Ulysses-Hermes: The Ethic of the Foreigner

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1. *PARADOXES OF RELATIVISM*

Critics of the process of the "technicization" of politics seem to strive above all for an objective of an epistemological order: to defend the arguments of political philosophy from the totalizing claims of scientific rationality, to affirm the existence of an unbridgable gap between ethical and scientific truth.

The collusion between science and politics that has progressively neutralized that gap consists of a sort of "division of labor." Science has the task of analyzing social interests, politics that of representing them. Against this project of a scientific foundation for ethics is counterposed the idea that ethics has no other reason for existing than individuals' more or less free and conscious decision to conform their behavior to certain general rules. The citizen—as individual, difference, freedom—has no interests, but only disinterested opinions. Free opinion cannot be represented because it comes into existence only when it appears publicly, in the course of a dialogic, communicative process.[1] The moment science wants to subsume human action under determinant natural "laws," forgetting that the historical event is the result of

the individual's actions and of their differences, and thus has a quality of the unexpected, the unforeseen, the new, then science becomes religion, it betrays modern disenchantment. That is, it betrays that unrenounceable "promise" of the modern according to which the world will be world-for-the-individual, "the place of opportunities, the prospect of his realization according to his strict autonomy."[2] But the theorists of radical disenchantment encounter two fundamental problems.

First, their conception seems inspired by the traditional contrast between "two cultures." On one side there is science, engaged in the search for regularity, for order, for the necessity that governs natural phenomena. On the other side there is humanistic culture, which investigates the world of social phenomena that, as the product of interaction among irreducible individualities, is not regulated by "laws" but rather by conventions, by artificial rules that are the product of decisions; it is a contingent world that could always be something different than what it is. However, as we shall soon see, such a conception is arguing with a science of necessity that no longer exists.

Second, if every claim to found a transcendental ethics is refused, if the concrete certainty of individuality(ies) as a value is assumed, then the paradox of relativism is set off: How can I go from the given of individuality to value? How can I conjugate in the plural a value that, precisely because it is groundless, aspires to the absolute? That is, how can I keep the autonomy of each individual, of that concrete and multiple individual that is each one of us, from being transformed into the sovereign will of the Stirnerian One?[3]

I would like to start from this second point by citing, almost aphoristically, several short passages from the work of Jankelévitch, one of the contemporary philosophers who has dedicated the most attention to the paradoxes of ethics. "Wretched plural! Every value is in itself infinitely valid, valid right up to the absolute"; "Harmony and complement among values does not exist; values are born independently, without taking account of each other, like liane in the forest"; "It is the plethora of values that constitutes evil! Ambiguous and fleeting, evil is in some way the overabundance of values. . . . a single virtue, separated from all the others, is a vice." But perhaps the most interesting statement is this final one: "Evil is not, however, the plural in itself: virtues turn into dust because love has abandoned them."[4] The point of view toward disenchantment here is completely overturned. It is precisely the failure of the theological foundation, of the prospect of universal love, that renders vain any claim to the

valorization of individuality. The plural loses sense precisely because it triumphs, because it is "emancipated" from every reference to the One.

To combat this thesis, the theorists of disenchantment must demonstrate that their position is not necessarily devoted to skepticism, to absolute relativism. But this can occur only by somehow reintroducing a transcendental principle, a founding instance. And this is precisely what they do, by delegating to politics the role they want to take away from theology and science.

Of course the task is not assigned to concrete political action, but to an ideal model of political rationality, to a *polis* that is founded not on the representation of interests but rather on the communicative process, on the free confrontation of disinterested opinions.

Thus one enters the conceptual field delineated by the thought of Jürgen Habermas, the field of a communicative rationality which is asked to resolve the aporia of modern polytheism, of the conflict between demands formulated with claims of universality, analyzed by Weber. According to Weber, in the disenchanted world it is necessary to take into account not only the dualism between a position of value and reality, but also and especially the pluralism of positions of value—that is, the fact that there exist different divinities one can obey; and ethical conduct can reconcile neither the single positions of value and reality nor the different positions of value.[5] Habermas maintains, however, that in its different moments a fragmented rationality can preserve its unity in the form of procedural rationality. It is in dialogue, in communicative interaction, that the different claims to validity are recomposed on the basis of fixed rules of argumentation.[6]

But when he proposes to redimension the totalizing claims of scientific rationality by referring to a broader field of communicative rationality, Habermas falls into a paradox. In fact he maintains the Weberian distinction, even though he reformulates its assumptions, between ethics of intention and ethics of responsibility: he who acts according to the first applies a principle independently of the calculation of the consequences, while he who follows the second reflects on the value of the consequences of his actions and considers both the possibility of accomplishing them as well as the results. He takes responsibility for controlling events, for their ends, and for their possible "perverse effects." Now this conception, according to which it would in any case be possible to calculate rationally the consequences of action, is quite similar to that which identifies scientific rationality with the ability to foresee particular events.

The point of view of radical disenchantment, therefore, leads in turn to determinism, finding itself forced again to ask scientific reason for illumination. This outcome is even more paradoxical since, as we have already anticipated and as we will attempt now to argue, contemporary science appears increasingly distant from determinism.

The crisis of classical models of scientific rationality, already clear in the transition to statistical-probabilistic models worked out in physics in the early decades of this century, has more recently been extended and widened with the development of the epistemology of the so-called sciences of complexity (cybernetics, systems theory, information theory, artificial intelligence, neurobiology, cognitive psychology, theory of evolution, thermodynamics of unbalanced systems, etc.). In particular, the conceptual apparatus articulated on the notions of natural law and of objective observation of phenomena has shattered into pieces, while the most radical results of constructivist epistemology call into question the very existence of an objective reality and of a scientific knowledge capable even in principle of describing such a reality.

In other words, the assumptions from which epistemology of complexity part are the following: 1) the "subjective" character of every scientific knowledge, due to the fact that the observer is involved in the system observed; 2) the object of knowledge is change rather than invariance. The two points are closely interlinked and intermixed with each other.

The concept of natural law is reformulated: it no longer implies a unilinear causal relation between given events, but the pure and simple recognition that phenomena are subject to constraints, that—to use Mauro Ceruti's terms—"in a given moment of a given possible world, not all possible worlds are accessible."[7] The idea of constraint also involves the existence of invariables, of a "background" that constitutes the reference point for the analysis of change. The background is not taken as a given, however, as an objective attribute of the observed phenomena, but rather as a construction of the observer. The process of scientific knowledge is described as interaction among certain rules laid down as constraints, chance and the contingency of particular events and choices, and the strategies of subjects who utilize rules and chance to construct new possibilities.[8]

We have then a relativistic and opportunistic conception that moves the problematic of scientific objectivity from the realm of subject-object relations, from observer-system observed, to the

realm of intersubjective relations among observers. While the trad-
itional theory of knowledge used to consider the relationship be-
tween knowledge and reality as a more or less close agreement,
constructivism conceives it as an adaptation, in a functional sense,
which in turn is the result of a multiplicity of complementary,
antagonistic, and often contradictory points of view.[9] "Belief" in
the existence of an objective reality is substituted with the recog-
nition of the narrowness of the possible: certain ideas don't work,
our ideas about the world are subject to a selection mechanism.
The theory of knowledge thus tends to devise concepts similar to
those of the theory of evolution, and at the same time interacts
with the latter, throwing the classical evolutionist paradigm into
crisis.

In its classic formulation, the theory of evolution was vitiated
by a teleological principle: natural selection encourages the survi-
val "of the fittest," thus determining constantly "higher" levels
of organization of life." Thanks to this, the evolution of the species
occurs "as if" nature contained an immanent principle of self-per-
fectioning. According to the new evolutionist paradigm, in con-
trast, natural selection functions in a negative way, both in
phylogeny and in knowledge: it is not organisms or ideas that
adapt to reality, it is reality that eliminates whatever is not vital.[10]
Evolution does not embody any "law of form," nor do its
mechanisms operate as if they were following fixed ends. Evolu-
tion is rather a *bricolage*, the art of improvising. Given that or-
ganisms (and theories) cannot be transformed rapidly into some-
thing new every time the environment changes, organs and be-
havioral forms that were intended for other functions (or for no
function at all, that is, the product of casual mutation) must from
time to time be "recycled" to cope with unpredictable environmen-
tal changes.[11] The selection operates with already available mate-
rial and "the resulting imperfections and bizarre solutions, put
together as best as possible, starting with whatever is at hand,
document a process that occurs in time beginning from unsuitable
antecedents, not the work of a perfect architect."[12] If something
like a "natural history" exists, it is a network of peculiarities,
contradictions, freaks, that render it more unpredictable and free
of normative determinations than even human history. Scientific
rationality extended to a search for a few simple and universal
laws capable of explaining all phenomena, even historical-social
phenomena, no longer exists. Epistemology of complexity de-
scribes a world in which the new, the unexpected, the unique,
the individual, are fully at home.

Indeed it is science that today could accuse humanistic culture of betraying disenchantment, an accusation that would be justified from at least two points of view: 1) the insufficient problematization of the concept of the individual; 2) the assumption of communicative rationality as apriori to social relations.

As Pietro Barcellona observes, after the contributions that systems theory and epistemology of complexity have given to sociology, the individual can no longer be determined through the unitary figure of the subject, the owner of expectations and rights, "but spreads out into the multiform reality of existence, to which correspond strategies of action made available by a highly differentiated system."[13] Individuality does not belong to the subject, but to the multiplicity of elements into which the subject is disintegrating.

It becomes problematic, therefore, to assume that communication is an apriori that at once transcends and lays the foundation for individual identity and autonomy. Similarly to what has happened with the relationship between subject-object, knowledge-reality, the problematic of identity and of intersubjective relations is reformulated in terms of the relationship between system and environment. Between the complex relations that constitute the individual subject and the complex relations that constitute social systems, there is no difference in substance, but rather a difference in level. No matter at what level of reality they are placed, identity and autonomy do not require a transcendental base inasmuch as the very notion of system implies the idea of its self-referentiality, that is to say the delimitation of a spatial-temporal field of actions endowed with sense, the possibility that the system may not react automatically to the stimuli of the environment, but may be capable of elaborating the environment's indeterminate complexity depending on its own internal organization.

Systemic "monads," in contrast to those of Leibniz, do not possess a pre-established harmony, they are not guaranteed by a divine order. The notion of the self-referentiality of systems carries pluralism and disenchantment to its extreme consequences, and refutes as well that secularized "theology" that is implicit in the theory of communicative action, in the belief in the existence of an ideal community of dialogue.

We should now ask ourselves what ethical principles should derive from this epistemological conception. Paul Watzlawick attempted to synthesize them in the following way: a person who accepts radical constructivism's point of view would be tolerant, insofar as someone who does not possess the absolute truth, but

only a more-or-less adequate vision of the world, must find it difficult to insist on the primitive idea, "He who is not with me is against me." He or she would, moreover, be responsible not only for his or her own dreams and failed aspirations but, much more generally, also for the known world and for the realities created by the fulfillment of his or her prophecies. Finally, such a person would be free, since whoever was conscious of being the creator of one's own reality would be equally conscious of the possibility of constructing it in a different way.[14]

And yet here the same questions that skeptical relativism can address to theorists of disenchantment arise again: Why should pluralism lay the foundations for tolerance, responsibility, and freedom? What rational arguments can I assert against the monads' will to power? Even if my world is only one among infinite possible worlds, why should it not be more important for me than all the others? Who or what can assure us against the reduction of reality to a pure game of strengths?[15]

2. THREE METAPHORS

Emanuele Severino's diagnosis of the outcomes of Western thought seems then to be confirmed: the collusion between nihilism and disenchantment prevents any argument to be opposed to the theses of skeptical relativism. Philosophical reason and scientific reason are based on the same assumption, that is, on the belief in the "becoming" of the world and on the possibility of dominating it. Philosophical and scientific pre-vision constitute the original form of the will to power.[16]

The paradox of ethics lies in the fact that it proposes to defend individual liberty against projects to "naturalize" human conduct, against its reduction to "unchangables," but, to plead its case, it appeals to the ethics of responsibility, to the calculation of the effects of action. The critique of technical-scientific rationality is formulated in the name of the very attitude that lies at the base of technical-scientific power: the conviction of being master of one's own actions and of mastering the things of the world through action.

In defending the arguments of modern disenchantment, philosophy enters into competition with science on its own ground. And it loses. If in fact the objective is to "liberate" modern man from the terrorism of the law (natural *and* social), from determinism, we have seen that science, in this sense, offers radical solutions. The conceptual apparatus of statistical-probabilistic

physics and of the sciences of complexity delineates a form of "forecast" that does not rule out the unpredictability of events and that salvages the unexpected, the new, the individual, a form of calculus of phenomena that "works but does not guarantee."[17]

For the first time, science has understood that the risk of unchangables is that of frustrating the very founding principle of Western rationality, of rendering "becoming" illusory. It is science that once again, therefore, manages to put itself forward as "the authentic remedy."[18] "Always act in such a way as to increase the number of choices," Heinz von Foerster proclaims.[19] In other words, if the supreme value is the goal of achieving wholes that are ever more ample and more differentiated in scope, the intrinsic ethic of science, then it is necessary to keep the forecast from neutralizing the future, it is necessary to destroy unchangables.

Scientific knowledge thus claims a local, contingent, hypothetical character. Forecasts can always be taken back, but above all the success of the forecast depends in large measure on casual factors. Technical-scientific rationality is the most powerful form of domination precisely because it is open to absolute unpredictability, because the will to power has been able to inscribe casuality and contingency in its own field.

And yet science continues to turn to ethics, it never ceases to question it about the limits of the will to power, it implores the solace of a voice in the desert that science itself created. Who or what keeps the interrogation going despite the impossibility of an answer?

If we do not want to choose the road indicated by Severino—if, that is, we consider the search for a completely alternative principle to Western rationality impossible—then we must ask ourselves whether there is an ethical requirement immanent in scientific knowledge that does not get consumed in the will to power. This requirement does exist. It springs not from the *logos* of science, but rather from science as narration. Radical disenchantment exists only as myth, as specific mythical narration of late modernity. "Theology" and the search for the absolutely other, for the One, for the origin, do not constitute a nostalgic residue of past ages but are a constitutive element of our culture, an element that today is revealed precisely through the scientific image of the world.

In support of this claim I would like to call upon three metaphors used, respectively, by Gregory Bateson, Paul Watzlawick, and Michel Serres.

Bateson recounts that, in order to explain his conception of

life sciences to a group of students interested in quite different subjects, one day he entered the lecture hall with a boiled crab and held this discourse: put yourselves in the shoes of an alien who has arrived on our planet for the first time, and try to ask yourselves how the imaginary visitor might understand that he had before him the remains of a life-form. A discussion then ensued that led to a first conclusion: the crab is symmetrical, here is the fundamental sign! However, someone then noted that the symmetry is imperfect: one of the two chelae is much larger than the other. The dialogue continued, allowing a final and decisive step to be made: the two chelae have different dimensions, but are identical with respect to the parts that comprise them and to their reciprocal relations. Life is recognized, therefore, by the existence of symmetries, rhythms, proportions, by a style of interconnections among its constituent elements. Bateson then encouraged the others to reflect on why this observation is decisive, and led them to the conclusion that this depends on the fact that the knowing mind is organized in the same way as the known object. In this way he succeeded in explaining his idea of the relation between mind and nature, of what he defines as the "connecting structure,"[20] of a "sense" that is born of a world constructed upon the counterpoint between difference and repetition. In the following pages of the book in which this episode is recounted, the discourse is expanded to attack the status of scientific research: the observer can never grasp the totality of the structure, but always works only with parts of systems. Science can never verify, much less prove its hypotheses; it can only explore, attempt to reconstruct the parts that are unfamiliar beginning from those that are known, and be always exposed to the risk of error, of defeat.

The second metaphor is a little story that Paul Watzlawick uses to explain the relationship between knowledge and reality according to constructivist epistemology.[21] Let's imagine, Watzlawick says, that a captain has to cross an unknown channel in a dark night, without the aid of a beacon or other navigational instruments. He will either successfully cross the channel or will be shipwrecked on the rocks. In the second hypothesis it will be clear that he steered a mistaken course, one might say he discovered what the channel was *not*. If in contrast he makes it, this demonstrates only that he did not collide with any point along the coast. He does not know at all how the passage really was. His course was simply suited to a topography that remains unknown, it did not "correspond" to it. All cognitive structures

operate in the same way: they do not establish the "best course," but only one of the possible courses in order to navigate in the world. "Reality" is manifested only negatively when it determines the failure of our expectations. We "know" a point only when we literally bump against it.

The final metaphor, very well known by now, is that of the "Northwest Passage" used by Michel Serres.[22] According to Serres, the blindness that the physical sciences and the human sciences show toward each other, the ignorance of physics with respect to politics and of politics with respect to physics, cannot and must not be overcome by a recomposition, a "synthesis," between the respective points of view. This would in fact involve the collusion of one style of rationality with respect to the other. In contrast, the fluctuations, the questions that the two fields constantly direct toward each other, must be kept open, even while knowing they cannot find an answer. Only this attitude allows the continuation of the search for a way out, only this permits the exploration of the narrow passage (analogous to the famous search for the Northwest Passage between the Atlantic and the Pacific) between opposing "truths." This is a risky and interminable voyage that finds in itself its motivation and sense. The hope is not to land at the goal of a knowledge that is finally omni-comprehensive but rather that, along the twisting road, science learns the lesson of philosophy, at least in part, and vice versa.

The common elements among the three tales are clear: the idea of a voyage, of a difficult, dangerous, and unending exploration; the fact that the voyage takes place in an ambiguous, fluid, inscrutable element, represented by the sea (the symbol is explicit in Watzlawick and Serres, mediated by the crab in Bateson); and finally the fact that this voyage has no true goal but that of continuing indefinitely, of not ending tragically in disaster.

According to the philosophy of the three authors just cited, then, the symbolic horizon of contemporary science is that ancient one of Ulysses, the voyager par excellence, it is the horizon of the *Odyssey*.

Odyssey, poem of voyage, but, as Kerényi rightly emphasizes, of a voyage that is not a ramble.[23] Ulysses is not a "wayfarer." A wayfarer is one who remains attached to the earth, the conqueror who constantly extends his estate. Ulysses is a voyager on account of his very existential condition, he who remains eternally suspended, who almost dissolves in his continuous motion, he who, since he is free of all ties of community, vanishes from everyone,

even from himself. He is the individual who ceases to be subject.

Again according to Kerényi, the *Odyssey* is also the poem that is detached from the values of the heroic life affirmed by the *Iliad*. In the *Iliad* the life of the hero Achilles stands out against the destiny of a unique, conclusive, irreversible death. The life of Ulysses is instead permeated by the risk of a continuous and omnipresent death, the fluctuating world of life in continuous contact with death. Ulysses is suspended without interruption over the abyss that yawns beneath his feet without ever swallowing him once and for all.

Finally, Ulysses is the ambiguous hero, cunning, opportunist, thief, swindler, and oath-breaker. He certainly does not seem to be the ideal model on which to found an ethic! And yet there is a "double divinity" about Ulysses, the figure of a god who, while possessing these negative attributes, ennobles them within the framework of a knowledge of the origins of the world and of life. In fact he who, like Ulysses, feels at home in the shoes of the eternal voyager belongs to the world of Hermes, it is Hermes who is his guide, companion, and messenger. Like Ulysses, Hermes is constantly in motion, he practices the arts of cunning, of theft, of deception, an opportunistic god who knows how to transform contingency and chance into the stuff of constantly new inventions, tricks, novelties. But it is just this relationship with disorder, with fortuitousness, that locates Hermes in a chaotic and primordial dimension out of which is born a knowledge of origins, a knowledge to which the gods of order and of dominion have no access. Hermes is the psychopomp, he who draws and arouses souls from nothingness, and to nothingness reaccompanies them, god of births and deaths, he alone of the gods who knows the mystery of becoming. It is only Hermes, therefore, who can help us look with different eyes at the ethic of nihilism, to understand why radical disenchantment cannot abstain from questioning itself about value, about the sense of things, of life, and of the world.

Not by chance did the figure of Hermes assume a fundamental role in Alexandrian culture and become part of the syncretistic Pantheon of Gnostic theology. The idea that the world we live in is ambiguous, illusory, contaminated by the errors of an evil demiurge; the idea of the unity of contraries, the conviction that different truths can live together and be superimposed without ceasing to be truths; the idea that reality can never be grasped or dictated, that our knowledges are nothing but metaphors and that these metaphors refer to other metaphors, in an infinite hermeneutic circle—all this goes together with belief in the existence of a remote

and veiled truth, of a unique origin the memory of which is lost, of a hidden and by now impotent God who waits to be reawakened by our questions, by our search for salvation, for sense.

Well then, the contemporary gnosis, our gnosis, is science—the very science of nihilism and disenchantment, the science that has abolished every illusion of certainty, of objectivity, of sense from our age; the science of complexity that has given life to a universe of singularities, unpredictables, "monads." It is just this science that admits that disenchantment is impossible, that the demand for sense is constantly reborn out of the ashes, that the monads are necessarily destined to question themselves about the origin, about the One.

The physicist Bernard D'Espagnat wrote:

> The field of the rational and of science is not *reality in itself*, rather it is the whole of the phenomena (as complex as they appear), it is the lived, empirical reality. As far as it is beyond the possibility, at least in part, of the rational and of science, it is neither phenomenon nor action . . . it is precisely that indispensible something about non-solipsistic thought called Being, or reality in itself.[24]

While recognizing that contemporary physics has by now dispelled any substantialist illusion, any "objective" referent of knowledge, D'Espagnat alludes to a *distant*, *veiled* reality whose existence cannot be left out of consideration without dispelling the very sense of scientific experience and research.

Let us return to the principles of an ethic intrinsic to science, which Watzlawick, as we have seen, sought to synthesize in terms of tolerance, responsibility, and freedom. From the rational point of view, pluralistic epistemology is unable to justify these principles. The "monadology" of complexity has no arguments with which to defend ethical value, to tell us why each monad should not absolutize the pure given of its existence as value. Those principles emerge rather from the myth of science, from the scientific image of the world. It is from the mythical narration of radical disenchantment that the truth emerges: the ethical question derives from nothing, it is without any rational argument, it is a sheer question of sense, of salvation.

Jankelévitch writes:

> Ethics goes in the direction of Being and asserts its unconditioned value: nonetheless, due to the contradictory demands of the monads, one cannot say yes to everything. Our condition becomes the relative preferability of more being to less being.[25]

Only relativism can imagine the essence of the ethical question. The limit of the will to power cannot be established by the proceedings of communicative rationality, by freely accepted rules of intersubjective relations. The freedom of the ethical decision is never guaranteed, it is an event that is determined case by case. And this event does not spring from the acknowledgment of the rights, needs, and demands of other monads, of the infinite number of other individuals to whom I should grant equal dignity, but from the fact that I cannot abstain from asking myself about the absolutely Other.

1. The formulation is Paolo Flores D'Arcais's in an article ("Il disincanto tradito," *Micromega*, n. 2 [1986]) that opened a debate that lasted for two years in the pages of *Micromega* and *Alfabeta*. In addition to Flores, the following authors contributed: Salvatore Veca, Gian Enrico Rusconi, Luciano Canfora, *Micromega*, n. 3 (1986); Gianni Vattimo, Roberto Esposito, *Micromega* n. 2 (1987); Carlo Formenti, *Alfabeta*, n. 101 (October 1987); Biagio De Giovanni, Roberto Esposito, *Alfabeta*, n. 103 (December 1987); Alessandro Dal Lago, Umberto Curi, *Alfabeta*, n. 105 (February 1988); Francesco Fistetti, *Alfabeta*, n. 108 (May 1988).

2. Paolo Flores D'Arcais, op. cit.

3. Ibid.

4. Vladimir Jankelévitch, *Le paradoxe de la morale* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1981); Ital. tr., *Il paradosso della morale* (Florence; Hopefulmonster, 1986), pp. 178-80.

5. On M. Weber's polytheism, cf. Wolfgang Schluchter, *Rationalismus der Weltbeherrschung* (Frankfurt am Main; Suhrkamp Verlag, 1980); Ital. tr., *Il paradosso della razionalizzazione* (Naples: Liguori, 1987); and *Die Entwicklung des okzidentalen Rationalismus* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr Paul Siebeck, 1979); Ital. tr., *Lo sviluppo del razionalismo occidentale* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1987).

6. Cf. Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981); Ital. tr., *Teoria dell'agire comunicativo* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1986).

7. Mauro Ceruti, *Il vincolo e la possibilità* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1986), p. 44.

8. The definition is M. Ceruti's, op. cit.

9. Cf. M. Ceruti, op cit., p. 32.

10. Cf. Ernst von Glasersfeld, "Introduzione al construttivismo radicale," in *La realtà inventata*, ed. Paul Watzlawick, Ital. tr., Milan: Feltrinelli, 1988. [*Die Erfundene Wirklichkeit*, R. Piper & Co. Verlag, München, 1981.]

11. On the new evolutionist paradigm, cf. S. J. Gould, *The Flamingo's Smile* (New York-London: Norton, 1985); Ital. tr., *Il sorriso del fenicottero* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1987).

12. S. J. Gould, op. cit., p. 27.

13. Pietro Barcellona, *L'individualismo proprietario* (Turin: Boringhieri, 1987), p. 121.

14. Paul Watzlawick, op. cit.

15. These are the objections Vattimo raised to Flores D'Arcais in the previously cited debate (cf. "Il disincanto e il dileguarsi," *Micromega*, n. 2 [1987]).

16. Cf. Emanuele Severino, *La tendenza fondamentale del nostro tempo* (Milan: Adelphi, 1988).

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Heinz von Foerster, "Costruire una realtà," in *La realtà inventata*, op. cit.

20. Cf. Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature*, 1979; Ital. tr., *Mente e natura*, (Milan: Adelphi, 1979).

21. Paul Watzlawick, op. cit.

22. Michel Serres, *Hermès V. Le passage du Nord-Quest* (Paris: Les éditions de Minuit, 1980); Ital. tr., *Passagio a Nord-Ovest* (Parma: Pratiche, 1984).

23. Karoly Kerényi, *Miti e misteri* (Turin: Boringhieri, 1979).

24. Bernard D'Espagnat, *Un atome de sagesse* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1982); Ital. tr. *Un atome di saggezza* (Florence: Hopefulmonster, 1987), p. 18.

25. V. Jankèlevitch, *Traité des vertus* (Paris: Flammarion, 1983); Ital. tr. *Trattato delle virtu* (Milan: Garzanti, 1987), p. 30.