlò Zarathustra* (1885), in *Ibidem*, pp. 1288-1290.

bridge, towards new dimensions of greatness, which for Nietzsche question the Dionysian revelation.

*From the death of God to the death of the self: the will to power and the Dionysian revelation*

In being a “bridge and not a purpose, a going under and a crossing over”, the first price humanity has to pay is the loss of subjectivity. For Nietzsche, that which we are used to identifying with the self is illusory and without foundation: nothing is wholly ascribable to the Cartesian dimension of *cogito*, nothing that can subscribe the domain of action to within the tight confines of identity that education, society and culture tend to create. “There is no other reality, he says, than that of our instincts [...] ramifications of a single fundamental form of will - the will of power [...]”<sup>9</sup>.

Why the will to power? Because if there is no subject, there is no notion of object, understood as the unintentional component of experience, on which the subject would have the privilege of choosing and acting and exercising his own power. Against all subdivision already established between object and subject – between who, like the Ego, acts in the name of God and who, like nature, the physical and mechanical reality, would limit themselves to being the mere recipient of that action - lies the complex and delicate game of power as a horizon and a system, always open to opportunity.

Nietzsche owes this passage also to Kierkegaard, who, as is known, had placed the communication of power at the centre of his philosophical reflection, because power holds the unfolding of the possible, rather than merely the necessary. And, if potency rather than power? In the Nietzschean manner, you need force for the possible to take shape, possible is not virtual, the passage to the deed is far from taken for granted and has to do with the instinctive and creative energies that are themselves powerful, but of which it is not easy to capture their profound demand for meaning.

“Truth – says Nietzsche – is not something that exists, that can be found or discovered – but is something which has to be made; it is a name

<sup>9</sup> Cf F. Nietzsche, *Al di là del bene e del male* (1886), Milan, Mondadori, p. 36.

for a process, or better still, for an unceasing will to vanquish the world [...]” Thus, in creating, we are not limited to describing and representing, but call on deeper strengths that are, of course, within the personality of the creator (and not only), but which cannot be intercepted without crossing the tight confines of the Self, the subject. In this perspective it is not possible to save subjectivity without saving divinity, and vice versa: not the divinity suffered by an incarnated God, forced to experiment the abandonment and perhaps the death of the God-Father, but that of a generator God, the primary cause of the earth and life, who leaves no doubt over his being the depository of an existing, eternal substance.

This passage also poses the other great question, that of the relationship existing, for Nietzsche, between the figure of Christ and that of Dionysus. If Jesus is the God of love, Dionysus is the God of creation, due to his ability to intercept the most powerful expressive energies and steal them from the well-studied harmony of the Apollonian: that dynamic of creation that played such a large part in the Attican tragedy of the 5<sup>th</sup> century and which was sent to its fate in the theatre of Euripides and the birth of Socratic thought. Nietzsche concludes, in the Dionysian era Jesus will reveal himself to the meek, Dionysus to the powerful.<sup>10</sup>

This Nietzschean thought lies on the register of a twofold revelation, one for the meek and the other for the powerful, and it is fair to wonder whether, in his intentions, the event of the death of God is to be considered temporary, or current until the second revelation, that of Dionysus, allows the celebration of the birth of a new God, able to tell his story through a twofold scripture. What is the fundamental difference between these two revelations and their respective scriptures?

In the form, the parable seems to be able to work for both, even though the Dionysian revelation has to be able to renounce all edifying intentions, and here the parable becomes fragment and aphorism: no longer the depository of an accomplished sense, but able to induce the reader to write and tell about himself in the first person, with yet more fragments and aphorisms. That communication of power which, for Kierkegaard, was carried to extreme consequences in Christian ethical and religious com-

<sup>10</sup> Cf. F. Nietzsche, *Così parlò Zarathustra*, cit.; Id., *La volontà di potenza*, cit.

munication, for Nietzsche is not only a prerogative of Christianity but indeed demands a move towards the Dionysian, allowing Christians to go beyond the experience of Christ himself.

In the contents, it also means revealing that side of Christ in shadow, his being exposed to passions and temptations which, in the sacred scriptures, while not totally missing, appear only marginally and are shown mostly in a negative light. Creativity is not possible without exposure to the most ferocious of conflicts: between the willingness to give and the will to domination and appropriation; between the instinct to be raised up and that of loss and brutishness; between the taking on of responsibility and the perverse pleasure of manipulation. Each of these dimensions comes into play in personality, and their conflict is not resolved by placing them one against the other in Manichean terms, but rather by learning to embrace them and govern them, understanding the implicit question of sense.

There can be no possible transmutation of values if we do not open ourselves to the perverse, multi-form and contradictory face of life, beyond all moralism: not to refrain from exercising morality, but to allow morality to embrace to the great events of existence, without any aprioristic preconceptions. More than ever, we understand how, in Nietzsche, the event of the death of God must be interpreted as a necessary condition for God to be reborn within us: these are the words of the Madman, we ourselves must become gods to be worthy of his murder! Thus the proclamation that God is dead is the *conditio sine qua non* for God to return. Removing God's invulnerability, ceasing to think of him and taking him for granted, eternal and untouchable, is the price to be paid for the experience of faith which, as already reflected on by Kierkegaard, is based on the exercise of ethical responsibility and is not, as it has been over the centuries, an improper renunciation often unfoundedly delegated to the will of others.

### *Christianity in the horizon of the death of God*

Renouncing God so that Christ may be reborn. Let God fall into the darkness of unconsciousness so that the figure of Jesus may re-emerge: alive, vibrant and vital, filled with light. This is the sense of a proclamation that coincides with an experience of even religious reawakening and which, paradoxically, offers an important and far from negligible contri-



bution to contemporary theological – and indeed secular – thought, as could easily be imagined. It is more simple in latter case to adopt the lesson of Nietzsche, which has often meant the assumption of an essentially liberating and deconditioning message; more complex, in the first case, is the theological thought, which feels attacked at the very roots of its *raison d'être*. For theologians, opening the page at Nietzsche has meant – in many cases the arduous task of – overcoming resistances, due to the difficulty in keeping alive not only their religious education but also their existential basis. Due to the greater friction and the impact this implies, in the context of this work it has been deemed more useful to privilege the reference to some passages of theological thought of that period.

One of the most radical positions in the ensuing debate is that offered by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. The Protestant theologian wrote:

As the incarnation of Christ, the Christian must not be a monk, a stranger, cut off from the world; he must live in the world, penetrate the world, accept all earthly reality.<sup>11</sup>

The sense of this statement is that of leading Christianity to militant positions which force it to accept precise historical responsibilities on a daily basis, without fearing compromise with the secular dimensions of power and experience. Bonhoeffer's Christianity is social, indeed almost atheist, considering humanity to be mature enough to choose and act in the first person, without putting off anything to beyond that horizon which is the kingdom of heaven. What distinguishes the Christian from the atheist, in the true sense of the word, and laymen generally, is his ability to use the figure of Christ to define a historically transmissible model of suffering: to accept, as Christ did, the experimentation of that excruciating event, the crucifixion, rather than merely suffering it, every time he accepts a responsibility that places him in radical contrast with his own time, without running from the ensuing scandal. "Only those who raise their voices in defence of the Jews also have the right to sing the Gregorian chant"<sup>12</sup>, for

<sup>11</sup> Cf. D. Bonhoeffer, *Etica* (1949), Milan, Bompiani, 1969, p. 212.

<sup>12</sup> Cit. in E. Bethge, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer, amicizia e resistenza*, preface by Konrad Kaiser, Turing, Claudiana, 1995, p. 65.

example, Bonhoeffer wrote in 1935, following many other positions defending minorities, which had led him to sympathise with the blacks in America and speak out against the cult of the Arian race, which led him to be involved in the failed assassination of Hitler in 1944, an act that cost him his life, executed by hanging.

On the trail of Bonhoeffer's thought and testimonial, another Protestant theologian, Thomas Altizer, hypothesised the need to not be limited to accepting the death of God, but to learn to desire it and embrace it unreservedly: to do so however, theology first and foremost must accept to extinguish itself, to dissolve. How? Not simply by disappearing, but by cultivating its immersion in that "dark night", in which Christians walk after the death of God. Now that "[...] that "night" is all – Altizer says – no longer can theology find a haven in prayer or meditation."<sup>13</sup>

In this direction, it may be useful to push for a change in tack on the thought of the death of God, in the direction of theologies of hope and the possible, understood in their most radically utopic meaning, as Bertin did in one of his works from 1973. Bertin comments:

While Death of God theology spread above all in Anglo-Saxon countries (in response to the objections of logical neo-positivism), the theology of hope spread above all in German-speaking countries, with particular attention to Marxist claims [...]. Its main thesis is [...] that it is not necessary to renounce a concept of God: it is enough to renew it in that of a God understood as the future of man, based on a biblical faith in the advent of Christ who will complete the history of the end of time.<sup>14</sup>

These perspectives swing from explicitly atheist ideas, like those of Ernest Bloch, to Messianic beliefs, hoping for the appearance of a God whose transcendence is not beyond history but rather within a process of evolution and transformation of humanity that will allow the divine to be revealed with spiritually different tones from the past. It is a God of the possible who drives humans towards radically transmuted dimensions of

<sup>13</sup> Cf. T. J.J. Altizer, W. Hamilton, *La teologia radicale e la morte di Dio* (1966), Milan, Feltrinelli, 1969, p. 28.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. G. M. Bertin, *La morte di Dio. Ipotesi teologica ed utopia nietzscheana*, Rome, Armando, 1973, p. 55.

cohabitation and who refutes all hypotheses of heavenly transcendence. In the words of Bloch:

Atheism is the presupposition of any concrete utopia, but concrete utopia is also the remorseless consequence of atheism. Atheism with concrete utopia is at one and the same time the annihilation of religion and the realisation of its heretical hope, now set on human feet.<sup>15</sup>

God is neither within us nor above us, continues Moltmann on the trail of Bloch's thought. It is a principle that is out of reach, that pushes forward the thresholds of experience and what can become possible, as Christianity acts as an element of contradiction of reality that does not want to "throw light on the existing reality, but that which will come". It is a God that is not resolved in historically determined forms, but which acts as a stimulus for transcendence, understood as a sign of self-giving and love. Not a simple nor painless choice, clearly, which pushes the personality to open up to community tensions and tolerate the resulting suffering, rather than indulge in the "glory of self-realization" or the "misery of self-estrangement": alike arise from hopelessness in a world of lost horizons<sup>16</sup>.

"God is yet to come", adds Brazilian catholic theologian, R. Alves, and, for him to be able to act in history, he must know how to knock down horizons and spread broader and stronger hopes than those offered by any other form of humanism, as well as technological development itself. Only the strength of transcendence is able to support non-triumphalist emancipation able to respect the most intimate and delicate dimensions of personality. The figure of the "cross" is central to this case:

[...] the resurrection is radically opposite to any kind of triumphalism, as the force of the resurrection is the dynamic of the cross. Man is therefore forced to participate in the suffering of God in the world. Wherever man is oppressed and destroyed, God is crucified and killed. But in the context of hope, suffering loses its power to drive man to desperation, and

<sup>15</sup> Cf. E. Bloch, *Ateismo nel cristianesimo* (1976), Milan, Feltrinelli, 1971, pp. 298-299.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. J. Moltmann, *Teologia della speranza* (1974), Brescia, Queriniana, 1970.

becomes the fertilising No that destroys the force of slavery in favour of a new dynamism of liberation<sup>17</sup>.

Both the catholic and protestant areas of these studies share the belief that a new God is possible on condition that humanity does not shy away from its ability to accept and process suffering. To become co-creator of divinity, man must take on board the teaching of Christ and immerse himself in the great pain of life, without any form of rapture and gratification: in other words, without expecting to absolutize these dimensions to the detriment of the others, and without, even in the experience of pain, missing a potential opportunity and a bridge towards those joyous parts of experience that no suffering, if metabolised, is able to kill. Welcoming communal love and following practices of self-giving and exchange, so as not to succumb in a world in which suffering is difficult and tortuous, when not shameful.

One of their limits, from the point of view of Nietzschean thought, is however that of establishing an exclusive relationship with Christian revelation, without attempting to some extent to force it onto other possible planes of scripture and revelation, as Nietzsche does referring to the figure of Dionysus. Only Hamilton makes an attempt in this direction, describing a new horizon for theology and the religious experience of our time, which passes through the overcoming of the Oedipal phase and its identification with the myth of Orestes:

Oedipal theology asks: "Who is my Father? Is rebellion against the Father permissible, or must I submit? What can I love in the loveless world? Where is the true locus of authority? Is there any Father for me to love?" And it is a theology based on a sense of sin: "I am a sinner, I love my mother and I desire to kill my Father." [...] Orestes symbolises the individual as he moves into his central crisis of growth, as he solves the problems of his adolescence or coming of age. Orestes on the other hand is the individual having moved beyond this crisis. Oedipus shows us the individual's psychological bondage, Orestes shows us his freedom and struggle for harmony [...] Now grown, Orestes comes back to the Oedipal situation. He

<sup>17</sup> Cf. R. A. Alves, *Teologia della speranza umana*, Brescia, Queriniana, 1969, p. 198.

could have remained in exile, but he did not. He chose to return. Unlike Oedipus, he does not perform his acts out of fate, but out of destiny.<sup>18</sup>

Detaching the religious experience from the control of fate, to motivate believers to tackle their own ethical and existential responsibilities, whatever these may be: this is the meaning of a reflection that seems to want to underline how, in the time of the death of God, the subject cannot become adult and responsible without emancipating himself from atavist conditioning and persistently concealed, unspoken and wholly unaware influences.

The author has some doubt over the choice of the myth of Orestes as a horizon for overcoming the Oedipal problem, as Orestes, as we know, returns home to revenge the death of his father, Agamemnon, who had sacrificed the life of his daughter Iphigenia for reasons of state; and because he did not stop at killing Aegisthus, his father's murderer, but also his mother, Clythemnestra, who had also suffered the loss of her daughter. Perhaps those who, like Orestes, act by revenge, cannot be said to be completely free from fate, and it is difficult to place their actions in a truly powerful and intentional horizon like the one desired by the death of God.

In this sense, Orestes' suffering is not less bound than Oedipus's: certainly more intentional, less subject to the incomprehensible plans of a cynical and cheating destiny, yet in any case subject to the weight of the past and its conditioning, and as such unable to create new directions for the future and spread hope. The horizon of the death of God must be able to rewrite the possible threads of the personal formation of everyone, replacing the horizon of the evangelical parable with that of tragedy. Giving substance to the teachings of the Gospel, without indulging in the sentiment of hypocrisy which, for over two thousand years, has filtered edifyingly into its reading, and going beyond the frame of edifying narrations means tolerating the impact with the awkward and scandalous truths of Christianity: those which demand that we embrace the reasons of the last and the marginal and expose ourselves to a higher risk of existential divergence and contamination.

However, Hamilton's invitation to impress a post-Oedipal face on civilisation is interesting, as it makes us reflect on the impossibility of giving

<sup>18</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 54-55.

a complete meaning to the event of the death of God in a world that is incapable of revising its own archetypes and suspending the action of its own most hidden influences. In psychoanalytical terms, there can be no death of God in a world dominated by the compulsion to repeat, whether the problem is Oedipal or Orestean. In a world designed in this way, both the autonomous sacrifice of Christ and the proclamation that God is dead are destined to remain substantially misunderstood, like the words of the Madman to the ears of the unbelievers, as therein the centre of gravity of experience lies in the hands of obscure and imponderable factors.

A complex and worrying path described thus far, which, as we have seen, for Nietzsche implies the division of the philosophical reflection into two parts around a dual writing of the revelation (one Christian, one Dionysian), while, for the theologians, it is resolved almost completely in following the teachings of Christ, becoming an opportunity for commitment and militancy. To what extent can the utopic dimensions of Nietzschean thought be said to be realizable within the indications of theological thought?

The centrality of Christ, as a figure of processing suffering, is undoubtedly a point of convergence: for Nietzsche, the value of nobility demands the willingness to grow and be formed in the “school of pain”, that school which demands us to remain in essentially complex situations, despite the discomfort that this entails, challenging ourselves and attempting to cope with contradictions and assume our own responsibilities. As Bertin specifically underlined<sup>19</sup>, it is in this direction that the value of freedom becomes ethically defensible, as it places the individual in a position to break the chains that bind him to dysfunctional forms of dependence on the environment, but at the same time demands that he stand up to the consequences of the choices that he has freely made, as well as the duties deriving from the exercise of his responsibilities.

That which perhaps differs is the absence, in the theology of the death of God, of a thought of the lightness<sup>20</sup> allowing the Dionysian to activate

<sup>19</sup> Cf. G. M. Bertin, *Nietzsche. L'inattuale, idea pedagogica*, Florence, La Nuova Italia, 1977.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*.

that principle of transmutation of values which is not limited to carrying out the Christian message in the world and in history, but also helps to reinvent and rewrite it. This certainly not negligible difference leads Nietzsche to develop a different concept of the Dionysian gift, compared to the Christian one: a gift by irradiation, inducing the personality to express its most precious parts and offer them unreservedly to those who understand their wealth and who in turn can put them to use for their own improvement. In the broadest sense, an artistic and expressive gift, able to illuminate the surrounding realities and increase the talents of others, driving others to develop their own autonomous problem-solving skills rather than remain dependent on the donor.

*After the death of God, the death of the unconscious?*

In both cases, the death of God is not exempt from subjectivity, working on levels of experience that affect profound personal dimensions and much broader social realities than those made possible by the subject. And it is here that the (not only Freudian) concept of the unconscious comes into play, of which Nietzsche is considered a forefather of Freud, so far so that the latter refused to read the writings of the German philosopher to avoid being conditioned by him. What is the link between these two levels of reflection?

It was necessary for God and the subject to die so that the unconscious could come into play: the Dionysian and the will to power have no other possibility for finding a voice in a world dominated by God and the Self of Western tradition. Creativity affects the practices of rupture that are not limited to overturning traditional values but which must be able to free personal experience from the constraints that have characterised this over the millennia: as we have seen, it must be both noble, free and light and be formed in the school of pain.

Now, if these dimensions of personality represent the point of arrival of a process of transformation of civilisation that is still in its very early stages (and was even more so at the time of Nietzsche), how can we not wonder if also the contents and phenomena that the psychoanalytical unconscious bears witness to are not part of the same process? Is it really by chance that, while Nietzsche theorised on the death of God and the subject, Freud con-

sidered the *Id* the depositary of the life drives and the *Ego* the depositary of the death drives? That he developed a concept of existence, in which God was considered a mere projection of the *Super-Ego*? Again, does the full revelation of Christian truths, and perhaps even more so of Dionysian virtues, not also need to pass through the revelation of the unconscious contents of the personality, including those emerging from the symptomatology of the hysterical patients being treated by the founder of psychoanalysis?

All radical processes of transformation of civilisation challenge intimate, personal and everyday dimensions of experience that are only apparently detached from their respective historical and social coordinates. The conflicts Dora suffers, towards the father figure, for example, are already inscribed in an evolutionary thrust that demands that the methods of cohabitation in the family context be rethought, bringing less hypocrisy and greater willingness towards transparent communication.

As is well known, Dora went to Freud suffering from symptoms of motor kinaesthetic paralysis, probably psychosomatic, as no physical causes could be found. The short period she was in analysis – according to Freud, too short – highlighted a sense of guilt, discomfort and aggressiveness towards her father, caused by the ambiguity her father had created with a couple the family were friends with, Herr and Frau K., for whom Dora had worked as a baby sitter: her father was in fact having an affair with Frau K., and her husband, becoming progressively aware of this, attempted to seduce Dora when she was still underage. It is not easy for the very young Dora, living in Victorian Vienna, to understand what is happening, even less so to report the matter: and yet she tries, meeting with hypocritical reactions of denial from both her parents and their friends. Only through analysis was she able to reach an aware reading of the situation she had experienced, and the symptoms she showed before therapy disappeared<sup>21</sup>.

A process of evolution of civilisation must occur to offer a platform for reaction formation, like the unconscious, which, previously, was considered socially intolerable, leading step by step to witch hunts, internment in mental institutions or even merely isolation from society and one's own social environment.<sup>22</sup> In Freud, the appearance of the unconscious under-

<sup>21</sup> Cf. S. Freud, *Casi clinici: Dora* (1901), Milan, Boringhieri, 1976.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. M. Foucault, *Storia della follia nell'età classica* (1962), Milan, Rizzoli, 1963.



lines the need to focus on a wide range of emotional and relational experiences which were considered wholly negligible by traditional education, or in any case harbingers of non-alarming psychic effects.

And while in Freud the value of criticism of education is relative without reaching radical levels, as he considers that a certain degree of dysfunctionality in the educational experience of psychic well-being is an integral part of the very development of civilisation<sup>23</sup>, psychoanalysts who were initially close to him, such as Ferenczi, or who came after, like Miller, denounce the failures of education in the process of personality formation in an increasingly decisive and aware manner: the unconscious of subjects analysed by them appears as the theatre of violent episodes considered to be socially acceptable and compatible with the customs of the time, therefore, suffered by those directly involved and the cause of processes of repression, every time they were such as to induce an excess of suffering and undefeatable senses of guilt. In the past, that unconscious bore witness to a deep desire for rebellion and the belief of not being able to experience it explicitly and legitimately: the belief that their malaise would not have been able to find any release, and would certainly not become a discourse of criticism of civilisation.

Faced with these considerations, we must not be surprised that Nietzsche's criticism of the family and school education of his time was radical and ruthless: yet another sign of convergence between philosophy and psychoanalysis on the need to free instinctual energies and the profound dimensions of the personality, without which the process of formation is inevitably unfinished and produces "little men"<sup>24</sup>. Perhaps the little men scorned by Nietzsche, the religious, the erudite, the philosopher, the artist – without considering that their highest manifestations – are not those which the aristocratic and bourgeois society of the Victorian era considered reputable and admitted to within their circles, as bound to comply with codes which, at least in public, demanded a clear renunciation of the satisfaction of a drive? That code did not admit any derogations, unless consumed in secret, a very part of a process of the splitting of the

<sup>23</sup> Cf. S. Freud, *Il disagio della civiltà* (1929), Milan, Boringhieri, 1971.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. F. Nietzsche, *Sull'avvenire delle nostre scuole* (1872), Rome, Newton Compton, 1998.

personality and the social experience that hid, behind the official, socially presentable Ego, many other submerged experiences: in the darkness of transgression, when the personality chose, more or less lucidly, to experiment them as illicit; in the darkness of the unconscious, when, while suffering its pressure and appeal, ended up by denying its existence.

The Dionysian unconscious cannot be separated from the Freudian unconscious, just as the liberation of the latter is a condition for gaining the expressive horizons from which the Dionysian, in Nietzsche's appeal, calls on humanity.

Hatred, delight in mischief, rapacity and ambition, and whatever else is called evil belong to the marvellous economy of the conservation of the species [...] <sup>25</sup>

Consciousness is the latest development of the organic, and hence its most unfinished and unrobust feature. Consciousness gives rise to countless mistakes that lead an animal or human being to perish sooner than necessary, "beyond destiny", as Homer puts it. If the preserving alliance of the instincts were not so much more powerful, if it did not serve on the whole as a regulator, humanity would have to perish with open eyes of its misjudging and its fantasising, of its lack of thoroughness and its incredulity: in short, of its consciousness; or rather, without the instincts, humanity would long have ceased to exist! <sup>26</sup>

The words of Nietzsche leave no doubt on the fact that what is most precious to live and the survival of the individual, as well as the species, does not belong to consciousness. On the fact that there are other personal and social dimensions we must reach into to avoid sterilising the gifts of civilisation. And yet, Massimo Recalcati says, we are in the presence of an anthropological mutation that leans towards the extinction of the unconscious and seems to confirm the reasons of a consciousness, reduced to a machine:

My thesis, he writes, is that a profound anthropological mutation is underway, promoted by the domain of the discourse of the capitalist; my

<sup>25</sup> Cf. F. Nietzsche, *La gaia scienza*, op. cit., p. 36.

<sup>26</sup> *Ivi*, p. 47.

thesis is that in hypermodern civilisation, dominated by the discourse of the capitalist, the experience of the subject of the unconscious as an experience of *truth, difference* and the *indestructible nature of desire* risks extinction because [...] it is inadmissible to the order of that discourse. My thesis is that hypermodern civilisation and its contemporary symptoms (anorexia and bulimia, obesity, drug addiction, pathological addictions, depression, panic attacks) give rise to a tendential suffocation of the subject of the Freudian unconscious.<sup>27</sup>

It is well known that Recalcati develops this thesis on the trail of Lacanian thought, in which the expression of desire, in our time, is compromised by the demise of the centrality of the link of symbolic castration: from this, a transmutation of the experience of pleasure, which, in line with the consumer societies that capitalist economies have become, today is based on merely compulsive and dissipative stimuli, which prevent desire itself from acting as the motor of new paths of production and processing of meaning and an existential design.

Therefore, if the appearance of the unconscious had already decreed the death of the Ego and a notion of subjectivity identified exclusively with consciousness, now, according to Recalcati, what is dying is that subject of the unconscious which was previously responsible for that death. A death which is caused not by a broader statute of subjectivity, such that extends the phenomenal spheres of the subject and his field of experience, but rather its drastic reduction and impoverishment. Quoting a passage from Marcuse on “repressive desublimation”, he states that

The facilitation of access to pleasure, freely – without the necessary sublimatory passage – linked to drive discharge, a compulsive sexuality without veils and, thus, without Eros, disassociated from love, the general effect of the desublimation of drive induced by the new civilisation, is not at all disalienating and liberating, but rather highly repressive, as it switches off the motion of desire, cancelling our all critical dissymmetry towards reality to which, on the other hand, the subject tends to adapt increasingly passively.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Cf. M. Recalcati, *L'uomo senza inconscio*, Milan, Cortina, 2010, p. 6.

<sup>28</sup> *Ivi*, p. 9.

What marks the new civilisation is the deactivation of the traditional and classic contradiction between the principle of pleasure and the principle of reality, which made subjectivity a constitutionally, structurally divided condition. It is more difficult for a divided subject to tolerate the absorption of subjectivity by a programme of collective pleasure, like that characterizing our time, because it is precisely in division that we experiment the rejections, conflicts, tensions and ambivalences that make that programme irresistible in some aspects, yet unapproachable in others. If there is no longer a splitting of the subject, both desire and otherness also disappear. More of Recalcati's words:

Hegel said it before: man's desire is the desire of the Other. We are not satisfied by things, objects, but only through another desire, only feeling recognised by the desire of the Other. Desire is inhabited by an absence [...] <sup>29</sup>

The man without an unconscious thus appears as a subject that is both monolithic and subdued, tendentially without any conflict or contradiction, the expression of an impersonal civilisation of technique, seeking to plan and quantify, reducing existence to a number. A man immersed in the reality of his own social commitments, which guarantee a stable, continuous standard of living, substantially free of trauma, because, Recalcati says, it is "*the meeting of the real that wakens us from the sleep of reality*".

From this point of view, nightmares are the most everyday experience of what it means to meet the real. Freud also stated that nightmares wake us from sleep because they come too close to our unconscious desire. Such excessive proximity can only generate a conflict between our social mask and the inadaptability of our desire. <sup>30</sup>

In this sense, desire can only be unconscious, as all other forms of conscious, foreseeable, known desire correspond to a form of domesticated desire, which attempts to preclude the meeting with otherness: with the stranger and the alien that live within me. A sort of "inner foreign territory", as Freud would say.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. M. Recalcati, *Elogio dell'inconscio*, Milan, Bruno Mondadori, 2007, p. 46.

<sup>30</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 44-45.

To better understand the meaning of this passage and all Recalcati's reflections, it may be useful to understand the link between the component of desire and ethical responsibility: precisely because unconscious desire is a subverter of the *Ego* and consciousness and carries demands that confuse consolidated values and identities, there is a need to reach a broader definition of responsibility, which also embraces these impure and compromising determinations and is not limited to distancing them from the self, as if they did not personally concern oneself. "The traitor is not outside of me, different from me, other than me, but an aspect of me."<sup>31</sup>

There is an element of rationality in the Freudian concept of unconscious, which, according to Recalcati, makes it incomparable to that of other authors of our philosophical and literary tradition, from Plato to Nietzsche, and indeed, to *Sturm und Drang* to Dostoevsky:

The step taken by Freud has no precedents, because the unconscious is not considered so much as the inaccessible obscurity of the psyche, as a subsurface of reason, but as a reason with its own ethical rigour and its own grammar. More specifically, while the authors prior to Freud placed the accent on the intimate and wild, irrational and bodily nature of the unconscious, with Freud what becomes relevant is the rigorous rationality that animates it [...] a new conflictuality comes to light: that between a reason bound to the *Ego* and its need for control and adaptation to the existent, and a reason which on the other hand supports the needs of a subject – the subject of desire – which is not resigned to a life bent to the service of the socially established discourse. The division is thus not between a passionate and a rational soul, but it is a division that crosses reason itself.<sup>32</sup>

*Death or transformation of the unconscious? Evolutionary horizons in the civilisation of Care and Empathy*

Now, Recalcati's reflection is interesting because it allows us to draw attention to a specific phase of the process of transformation of civilisation, which appears to pass through the experience of the death of the uncon-

<sup>31</sup> *Ivi*, p. 33.

<sup>32</sup> *Ivi*, pp. 2-3.

scious, after that of God and the *Ego*, proclaimed by Nietzsche and by contemporary theological thought. A limit however of this reflection is that of attributing a merely regressive and involitional function to the disappearance of the Freudian unconscious: but is this really the case? To answer this question, we have to ask what it means to theorise on the death of the unconscious in the context of the two previous deaths: is there a relationship of consequentiality between the first two and the third, a relation of cause and effect, such that also makes the extinction of the unconscious in some way preordained, or are we really in the presence of a counter-event – as Recalcati seems to think – that risks making humanity recede to phases preceding development?

We have said that the birth of the unconscious was facilitated by the crisis of thought of the subject and which in turn contributed to fuelling it. Well, if the crisis of the unconscious can be configured as the umpteenth phase of the process of dissolution of the Ego and consciousness, in this case, it must be considered that it has a positive function, which allows it to carry that process of transmutation of the values already proclaimed by Nietzsche to extreme consequences. If, on the contrary, it represents the moment of interruption and weakening, it should move in the direction of a recovery of more solid and monolithic identity codes, similar to those of the past. Faced with this possible alternative, how can we not wonder if the unconscious is not a universal principle, valid for all historical eras, or a finite, historically situated principle, functional to a given period and its specific problems of liberation?

Probably, it is both. The problems posed by the demands for development and emancipation of the affluent European classes between the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries found a first important answer in the theories of the unconscious described by Freudian psychoanalysis, which accompanied us throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Those concepts, for example, offered a voice to the anger of women demanding a different universe and destiny to that assigned to them; to the anxiety of homosexuals seeking a path to legitimacy that, at the time, was difficult to imagine; to the solitude and atavist abandonment of a childhood that did not become observable until psychoanalysis and other developmental theories underlined its specific elements. In a broader sense, to the discomfort of that emotional world which for centuries, indeed millennia, had been rejected and driven backward, labelled as irrational and unreliable.

Of course the Western societies of our time have all evolved in these directions, and while such evolution is not yet over, these factors of incomprehension and resistances and delays that still hinder and slow the process of emancipation are however now less obscure than in the past and refer to broadly debated factors that have become a part of radically changed collective thought: that process of reform of thought that Edgar Morin has been drawing our attention to for decades.<sup>33</sup> In this framework, the Freudian concept of unconscious would seem, at least in part, to have done its time, because many social factors that contributed to the repression of entire areas of emotional experience have in the meantime ceased to exist.

At the same time, however, the heuristic maturity of the Freudian concept of unconscious is proven by its subsequent developments in other psychoanalytic schools, first and foremost the Jungian school, which, with the concept of collective unconscious, helped to shed light on the process of repression of archetypes and their action within the phylogenetic memory, thus making the unconscious a part of the very long-term evolutionary process embracing the whole history of humanity. So why then circumscribe the analysis to the “short” and now anachronistic term of Victorian society and its reaction formations rather than broadening it to a broader forum of evolution, which examines the whole path of the human species?

We need to be able to continue to refer to the concept of unconscious, so as not to risk circumscribing the analysis to concepts and contents referring to *Zeitgeist*, and thus to the dominating reasons of the time, and to place it on a much longer timeline. And the analysis offered by Lacan (as well as Recalcati) on the compulsion to pleasure that crosses this view of civilisation and its castrating effects on desire seems to lean in favour of its currentness, rather than its near extinction. Around which contents does the power of repression of the unconscious act today?

We are well aware that the consumer culture has broken down many taboos, transforming them into totems: first of all, that of sexuality, which from being the primary cause in the aetiology of neurosis, due to its unnatural experiences of repression, today in aetiology it has become the primary

<sup>33</sup> Cf. E. Morin, *I sette saperi* (2000), Milan, Cortina, 2001.

cause of neurosis (or indeed psychosis) due to its unnatural experiences of competitive exhibition and ambivalent prescription, often marked by paradoxical injunction. If, in traditional education, the normal paths of modelling the *Id* were the passage from the principle of pleasure to the principle of reality and/or its partial replacement with activities of sublimation, which deviated the experience of desire towards the achievement of higher goals, in modern societies the compulsive drive to pleasure appears oriented to prescribing that which is not susceptible to being prescribed, because in prescription it dies, experimenting error, impotency and, ultimately, the double bind. From this, the famous lesson of Lacan and Derrida.

Where Victorian society rested on an antagonistic tension between the *Id* and the *Super-Ego*, and the *Ego* was left out, when not torn apart, the consumer society rather experiments the mutual flattening of one on the other, and the *Ego* remains suffocated. That which was once repressed, the *Id*, is today the object of worship and prescription, by the dominant culture: in this framework, what has become of the principle of self-control and diversification of experience that led Freud to consider the *Id* as the place of life drives and the *Ego* that of death drives?

Forced into being the *Super-Ego*, the *Id* seems unable not only to cultivate the drive-desire, but, even more serious, defend the primordial reasons of instinct. In turn, the *Ego* is no longer limited to defending the successes earned with fatigue in the battle against the *Id*, as the *Super-Ego* won the final war, stealing any power of mediation. More than drives, it seems today that it is those dimensions of subjectivity that end up in the unconscious, where the mutual colonisation of *Id* and *Super-Ego* has deleted all ability for negotiation. Thus the *Ego* becomes the victim of the processes of repression and it is in these domains that we must seek the traces of those life drives that tend towards developmental diversification.

As early as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Sören Kierkegaard had acutely underlined how the triumph of aestheticism and the choice of bending the existence to the priorities of wellbeing, orienting civilisation towards the “repression of the spirit”, precluding all possible space for freedom and the exercise of ethical responsibility. Indeed, as already underlined in a previous work, if the process of repression of drives described by Freud was evident in the societies founded on the educational customs of Black Pedagogy, that of the repression of the spirit to which the Danish philosopher refers is today more current than ever, faced with the educational customs of White



Pedagogy, privileging the satisfaction of drive, even though following the paradoxical logics of the consumer society. In a child that Kierkegaard identifies with the image of Nero, and which is not impossible to assume as an expression of the problems of the condition of childhood in modern civilisation, existence becomes shipwrecked in the unconscious, leaving weak traces of itself in a shabby, compulsive experience of pleasure, distilled of all forms of sanctity and creativity, ultimately unto itself.<sup>34</sup>

Slavoj Žižek writes:

The “post-metaphysical” survivalist stance of the Last Men ends up in an anaemic spectacle of life dragging on as its own shadow [...] On today’s market, we find a whole series of products deprived of their malignant property: coffee without caffeine, cream without fat, beer without alcohol [...] And the list goes on: what about virtual sex as sex without sex, the Colin Powell doctrine of warfare with no casualties (on our side, of course) as warfare without warfare, the contemporary redefinition of politics as the art of expert administration as politics without politics, up to today’s tolerant liberal multiculturalism as an experience of the Other deprived of its Otherness [...] Virtual Reality simply generalizes this procedure of offering a product deprived of its substance: it provides reality itself deprived of its substance, of the hard resistant kernel of the Real [...] Is this not the attitude of the hedonistic Last Man? Everything is permitted, you can enjoy everything, but deprived of its substance, which makes it dangerous. (This is also the Last Man’s revolution— “revolution without revolution”). Is this not one of the two versions of Lacan’s anti-Dostoevsky motto “If God doesn’t exist, everything is prohibited”?<sup>35</sup>

As ever, Žižek’s words are strong, indeed very strong, and from these we understand that what is lacking in the human condition in a transformed civilisation is not the dimension of desire, but responsibility, including the responsibility to cultivate desire and allow it to grow, not in the *humus* of a wounded unconscious and an Ego forced to express itself by virtue of its absences, but in the novel of formation that allows every

<sup>34</sup> Cf. M. Fabbri, *Nel cuore della scelta*, Milan, Unicopli, 2015, II edition.

<sup>35</sup> Cf. S. Žižek, *Il cuore perverso del cristianesimo* (2003) Rome, Meltemi, 2006, pp. 124-125.

one of us to develop in time and in history, rather than halting at the compulsive (non) search for pleasure without history. The Civilisation of Care and Empathy, I called it in my last works<sup>36</sup>, where I cannot stop thinking and hoping that, in the social scenario described by Lacan, a process of evolution is underway, made possible by the redemption of emotional reason: the past few decades have been a work in progress, for the first time in the history of civilisation.

Civilisation of Care and Empathy, where there is no *Minimum Ego* – to use Christopher Lasch’s expression<sup>37</sup> – that which survives the incest between the *Id* and the *Super-Ego*, but an Ego no longer suffering from its own traumatic and painful tamperings: an Ego open to stalemate and failures, which has learned the lesson of detachment and abandonment, but has not had the chance to do it by degrees, because existence has not expected either to give or take all from it, nor to tell it brutal truths or hide fundamental truths from it... Psychoanalysis was also a form of Black Pedagogy, Alice Miller states, in presuming that the *Laius* complex was the fault of Oedipus. There is something true in Miller’s words that reproach Freud for his tendency to think of the sexuality *in feri* of the child, as if... he was already an adult. Similarly, Jonathan Lear writes, Freud “assumes that Dora is already a woman, when her problem is that she is trying to understand how to become one. He assumes that she understands erotic life; she is trying to understand what it is.”<sup>38</sup>

The unconscious of he who understand that the child’s libido cannot be thought of in similar terms to that of adults does not die: simply, a new unconscious will take the place of the previous one, with new contents, and subject to repression. The intrinsic risk of theorising the death of the unconscious is that of causing its repression once more:, not inventing but merely discovering transference formation<sup>39</sup>, neither did Freudian psychoanalysis invent, but merely express, the contents of the unconscious of its own time. Psychoanalysts (and perhaps also the educators and thinkers

<sup>36</sup> Cf. M. Fabbri, *Controtempo. Una duplice narrazione fra crisi ed empatia*, Parma Spaggiari, Junior, 2014.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. C. Lasch, *L’Io minimo* (1984), Milan, Feltrinelli, 1986.

<sup>38</sup> Cit. in S. Zizek, *Il cuore perverso del cristianesimo* (2003) Rome, Meltemi, 2006, p. 125.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. S. Freud, *Dinamica della traslazione* (1904), Milano, Boringhieri, 1976.

of our time) have the task of expressing new forms of repression and their qualifying contents.

Thus, the concept of the unconscious must not be abandoned or repressed, as it is used to introduce a principle of heuristic flexibility into the analysis, which, like the Kantian concept of noumenon, helps to re-define, with increasingly new boundaries, the free zones of thought, compared to those marked by precise identities. Hans Blumenberg writes:

[...] the difference between phenomenon and idea is not theoretically an advantage but on the contrary a bitter disappointment, as all the opinions of science refer to phenomena and say nothing of the idea itself. Despite this disappointment, the effort of maintaining a direction lies in contradictions [...] And therefore, for Kant's audience, comes the surprise that the disappointment of the *theoretical reason* is revealed as the only possibility for the *practical reason* [...] There is no consciousness of freedom, no experience, no construction of freedom and consequently, *stricto sensu*, no concept of freedom [...] If there was experience of freedom, there could no longer be, *eo ipso*, the possibility of experience [...] *that which is must always be.*<sup>40</sup>

And so the unconscious as noumenon? If it is thus, what is the point of using the term Freudian, when Kant was sufficient for the purpose? The answer is simple: while it is true that Kant, even before Freud, had contributed to thinking that self-knowledge was not less exposed to the risk of error than that of the outside world – subverting the known Cartesian principle of *cogito ergo sum*, the thinking Ego that is clear to itself - it is certain that the founder of psychoanalysis was able to pull that awareness out of its theoretical genericness, underlining, with clinical data in hand, the processes of split personality deriving from inappropriate primary experiences, the most total evolution of civilisation to the detriment of psychic well-being, the actions of psychic life through routes that are no less obscure than those of social life. And while it is true that today many factors, once foggy, have been made clear, at the same time, the present is not exempt of pockets of problems, which hinder the process of self-

<sup>40</sup> Cf. H. Blumenberg, *Teoria dell'inconcettualità* (2007), Palermo, Due Puntì Edizioni, 2010, p. 54.

understanding, not least those to which Recalcati refers, when he laments the death of desire.

Accepting to follow those paths, moving towards a new form of self-understanding, allowing those who inhabit the civilisation of care and empathy to raise the bar reflecting on their own emotional experience higher, generating practices of socially shared reflection, freeing the dialogue between analyst and analysed from its isolation, allowing all the potential of renewal and transformation of educational customs to emerge, in line with Ferenczi's famous analysis.<sup>41</sup>

From this concept of the unconscious another Ego can be born, another God, which do not fear confrontation with the responsibly and ethically based dimensions of the existence and which, opening up the horizons of a possible civilisation that is less a prisoner of its own repressions, recognise that a unique culture of respect is taking root. It is in that civilisation that the God of love offered to us by Christ can still hope to be incarnated, and that the Dionysian God of *Thus spoke Zarathustra* can stop being little more than a utopic and poetic expression.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. S. Ferenczi, *Psicoanalisi e pedagogia* (1908), Milan, Cortina, 1989; cfr. S. Ulivieri Stiozzi, *Sandor Ferenczi "educatore"*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2013.