

From Heidegger to Tarasti: musical hermeneutics and existential semiotics

Existentiel
or Existential
Semiotics?

How should we translate into French the adjective 'existential' in the title of the collection of essays which Eero Tarasti consecrated in 2000 for *Existential Semiotics*¹. When hereby mentioned discipline explicitly refers to the so-to-say 'existential' thoughts, it seems that the concept of '*existentiel*' would be meant here.

One should still keep in mind – before we decide about which alternative we shall choose – the remarkable wisdom with which the author – about whom we know that he had aspired in his youth for philosophizing – has kept the play open to take a distance of all subordination to the '*existentiel*' thought of which he many times declares that its time has passed.

With this reserve (which is based upon a simple statement, uttered modestly, and without special emphasis) Eero Tarasti in fact puts on the shoes of those doctrines of the 1930s which at least in France were considered initiators of 'existentialism', but which had emerged with a neat constancy against this claim of parenthood: Martin Heidegger. And how did such susceptibility stem from the author of *Sein und Zeit*? One would be tempted to answer: from the very title of his work. It was at least what the philosopher himself made appear, as the letter he sent to Jean Wahl reveals us, and which this published as an appendix of his later work².

¹. E. Tarasti, *Existential Semiotics*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2000.

². Jean Wahl, *Existence humaine et transcendance*, Neuchâtel, ed. de la Baconnière 1944 (appendix: Letter of Martin Heidegger, p. 134-135).

In fact, invited to listen to a conference entitled *Subjectivité et transcendance* which Wahl had to deliver in Paris, during the session of the French Society for Philosophy on Dec 4, 1937, Heidegger, from whom the nazis had refused exit from the territory, gave his host in Freiburg, to believe that he would be absent 'due to the work of the ongoing semester'.

However, he had read the abstract which had been addressed to him with the invitation, and thought he had to react in these terms:

"Your critical remarks on the topics of 'philosophy of existence' are very instructive. Yet I have to repeat that my philosophical tendencies, even though they would concern in *Sein und Zeit* the 'existence' and 'Kierkegaard', cannot be classified as *Existenzphilosophie*. But this error of interpretation will be probably difficult to solve right now.

I am totally agreeing with you to say that the 'philosophy of existence' is exposed under double danger, either to fall into a theology, or to an abstraction. But what is involved here is not the the question of the existence of man; it is the one of being in its entirety and as such. And Nietzsche neither is any longer a philosopher of existence, but in his doctrine of the will and eternal return, he sets the old and unique question of being. However, the question which is posed in *Sein und Zeit* has not been treated by Kierkegaard, nor by Nietzsche, and Jaspers totally passed by it"³.

Yet, how would 'thinking of being' would free us from 'thinking of existence'? in other words to exercise well an *Existenzphilosophie*? The relative lack of enthusiasm which Eero Tarasti seems to show regarding the label of 'philosophy of existence' has it some relationship with the phobia of taking Heidegger openly as an 'existentialist'? Jean Wahl made already this reserve which he had himself experienced when he had received the letter of excuses from Heidegger, adding there this short comment: "In any case the fact remains that the philosophy of existence is for Heidegger the inevitable point of departure, if one wants to constitute a philosophy of being".

In fact the argument is essential, and worth insisting on. To question being, this means to abandon oneself to *ontological* considerations, distinguished from the *ontic* ones, concerning the one which is. But who would be interested in being except that entity called man? It is here an ontological privilege, but devoted to something of ontic nature; if the ontological founds the ontic, it is not less founded in another sense on the latter one, because we do not have an access to being but by being a being. All is 'here'!

This explains that Heidegger's typical idiom in *Sein und Zeit* attaches the worry to *avoid all ambiguity as to the difference of being and entity* (être/étant). To make it clearer, Heidegger proposes in fact that if the word '*existentiel*' applies to the entity (étant) that which concerns the being would be '*existential*'. In this respect the definition of man, according to the *existentiel* formula dear to Sartre, in which he is determined as an 'entity for which his being is concerned, appears at the same time incontestable and simplifying. This only translated (and weakened) that which had already been expressed in *Sein und Zeit* in 1927, and which proved in its structure exactly, the German *Dasein*: the fact that for this entity, the *Sein*, being, is just *da*: there (at the same time being what it is).

From this 'distinction' which characterised a whole period, what consequences does a semiotician of music like Eero Tarasti draw for our time? Let us state first that it is not

³ Ibidem.

just by its very title, the work which launches the reorientation of his research, namely 'Existential semiotics' is striving for ecumenicality: the texts he regroups, although they nicely emerge from music, do not allot at all the absolute primacy to it, which the author gave it earlier. Here the musical is only one topic among others.

Naturally, if what is crucial is being – neither the subject nor the entity who is, the regional science which is scrutinised here as the 'positive' science, an object or given territory (be it the posited field or orientation – such a science takes what one gives to it. It should not interrogate this gift, although it were its receiver: it is sufficient for it to clarify what is in front of it. Accordingly, for the musical semiotics of Tarasti, the 'musical' exists, it is already *there*. Only an *existential* semiotics could try to return in counter-current. However it would digress the formal limits of the musical domain in order to lay the ground: it should undertake to discern the *eventuality* of this event, or of this 'there is' – the figure at the bottom of the silence. And this when making inquiries about its *essential* origins. Briefly to study being, it is not only to make its history, not even to elaborate its ontology, it is to put a historical question: *how is such an onto-logy possible?*

Such a project, if it would take shape, would serve as a proof of the rigor whereby one wants to pursue this research. Yet the test of this confirmation is given us by a question, which is implicit in the whole book by Tarasti, namely the historical foundation of his 'existential' conversion: *at our time, is music still ascertained by itself?* Therefore, music is not absent by accident in the title of the work: the relative dissolution of Tarasti regarding the musical is STILL musical, it signifies to us, by the absence which it proposes, the survival of the sound art in the profound preoccupation of our semiotician. Let us put it in more academic terms: the Tarastian question, by its calculated omission of that which it admits, tries to reverse (like in a mirror) the movement of the Leibnizian interrogation: *why is there something rather than nothing?* Nevertheless its effect is to mine a little bit the *metaphysical* certainty upon which true semiosis is believed to lean. When the author concludes chapter 7, the study of musical 'styles' ('*existentiel*' and '*structural*') he notes that without the avantgarde of our century, no such confrontation could have been conceivable⁴. Is it not so that such reference to a history also evokes the preexistent semiotics, which could not define itself alone and whose origins one should study?

There resides that which one might presume to be obscure, negative, 'trans-descendante'⁵ in of his approach. Although interested in Heidegger, and abandoning totally the 'jargon of alienation' to honour the school of Frankfurt, Tarasti, by evoking the avantgarde, poses a question worthy of Adorno: is not the right of existence of music nowadays under threat? And from the fact that modernity follows the principle of communication arts, an issue of research like this one seems to snowball: the destiny

⁴ E. Tarasti, *op. cit* p. 110.

⁵ The neologism "transdescendance" has been invented by Jean Wahl. It appears for the first time in "Sur l'idée de transcendance", in one of the chapters of the book cited in note 2: "One can conceive a hierarchy of transcendence or even hierarchies. There is a hierarchy directed towards the depth if one can say so, that which some Lawrence was aware of when he presented to us, in the foundations of the being, the unknown God. There is not only a transascendance, but also a transdescendance". (Cf. p. 37). These expressions by Jean Wahl, 'transdescendance' and 'transascendance' have been retaken by Eero Tarasti.

of an art including the one of all the others, a serious doubt risks strongly question again the (metaphysical) idea of the art as such: its truth (*veritas*) To talk about 'truth', means always to refer to the eternal. Alas! what is involved is nothing but time ... all the hybridations, all the glidings are made possible.

Yet beginning from page 4, Tarasti tells how to use the existentials of Heidegger.

He justifies this with "the synthetic judgements a priori" by Kant, since they constitute a 'metalanguage' appropriate to make 'communicable' certain 'visionary aspects' – i.e. intuitions – which 'the instinct' of a scholar enacts when he aims for a reevaluation of the field of his competence. What remains is to determine whether that made Tarasti to turn, instead of to Kant rather to 'existentials' (and in general towards the 'metalanguage' in which they participate) does not depend also (and in the first place) on a certain reading – de-theologizing, and imposed in our time by the inventor of Heideggerian existentials – namely *hermeneutics*.

Such a hypothesis seems even more plausible when taken as an orientation of the *semiosis* towards '*existentielles*' considerations (coined by Sartre or Camus, Jaspers or Kierkegaard) taking into account the nature of these last mentioned thinkers: in fact, to insist on their relation, at the same time complementary and prioritized, with '*existentiales*' considerations, this means to declare also a *fascinating standpoint within the hermeneutic circle itself*.

The conjunction of the *existentiel* and the *existential* which makes the closed system crack – does it not likewise lead us to question the exclusivity of structuralism? Tarasti does not pretend to 'liberate' existence as such, neither to break his ties with great 'authors' of semiotics from Peirce to Eco. But then he reestablishes the previous sensibility, since semiotics, born before the second world war, such as he conceives it, could well risk its status in new hermeneutic efficiency, at the same time *post-structuralist* and *non-metaphysic*. And to this the musical element which he continues to work on, could well make a remarkable contribution, albeit concealed. Let us summarize: 'the instinct' to which Eero Tarasti resorts in order to reorient himself with an *Existential Semiotics*, and which has lead him to adhere (at least momentarily) to the Heideggerian perspective of a hermeneutics *in statu nascendi*, this 'instinct' has incited him to reexamine his own theoretical presuppositions, which he had earlier refused to contest. To give up the (metaphysical) formalisation could only make ambiguous if not improbable, the ontological difference. Metaphysics formalised being into God and time into eternity. *More original than the truth about the difference between being and entity (veritas), the truth of their foundation (alçtheia) – which is the ground of indifference – could only underline the fragility of this cleavage or difference which metaphysics had fixed by eternalizing it; difference which one would however leave for metaphysics, in order to worry only about the event which constitutes it.*

Towards an in(de)finite
semiosis: Heidegger
and Peirce

Therefore we have to ask in which sense is it permissible to propose – as we do – the possibility of a true *musical* renovation (i.e. which would not be satisfied with some dead music or some supposedly living, yet illusory *in absentia*) parting from a semiotics of what is, or of *event*? What probably seduced Eero Tarasti to discover (or reread) *Sein und Zeit* is – in absence of any direct reference of Heidegger to the tonal art, at least when we do not accept the

other habitual meaning of the concept of *Stimmung*, which evokes however something quite far from any 'tonal' system! – the thesis of the gap between saying and speaking, and this due to those subtle implications which this thesis brings in the area of the audible. "To say signifies the existential constitution and to speak its worldly aspect which falls in the field of empiria. That is why the first determination of to say is not to speak, but rather the couple: listen-to be silent."⁶ Or more exactly (and in order to maintain a little bit of the idiomatic flavour of the German): to listen (*Horchen*) is only possible from to hear (*Hören*); but to listen is only possible from the understanding. Is this not for a musician the whole program?

From here stems the hermeneutic (and musical) character of the problem of language. The voice is a function of hearing and if a man speaks, it is not because he owns vocal organs but because he is 'that instance which discovers the world and the *Dasein* as such.'⁷ This theme will be repeated, rethought and said again with certain varieties all along the paths towards the speech of 1961. If one tries to speak about 'vocal articulation of a thought by means of speech organs' one forgets that 'speaking is always a case of understanding'. To oppose these two terms, one avoids to rooting speaking in saying, and even more because the latter is first hearing. "We just do not speak a language, we speak *by* it; we can do this only because we have always listened to the language. What do we listen there? We listen how language speaks"⁸.

The consequence – already presented in the conference on *Logos* in 1951, whose first French translator was Jacques Lacan! – is:

We do not listen because we have ears. We have ears, we are provided with corporeal ears, because we listen. The mortals hear the thunder in the sky, the wind in a forest, the murmur of a fountain, the chords of a harp, the noise of the motor, the noise and sounds of a town: but all these things, the mortals do not hear (*Hören*) them but to the extent and in respect of themselves belong to them (*zugehören*) or not... We have heard when we belonged to that about which was spoken to us (*Wir haben gehört, wenn wir dem Zugesprochenen gehören*).⁹

⁶ We reproduce here the definition by Paul Ricoeur. A French version of the text wherefrom it has been taken, "The Task of Hermeneutics (in *Philosophy Today*, 17, no. 2-4. p. 112-128) has been kindly communicated to us by Paul Ricoeur. It consists of, besides "The Task of Hermeneutics" two articles, "The hermeneutic function of the distancation" and "Philosophical hermeneutics and Biblical hermeneutics". In the following we cite the first abridged as TH, and with the page numbers of the French text. Here: TH 195.

⁷ M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit, Erste Hälfte*, Unveränderte 5. Auflage, a.d. S. Niemeyer, 1941, p. 165; *Being and Time*, English translation by J. Macquarrie and E. Robinsons, Oxford, Blackwell, 1967, p. 208-209. (We have consulted one of the French translations, the one by R. Boehm and A. de Waelhens. Paris, Gallimad, p. 204 – but we have only found there: "Man manifests as an entity who speaks: ...this entity is in the mode of discovering the world and his being therein".

⁸ "Wir sprechen nicht nur die Sprache, wir sprechen aus ihr. Dies vermögen wir einzig dadurch, dass wir je schon auf die Sprache gehört haben. Was hören wir da? Wir hören das Sprechen der Sprache". (M. Heidegger, *Unterwegs zur Sprache*, Pfullingen, Gunthre Neske, 1959, p. 254.)

⁹ M. Heidegger: *Essais et Conférences*, French translation by A. Préau, Paris, Gallimard 1958, p. 259-260.

Accordingly, not only does hearing – as we learned from *Sein und Zeit* – constitute the discourse¹⁰ but it manifests our belonging to the world. *All inquiry about language which does not resort to this primary fact of belonging would be found thus disqualified.* The ‘sciences of language’ a.o. can of course teach us lessons about *homo loquax*; but they will never tell us anything about saying – they will never say us anything.

One can notice the dissatisfaction felt by hermeneutic commentators, like Ricoeur, or orthodox phenomenologists referring to Husserl, facing this thesis – dear to the ‘last’ Heidegger just as it had been to the one of *Sein und Zeit* – of the irreducibility of saying to scientific treatment, i.e. rebellious against ‘utterances of proposition’.¹¹ This unasiness, how would Tarasti digest it? Without subscribing completely (nor omitting) the radicality of the Heideggerian attitude. For he wants to render this attitude into a device whereby one could reconsider the position of human sciences – *but only with-in certain limits.* In this respect, his procedure does not join exactly with the one by Ricoeur (whom one can estimate to be as one will see a little too faithful to the academic conception of hermeneutics). In reverse he evokes at least by his intentions, the Italian philosopher Carlo Sini who in the works he dedicated to semiotics – particularly in *Semiotica e filosofia* published in 1978, and subtitled *Segno e linguaggio in Peirce, Nietzsche, Heidegger e Foucault*¹² – has investigated Heidegger’s economy of ‘index-sign’, which he compared to one of the great inspirers of Tarasti: Peirce.

According to Carlo Sini, this comparison made apparent one fault or excess in the concept of *sign* as it was presented in the section 17 of *Sein und Zeit*. In Peircean classification *index* certainly played a certain central role between the *icon* and *symbol*. But this did not yet exhaust the definition of sign: contrarily Heidegger had underestimated *semiosis*, by dealing in his analyses of indication (*Weisen*) and moreover of showing (*Zeigen*) only with that aspect which in Peirce would reveal the so-called *sign-relations*. But did this *indexicalisation* correspond rather to a kind of self-mutilation? Did Heidegger not amputate his own problematics, by resorting to a reductionist and mono-ideist vision? Facing this circumstance Carlo Sini proposed – truly audaciously – to renew the context of the research, not only relying on Peirce exclusively but associating Heidegger and Peirce. He hereby anticipated Tarasti.

And what should one expect from this coupling? First, intra-categorical and liberating dissolution, concerning the preeminence of indexicality such as conceived by Heidegger. Therefore just as Herman Parret has proposed in his *Esthétique de la communication* (1999) no semiotics should stick with one category like the one based on similitude, icon. Herman Parret leans to the famous definition by Peirce according to which “the icons substitute so well their objects that they can hardly be distinguished from their objects.... When one contemplates at a painting, there is a moment in which one loses the consciousness that it is not a thing; the distinction between the real and the copy vanishes, and this presents a moment like a pure dream – neither a particular

¹⁰ M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, *op. cit.* p. 163, English translation p. 206, French translation p. 201.

¹¹ According to the last words of the conference *Zeit und Sein*, in *Läendurance de la pensée. Pour saluer Jean Beaufret*, French translation by F. Fédier, Paris, Plon 1968, p. 69.

¹² C. Sini: *Semiotica e filosofia. Segno et linguaggio in Peirce, Nietzsche, Heidegger e Foucault*, Bologna, Il Mulino 1978.

nor general existence. At this moment we contemplate an icon¹³. The 'substitution' of icon for an object, did Heidegger not underestimate it?

But not only does aesthetic appreciation *iconize* the semiosis – but – always in Peirce, like Parret explains it – this *iconisation*, just when it mobilises the imagination, is susceptible to rule over this essential mechanism of production of signs which Peirce calls *abduction*, and about which he proposes the following definition: “the abductive understanding is the *sensibility* in us for *iconicity* which strikes us and forces us reason with imagination”¹⁴.

Simply, when Tarasti said that he returned to 'intuition' in his search for a 'metalanguage', Peirce rather leans on *inference*: in his eyes the abductive reasoning, when it at the same time was constituting a sensible configuration, did not stop to occupy the imagination. The truth of a *sign-relation* is not anchored in the mono-ideality of one sense, it opens an infinite number of reinterpretations. But are we not here approaching the Nietzschean perspective? The infinite semiosis i.e. rigorously pluralistic, would not by its definition be able to tolerate the *veritas*. Because the empire under whose name one slices the differences with the guillotine of the true and the false, crumbles at once with aphorism 374 of the *Gay Science*, which declares an infinite world but only as regarding those infinite interpretations which constitute it¹⁵.

For Peirce, no more than for Nietzsche, the question would not be to forget the *existence* of the truth. Peirce's methodological concern does not leave any doubt in this respect. And when Nietzsche declares that “we have the arts in order not to forget the truth!, it is – and if one accepts to *reading* this form – the perpetual truth he is longing for, rather than its disappearance or deconstruction (*Destruktion*). However, what distinguishes the signification from the word *existence* has to be specified again: perhaps that would allow us to conceive why (and by virtue of which inflation) it is beyond any 'thought of existence' such as elaborated by the 'existentialists' after the war – *as it has been well noticed by Eero Tarasti* – which remains out of the center of the present argument.

The reference here belongs, as it must, to many levels. One can dream for instance of the distinction developed by Georges Bataille between *restricted* economy and *generalized* economy. Since if that which *is true exists*, this can happen only with abundance or excess of any particular interpretation. A similar figure appears in Deleuze which hits the point: “to replace the *is* by *and* (in French this is a pun: *est/et*); Deleuze whose first book dealt with Hume, has himself underlined that such a slogan was stemming from the famous thesis on the Pluralist philosophies of England and America, and its author Jean Wahl (himself a theoretician of 'existentialist thought'). In any case the truth we meet here ... tries to be at the same time 'public' and 'in process': even if subjective, it does not belong to any person, because it constitutes

¹³ C. S. Peirce, *Collected Works*, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press 1965, p. 362, cited by H. Parret, *L'Esthétique de la communication. L'au-déla de la pragmatique*, Bruxelles, OUSIA 1999, p. 115.

¹⁴ H. Parret, *L'Esthétique de la communication*, *op. cit.* p. 115.

¹⁵ The reference to *Gay Science* has been suggested by Alessandro Carrera in his “Consequences of Unlimited Semiosis: C. Sini's *Metaphysics of the Sign and Semiotical Hermeneutics*”. (in Hugh J., Silverman, *Cultural Semiotics. Tracing the Signifier*, New York, Routledge 1998, p. 51.

a *multiverse*¹⁶. One understands that it is affirmed only in the manner which as early as Nietzsche was conveyed: when shooting a gap into the being. But what becomes then the reference to Heidegger?

The Hermeneutic Circle
and its Expansion

We have already suggested it: *opening to the multiple*, whose necessity has been diagnosed by Carlo Sini and Herman Parret, each from his side – which has permitted them to make some harmonies emerge – this *opening* prepared the avenue not only to a better understood semiosis, but to the enlargement of *hermeneutics*. Furthermore it should enter into resonance – which was the case for a scholar so subtly *philomousikos* as Tarasti – with the concept of a hermeneutic circle which was forged by Heidegger, and which offered the paradox of presenting a criticism of prejudices at the same time as it imposed them – strangely – and encouraged keeping them. What is after all the ‘hermeneutic circle’?

One can define it (classically) by reference to the duality of subject and object, like taking possession of each of the terms regarding the other: “the subject proposes itself in the familiarity with object, and it is in turn determined in its most subjective disposition by the adoption which the object has on the subject, before this even becomes conscious of it”¹⁷. Then an act follows.

Yet, what becomes of this circle (in ‘good’ Heideggerian logics) if one grasps and takes it from the power of metaphysics by depriving the *Dasein* of its subjectivity? One finishes by hiding the pre-understanding which is typical of *Dasein*, but only insofar as it forms a ‘non-subject’ – evidently if it poses (and imposes) the question of the being, which is a ‘prejudgement’ of being, and by this ‘pre-judice’ or ‘prejudgement’ it is no longer he who speaks as a subject but being. And his time appears hence as the time of the being. The ‘pre-’ is synonymous with a certain figure of temporality of *Dasein*: the anticipation. And the turn is played: as little as one might know it such a reference causes a short-circuit as condemnation (metaphysical and subjectivist) of the hermeneutic circle as *circulus vitiosus* – which abolishes the unambiguous characterisation of the pre-understanding as a ‘pre-judgement’ or ‘prejudice’ in the pejorative sense. Heidegger can from here on write that what is involved is not in any case ‘to exit the circle, but to penetrate into it correctly’¹⁸.

We let it sound: such a rehabilitation cannot but upset those who consider it in a thinker a pure and simple denial of the scientificity of science. In the eyes of some,

¹⁶ The expression by William James, ‘multiverse’ has been readopted in relation to the thought of Ernst Bloch by Remo Bodei, (*Multiversum, Tempo e storia in Ernst Bloch, Napoli, Bibliopolis 1982*). who has tried to compare the Blochian conception of ‘asynchronicity’ with the *Ungleichzeitlichkeit* of Heidegger. This comparison could be enlarged to Tarasti, whose ideas seem to be close to the ones by Bloch, just due to the insistence of Bloch on the ‘narrativity’ of ‘being-not-yet’. About this topic, see G. Berto, *L’Attimo oscuro. Saggio su Ernst Bloch*, Milano, Unicopli 1988, p. 113-128.

¹⁷ P. Ricoeur, TH 195 (see note 6).

¹⁸ M. Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, *op. cit.* p. 153, English translation p. 195, French translation p. 190.

Ricoeur, for instance, there is the Heideggerian gap between saying and speaking, flavoured by the Diltheyan opposition of understand and explain, which aims at bringing it to a crisis. If in fact the theory of understanding, in Dilthey, was “doomed to oppose to naturalist explanation and in rivalry with it as objectivity and scientificity”, with Heidegger the aporia is “shifted elsewhere and at the same time aggravated: it is no longer in the epistemology, between two modalities of knowing, but it is between the ontology and epistemology taken together”¹⁹. Let us return the argument to its beginning: saying emerges from ontology; speaking emerges from epistemology. Speaking is rooted in saying insofar as this means to listen and to hear oneself be silent. But according to Ricoeur, it is one thing to ‘erase’ – in the wish to lay foundations – from speaking to saying, and another thing to ‘redescend’ from saying to speaking. Whoever resorts to ontology as the ground risks the obligation to carry his sorrow (*Verwinden*) of epistemology, namely, this ontology which is supposed to be the foundation. Ricoeur wants – it seems to us – to open our eyes as to this misuse: if the ontology founds anything, it would be art...

In fact, what would be more normal than that a musician feels to be attracted by such a passage as that in *Unterwegs zur Sprache*? The contents of it take shape here, thanks to transfers of sense and other lyrical transpositions, of which Ricoeur admitted that one is free to appreciate them as one likes, without trying to allot them the least veridictoriality. They are and have to stay, as poetry. Take this question: if listening is to ‘hear someone speak the language’, do we have to attribute to this language ‘vocal organs’, *Sprechwerkzeuge*?

The answer is rather: on the other hand: the voice of the language is a silent voice, and this silence is the richness of the world; it has to be listened to, but it advises us to renunciate all positivism, all scientific substantiation of the voice.

As the silence of the language, the voice escapes our hold; and this lack of mastering signals – like a lack in the core of ourselves, our physics and even physiology – a ligne of escape, a gap. This voice, no discipline can deal with it.

It is the voice of the world: the song. It is rather ourselves than we. It is the poem of the being, in the sense that “man is that poem which the being has started”. Yet, always in the vision of Ricoeur, it remains to explain or rather to understand how the *prose* of the world is possible. How *not to be* a poet, or to be one only momentarily? I admit that the *Ursprache* ‘precedes’ everyday voices: how do these last ones *proceed*, how can I return to my chattering, *Rede* and *Gerede*? This is possible only by some historical downfall – which transgressed by definition the object of any linguistics – which has affected the language insofar as it has been constituted as a secondary object, on the basis of a non-language²⁰.

Only such an answer would satisfy Ricoeur. His argumentation postulates in fact the irreversibility – which Ricoeur does not accept – of the misuse of language, from the listening to oneself, silently speaking. As if to say would be exhausted in what is said, as if one could never say it again – and as if the metaphors would never survive.

¹⁹ P. Ricoeur, TH 195.

²⁰ On the history of constituting the concept of language, see all the work by Johannes Lohmann, and particularly, *Le rapport de l'homme occidental au langage* “Revue philosophique de Louvain”, t. 72, 4o series, no. 15, 1974, p. 721-766.

The Heideggerian or Derridean condemnation of the metaphor is always pursued along the reduction of it to the rank of simple fool's gold of the metaphysics of the presence (i.e. of 'the' metaphysics). But in this respect one only reifies the *absence*. Well, here is, in the eyes of Ricoeur, the weak link of Heidegger: he has persuaded once for all, and preached, that one had forgotten not only the absence – but also *the absence of the absence*. In this quest for *absence* in this unambiguous history of the 'metaphysics' (and of language, for which all metaphor rings the death-knell), should one not oppose the demand of the 'return' of saying to speaking, and of the 'living' metaphor? A true hermeneutic, should it also be *verifiable*, i.e. reversible? In the level of gap between the saying and speaking this signifies that it is not obligatory to devalue speech, nor claim it to be incurable: sweep away the remnants of saying in the speaking, is that not all the secret of the dignity of saying, which would rehabilitate – when situating the problem on the ethical level, without searching for an aesthetic compensation – the very notion of truth?

One sees clearly the advantage which such a criticism offers in the eyes of Ricoeur: it allows one to give justice to human sciences, by separating there what can be 'founded' in the *indifference* of the so-called sciences regarding their proper relation to 'the' metaphysics. It can seem in fact that the 'penetration' into the hermeneutic circle, such as tried by Heidegger, becomes too expensive if its 'correct' practice is not done in one direction, taking as the necessary condition the denial of any 'return'. Contrarily, Ricoeur judges:

A philosophy which breaks up the dialogue with the sciences does not address anyone other than itself. Even more, it is only during the return one pretends to keep the questions of exegesis, and in general, of historical criticism for the *derived* questions. As long as one has not efficiently proceeded in this derivation, the shift itself towards the basic questions remains problematic²¹.

However, to render strictly their debt to the human sciences, and among them to semiotics, is this not – in spite of the incontestable generosity proved by the words of Ricoeur – a little too short a program? When restoring in the back-and-forth movement between saying and speaking the integrity of its course,, and still controlling its perfect pureness, which does not appear problematic but in the respect in which its reversibility is never ascertained, does this not mean anything else but assigning to hermeneutics its task of *maintaining* and serving as a helper?

The era, certainly, is thirsty for 'risky profits'. But do we have to struggle until that 'prose may live'! – therefore one is not aiming only for maintaining – the beauties of the flowers – but a simple *poetic prose*? What is involved is not to contest the pertinence of Ricoeur's argument: it is just that the defender of a hermeneutics of *appropriation* draws attention to the necessity of maintaining the advantage of the full scientificity of its discipline.

In reverse the idea of 'appropriation' calls reserves if one takes it as a vocation, of so to say hygienic nature, in order to *purify in advance* the contents of what is said, in order to make it such about which one can *speak*. One has to ask of oneself if the 'return' as a putting something at the disposition of a text does not constitute, in

²¹ P. Ricoeur. TH 195.

favour of rewriting and formulating this text *ad usum delphini*, the homogenisation or pasteurisation which would make it a polished object, civilized and totally consumable.

The legitimation of the reversibility between the saying and speaking appears under completely different light from that whereby Ricoeur posed his objections against Heidegger. This is not the point of criticism which would – even as ‘pure’ – remain in the service of that which one deals with, but rather to reconsider the ‘musical’ part of the saying, *by rehabilitating the voice as an affirmative force of saying the properly ‘said’ (before the critic), and not of the saying of ‘properly’ said (i.e. of speaking)*. Affirmation which does not precede any silence, but which also murmurs as already present amidst the silence, all that which assembles in one group the three ‘ecstasies’ of time, the past, present and future – *prove well the inscription of the Heideggerian Dasein in the primary time* (which we have qualified as ‘ontological’ insisting on its primary nature as to the ‘ontic’ or ‘inauthentic’ time). And what would be the consequences? It may be that in returning to the temporal origins those hegemonies vanish which appeared in various eras, such as the dualities which they tried to legitimize – in whose first place figures doubtless *the opposition of the authentic and inauthentic whereupon Heidegger himself thought to be forced to found everything*.

Alétheia and veritas

One would thus orient oneself not towards a unity but towards the neutral, towards the non-struggle (to be conceived or rather lived as a kind of rainbow of the neutral). For the rehabilitation of speech in front of saying does not equal to the authentication of the inauthentic, which would leave untouched the blending of those two as the condition of the promotion of one to the other. Contrarily, what is involved here is grasped again in the voice, the noise of the source, a potentiality of earlier irruption in the gap between the saying and speaking, short, the polysemic murmur of silence whose browsing would vary between understanding and babbling, with its side product the shortness of some indivisible becoming... This source, every great poem might indicate it – at least *between the lines*?

Such a movement of the thought, which one can esteem that it has not escaped the attention of Tarasti, has not appeared to us to be dealt with but occasionally by Ricoeur’s epistemological objections. His traces have to be followed since the moment when the author of *Sein und Zeit* decided to distinguish like the Greeks, by their *aletheia*, the ultimate and definite ‘concealment’ which would finish (at least under its umbrella) by disqualifying and putting in the rank of an epiphenomenon the *veritas* of Rome. Let us remember that the ‘dismissal’ of the *veritas* – which being the antithesis to falsehood, prescribed the ‘correspondence’ (*adaequatio*) between the thing and intellect – has appeared in the daylight in the course on the Poem by Parmenides (delivered during the winter semester of 1942-1943 at the University of Freiburg). According to Herman Rapaport²² Heidegger did not hesitate any longer at that moment to refuse from the usage that the nazis had made of the concept of *veritas* which they erased as an aesthetic criterion in order to impose their ideology, and to subordinate art under their rules. This turn depended again on the reusage of the first, whereby one played with

²² H. Rapaport, *Is There Truth in Art?*, Ithaca NY, Cornell University Press 1997, principally p. 26-35.

the will to power, inappropriately borrowed from Nietzsche, the role normally allotted to God or to Reason. It was only sufficient here to foreground under the same idea of *will*, both 'justice' *justitia*, and 'discipline' (*rectitudo*), these two cornerstones of *veritas*...

Yet how had Heidegger come to his notion of the fall of *veritas*? The return to *aletheia* in 1943, made the problem at least: "one could always suspect our philosopher to have overinterpreted the Greek term, when he translated it as 'unconcealment'. As later Hans-Georg Gadamer has remarked in his presentation in the three conferences of 1936 on the *origin of the art work*. that so 'curious' as the relationship between being and entity might have been with Heidegger, 'still more curious' was the fact that 'in the *da*' of the entity showing itself manifested also for the first time the unconcealment of the being itself". In the case of an art for instance, the 'truth' did not keep in the "clear discovery of the sense, but first and above all in the bottomless character and profundity of its meaning." It is so that:

"The truth, understood as unconcealment, is always the fact of *confrontation between the discovery and recovery*. Those two necessarily make a pair. This signifies that the truth does not designate simply the total presence of the entity which would come in some sense to face the representation. Such a notion of unconcealment presupposes rather as granted the subjectivity of a *Dasein* which presents itself as an entity. Only the entity is not determined in the correct manner in its being if it is simply understood as an object of a possible representation. It also participates in its being when it is able to refrain from it"²³.

Heidegger in fact described the truth itself as "ambiguous" (*gegenwendig*), which supposed that "the hostility of the presence made as a kind of 'counter-truth', an integral part of the being". From this Gadamer concluded:

"What is present not only in the surface, a recognizable and familiar shape, this also owns an inner depth, an autonomy which Heidegger characterizes as 'keeping-in-oneself'- The total unconcealment of any entity, the total reification of all that which is (by intermediary of a representing in all its perfection) would enact a suppression of the being-in-oneself of the entity and would equal to complete even making.... What would rather be presented would be the same namely, the opportunity of possible utility, but this would say that that which emerges in all would only be the will which searches to dominate all the entities, But in the art work, everyone can experience the absolute resistance to such a will to dominate"²⁴.

One conceives that *aletheia* would be constituted in these conditions as a capital action. As early as in the 1930s, but doubtless even more in 1943 – the year of Stalingrad – it signified *the only possible resistance* by making the ground for a *faultless behaviour (Contenance)*. From this point of view the reservation in the face of 'modern science which calculates all' – a reservation which Ricoeur, one has seen, rejected in principle – was explained by the simple fact that such a science "brings about a loss of things, whose 'attitude' which was not against anything finds itself in fact, as an object of countable factors' attack which are in the service of its projects and its transformations".

²³ H.-G. Gadamer, *Le chemins de Heidegger*, French translation by Jean Grondin, Paris, Vrin 2002, p. 125.

²⁴ *Ibidem* p. 125-126.

If there were no work of art, where would be “the instance which would preserve us that universal loss of the things”²⁵ i.e. which liberates us from all will because it does not serve as anything to anyone?

It should be by all means that the ‘attitude’ – or the ‘thinglikeness’ – of the ‘thing’ (for which Heidegger has consecrated a well-known essay) would benefit the ‘preservation’ which would save the work, the only rest against the attacks of the will. Since if we were deprived of this only escape, that would be an apocalypse! The seriousness of tone and density of thought help us – among the listeners of Heidegger – to note the impression of listening to a threat dictated by destiny. It is true that the problematic character of erasing the foundation at which the thinker did not stop to make reference, seemed to confirm something unavoidable. But when it concerned the hope of freedom, in front of the vicissitudes of the ‘essential domination’ of the *Dasein* by a will of power, perhaps it might have been proper to point out here, as an opening, a dimension upon which commentators have remained silent, that of *liberation*. Yet, this dimension exists, and Heidegger had noticed it in 1936, when he claimed ‘that the essence of the event of a truth which is given by an art work’ would be ‘the opening of a free space’²⁶.

Let us remember: the formal scheme adopted by Heidegger since 1930 in his *Von der Wahrheit*, in the terms of which the truth as *adaequatio* could not lead us to a more original freedom, on which was rooted in turn in a more essential truth, that of the abyssal *aletheia*, ‘a groundless ground’ of a *Grund-Abgrund*, this scheme – which was reconsidered in his course on Parmenides – proposed that instead of adhering to rigorous norms imposed from the outside, and of being obliged to justify ceaselessly to oneself the *Dasein* for which the *aletheia* was promised, if one ceased being subordinated by the yoga of alternation between the true and the false (which was nothing but – according to Rapaport – a variant of the distinction of being and entity²⁷). And once it was dis-subjected (*dés-assujetti*), the *Dasein* whose place (*Da*) had been until now counted and measured, did not see this place see a re-opening and delimiting suddenly for the reception of the being (*Sein*)? Somewhat as if that union would have been destined to evaporate physically between those two *Da-* and *Sein* one saw the possibility of their blending together to vanish, in other words, of *make being* and *full being* (just like one speaks about *plain-chant*, i.e. Gregorian song). *There and only there, even the Da and Sein, would take shape – eventually – the non-duality of becoming. This means freedom.*

Existential semiotics has taken the challenge. But the author *does not forget the music*. When Tarasti examines the ‘anguish’ – in the chapter he dedicates to the Signs of Anxiety²⁸ – he is not content to only refer to the source, which was for him *Sein und Zeit*, and to illustrate then his words by means of proper musical references (from Wagner to Schoenberg), he takes the courage to make excursions and visit certain scores from Peter Maxwell Davies to György Ligeti, Magnus Lindberg or Kaija Saariaho. Especially, he proposes to go further and distinguish in two great piano sonatas of Ludwig van Beethoven, *Waldstein* and *Les adieux*, two types of ‘expectation without object’ which causes ‘euphory’ (*Waldstein*) or ‘dysphory’ (*Les adieux*). Would the ‘dysphory’ correspond to the signals of Angst with the Heidegger of 1927? Here

²⁵ *Ibidem* p. 126.

²⁶ *Ibidem* p. 127 (the formulation by Heidegger, cited by Gadamer).

²⁷ H. Rapaport, *op. cit.* p. 22.

²⁸ E. Tarasti *op. cit.* p. 76-83 (chapter 5).

it seems evident. But which 'euphory'? How to discern it except through the exact opposition of 'dysphory' of les "Adieux" to the one in "Waldstein"?

It constitutes a strict symmetry: it is an anguish reversed.

Let us notice from here on this remark which actualizes in some way Heidegger by 'putting in situation' the ambiguous relationship of art and technique: according to Tarasti, the vision – anxiogenic – which many young composers believe that they have to forge from the universe in which their works should be inserted, this vision contains the same 'representation' of 'subject' as the one given nowadays – cut and fractalized – by the works with artificial intelligence or cognitive sciences – and of which their works provide us with identical copies.

Only if Beethoven were able as the difference from the all-capable 'modern' or 'postmodern' composers, to *turn around the anguish like a glove*, does this not indicate that knew to keep away from representation, and this a time when no one had yet learned to refrain from it? And is it not so that this leads us to consider that in reality our period contains as its ground – in the sense of 'attitude' which has just been scrutinized – something which conjures the fatality of conformism, i.e. of the 'truth as conformity'? The analysis by the semiotician Tarasti comes then to support the hypothesis according to which the renewal hermeneutics would be, as was anticipated by Heidegger, completely possible. Its vocation, if this were true, would be to reach now (*index*) towards *another beginning*. But as the necessary condition of pursuing the representation (and in general of its mimetic or allegoric disasters): the work would become its proper hermeneia, it would declare itself – in the strongest sense – *index sui et veritatis* (the 'et' marking well that the *index sui* equals to the *aletheia*).

Letting-things-be
(Gelassenheit):

Abandoning
and Not-Will

One finds as well that another great text by Heidegger, *Gelassenheit*, has served as reference for Tarasti, who did not want to resort only, regarding the anguish, to considerations inspired uniquely by *Sein und Zeit*. But the idea of a new 'departure', looming behind the Tarastian problematics, has just made the object, from Heidegger's part, of extreme attention. It has been first evoked in the course of the conference on *Gelassenheit*, which figures as the title of the work, and by which the philosopher makes homage (on October 30, 1955), to a compatriot composer, from Messkirch like him, namely Conrad Kreutzer (1780-1831), on the occasion of the commemoration of the 175th anniversary of his death. But Tarasti has particularly meditated upon the various sides of the Commentary (very developed), which followed the conference, and which the author notices he has revised in 1944-45 (which puts them in line for the course in 1943 on Parmenides, to which we earlier made allusion).

One can ask oneself, concerning the Commentary, about the little enigmatic anachrony of the utilization of a written conference about ten years later (Heidegger said himself), in which he dealt with the *techniques* at the contemporary time, but under the cover of a musical reference – so at first an unknown subject, debated as in a Platonian dialogue, with a Scholar (S), Erudite (E) and Professor (P). One will likewise observe that the notion which provided the whole work its title formed an object of historical discussion a little detailed in the Commentary; the conference, more focusing on practice than on theory, furnishes it with its results. What they are?

Gelassenheit, the word stemming from the lexicon of Master Eckhart, evokes, literally, a 'laisser-etre', letting-things-be, which has been forgotten in the French translation, which keeps classically, with the word 'serenity'²⁹. Even when this replacement does not have the elegance which was proposed by Dominique Janicaud, who advised the word, *délaissement*, this is certainly not without foundation. Let us open the Commentary upon the Serenity: in the course of the debate which has been transcribed there among Professor, Scholar and Erudite, we learn by the last one that Master Eckhart wished to define by this word "the rejection of a guilty egoism", or "the abandoning due to divine will, the will of one's own". And whereupon dealing with the essence of serenity the Scholar inquires "Could one accept this definition?" "Eckhart, alas, did not know how to help us" answers the Erudite. In his eyes the serenity is never found to be taken but "inside the domain of the will". And the Professor adds that "We cannot 'think' of 'serenity' *except if we cease to understand by thinking a representation, as one has done until now*"... the idea starts to burn namely that "the essence of the thought has perhaps its place at the bottom of the serenity". But what is this 'bottom' then?

The dialogue, veritable introduction to the exercise of patience, does not seem to be forced to give an answer (at least immediate) to this type of interrogation. Nevertheless, certain passages are more emphasized; their intention is evidently to put us on the right line, and one among them even furnishes us – in eleven replies – with a true key for all the analyses and developments which Eero Tarasti has consecrated to the aesthetics of 'non-vouloir' not-will, and to music, experimental, just like to all that which is by nature *arte povera* from Satie to Arvo Pärt and to minimalists. And all this *by transferring, thanks to the expectation suggested in filigran, the eventuality of accident towards the counter-current of the source*³⁰.

S (Scholar): With the best will of the word I do not manage to figure out the essence of the thought.

P (Professor): What prevents you, is just this better will of the world and the mode of our thought, which is the one of representation.

S.: What should I then do, in Heaven's name?

E (Erudite): Me, I want to ask it, too.

P: We must not do anything, only to wait.

E: Miserable consolation!

P: We should no longer wait for a consolation, bad or good; and is it not so that when waiting for one, we lose the consolation?

S: Why then should we wait? And where should we wait? Rather I would no longer know where I am and who I am.

P: We all, we do not know any longer, when we finish in misusing ourselves.

E: But do we not still have our path?

P: Without doubt; but if we forget too fast our path, we shall turn around our thought.

This fragment – of an almost Beckettian irony: in Heidegger one was waiting for Godot – gives us the idea of the tone of the Commentary, of which Tarasti makes

²⁹ M. Heidegger *Questions III*, French translation by A. Préau, Paris, Gallimard 1966, p. 177.

³⁰ *Ibidem* p. 188-189.

the observation which makes him break with the manner *Sein und Zeit* dealt with the idea of anguish. In fact, rather than giving an epilogue still on the theme of 'one' (*das Man sein*) which would absolutize (and absurdize) the downfall of the *Dasein*, the Commentary calms down the play by proceeding likewise at the negation of Angst, but also *choosing to limit it by its 'positive' aspect*. Yet, the access to this 'positive side' depends, Eero Tarasti said, on an analogous discipline to that of Zen, or even to quietism. In this sense the anguish is that what we make: let it concern the vertigo of certain creators in front of the white page, or the panicked acceleration of a pianist like Arthur Schnabel 'swallowing' suddenly the end of a difficult scale – what is revealed there is the premonition of a leap to the unknown. From here comes Tarasti's pertinent advice: it is better not to imitate Schnabel but moderate the tempo³¹.

The extreme subtlety of the dialogue cited above leads us in fact – as it is sketched in *Monde du silence* by Max Picard or on a page of *La ralentie* by Henri Michaux – to a poetics of *slowness*. Each of the protagonists of the *Gelassenheit* expresses himself in a manner in which the slightest speech vibrates so that even when it appears like an echo to its preceding utterance, it seems to interrupt the arrow of the sense, letting it turn around itself, or slightly deviate from its course. Nothing guarantees that this inflection will endure, but the so reached stasis slows down the tempo of the conservation by forcing the spirit to stop in order to reorient itself. From one moment to another, inequality of the accents, if it does not force the sense beyond its lines, does not launch less each time an expectation of rechange, not at all unquiet but a little tensed because uncompressible.

But should one however, change metaphors and speak here of a line to the goal of sense, namely of a mimesis regarding that which one has to say, and which would combine in a more or less strict manner according to the moments, but never interrupting completely the thread of the words and the series of the thought? It is certain that the 'last Heidegger' has worked in order to persuade his audience about the richness of being in the word.

Yet if it is normal for a being to convey itself, and if it is still necessary that the being would be at home in each word, 'the fact remains' that this would not prevent this word from wanting to say already that which it says, namely, the signified. All occurs as if the being (the signifier) had to abandon every word in order to invest the next one. And it is just this wandering of the being, even if not to mention this panting of the being which suffocates the thought, since the word 'being' implies directly every other word, but without being there really, or without being there any longer. Without ever assuming any precise signification, since it can never identify with some entity. At least, would the word itself practise the non-will, when ceasing to pretend to signify?

But what to do when one is author (since in philosophy there is always someone) – even when it is not the signatory – in order to obtain this negation on the level of an isolated word? Should one not, as it has been emphasized by Serge Botet, when analyzing the linguistic 'technique' of Heidegger, thereby make a conspiracy of the entire text?³² What would such a conspiracy be if not *music*?

³¹ E. Tarasti *op. cit.* p. 82.

³² S. Botet, *Langue, langage et stratégies linguistiques chez Heidegger*, Bern, Peter Lang 1997, especially p. 490-503.

The situation of the *aletheia*, if the 'techniques' and other 'strategies' have infiltrated in a certain manner the Heideggerian Saying, and if one would choose the firm belief like iron, i.e. the doctrina (*doxa*), when persuaded of how Heidegger, one of the most fanatical technophobes of the XXth century, viewed this situation – should it not be taken as totally desperate? Here contrarily takes shape the perspective (which Eero Tarasti has been able to start to elaborate, at least in a partial manner after having read *Gelassenheit*) of an exit beyond the sphere of anguish and existential pathos. In fact an answer, which is in every respect clear, can be given to our question on the manner whereby the author of the *Gelassenheit* would articulate one or another of the two leaves of his work: to juxtapose two texts so manifestly strange to each other, would not relieve any fantasy (nor the slightest idea of provocation), but of an accomplice not yet recognized at the period where the truth could signify only a complete outbreak of *aletheia*. Nevertheless, this accomplice would be susceptible of becoming manifest, parting from the moment when one would exercise not-will – it would be an ethical gesture to a weak obscure and almost-forgotten music, but which speaks our language – if at least there we accept our not-will.

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