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WHAT IS PHILOSOPHY? WHICH PHILOSOPHY? WHY PHILOSOPHY? PHILOSOPHY AS DISCOURSE IN THE THOUGHT OF AUREL CODOBAN

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Abstract: It has not been sufficiently noticed that Aurel Codoban's metaphilosophical project proposes a distinctive definition of philosophy: philosophy as discourse. This definition is peculiar because it dissolves several determinations through which philosophy has traditionally understood itself, above all wisdom and knowledge. The present study reconstructs the conceptual path by which Codoban arrives at this definition and asks what remains philosophically specific once philosophy relinquishes both the privilege of knowledge and the classical authority of wisdom. I argue that Codoban's account assigns philosophical discourse a double and interconnected task: first, to produce meaning by articulating the significations through which a world becomes intelligible; second, to alter the meaning of the world indirectly by transforming the consciousness of those who practice and receive philosophical discourse. The conception developed in *Philosophy as a Literary Genre* also anticipates important directions of Codoban's later work. The definition of philosophy as a discourse that articulates meaning and transforms consciousness reappears, in a different theoretical register, in *The Sacred and Ontophany. For a New Philosophy of Religion*, where the problematic of meaning is extended toward the experience of the sacred. The later philosophy of religions may thus be read as a continuation of the metaphilosophical project outlined here: if philosophy organizes the dialogue between humanity and world through discourse, the philosophy of religions investigates one of the deepest horizons of this dialogue, namely the manifestation of the sacred within human experience. Thus, ontophany may be understood as the continuation, within the philosophy of religions, of the inquiry into meaning that Codoban had previously established as the constitutive core of philosophy as discourse.

Keywords: metaphilosophy; philosophy; discourse; meaning; transformed consciousness; experience of the sacred; ontophany; Aurel Codoban

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1. Introduction: The Question Philosophy Turns upon Itself

What is philosophy? The question appears elementary only for as long as philosophy can still rely upon an inherited image of itself (and perhaps even inherited says too much here, since what is inherited is never simply received: it is repeated, displaced, sometimes even mistaken for something else etc.). Once that image becomes uncertain, however, the question itself changes its status. It is no longer merely a request for a definition. Or, more cautiously, it cannot be only that. It becomes an event internal to philosophy itself: philosophy turns upon itself and asks what kind of practice it has become, why it should continue to exist and, perhaps more importantly, under what form it might still be possible.

Aurel Codoban's *Philosophy as a Literary Genre* (Codoban 2005) begins precisely at this threshold. Contemporary philosophy, he argues, is haunted by a suspicion that is difficult to dismiss (and perhaps even more difficult to admit): that philosophy has become commentary. Commentary on its Greek past, commentary on science, commentary on literature, commentary on culture. Commentary, in short. Yet the rhetoric of the „death of philosophy", for all its apparently radical force, names the problem badly. Cultural forms do not simply disappear. They metamorphose (the word is perhaps too strong, although I am not sure another would do better); they alter their functions, abandon some of their former privileges, acquire others, and redistribute their relations with the cultural forms alongside which, and sometimes against which, they exist (Codoban 2005, 6). The serious question, then, is not whether philosophy is dead. What, after all, would it mean for philosophy to die? The question is rather in what form philosophy can still exist today. Or, more precisely, what we are still entitled to call philosophy once a certain historical figure of philosophy is no longer able to sustain itself.

Codoban reformulates this question within the thematic field of language and communication: what kind of cultural discourse is philosophy? The displacement is radical, although at first sight it may not appear so. Attention moves from philosophical doctrines to philosophical discursivity, from what philosophers speak about to the way philosophical speech organizes signification, reference, logic, rhetoric and, finally, reception. Philosophy becomes a metaphilosophical problem because its identity is no longer secured by a privileged object. After having been organized around „Being" and, subsequently, around „Knowledge", philosophy enters a third constellation, that of language and communication. The „thematization of communication" as the „last"

philosophical paradigm, after that of „Being" and „Knowledge", is probably one of the most powerful metaconcept that Aurel Codoban proposes. Even if it is explicitly present in his doctoral thesis transformed into a book (Codoban 1984), it is first developed in the princeps edition of *Philosophy as a Literary Genre* (1992). Perhaps, a different study aiming to reconstruct such a strong thesis present in all his books (Codoban 1995; Codoban 1998; Codoban 2001; Codoban 2003; Codoban 2005; Codoban 2011; Codoban 2013; Codoban 2023; Codoban 2025) is necessary. What follows from this is not insignificant: philosophy must now attempt to define itself as a practice of signification and as cultural discourse. The importance of this shift becomes even clearer when viewed from the perspective of Codoban's later writings. In *The Sacred and Ontophany* (Codoban 1998), the thematic field changes from discourse to religion and the sacred, yet the underlying philosophical concern remains remarkably consistent. The question is no longer only how meaning is produced within discourse, but also how certain privileged forms of meaning become manifest within religious experience. In this respect, the philosophy of religions developed in the later work appears as a natural extension of the earlier metaphilosophical inquiry. The continuity is especially visible in the mediating role assigned to philosophy. In *Philosophy as a Literary Genre*, philosophical discourse mediates between humanity and world by organizing meanings. In *The Sacred and Ontophany*, philosophy of religions mediates between the human and the sacred by interpreting the forms through which sacredness becomes manifest in culture and experience. The later work therefore broadens the horizon of the former without abandoning its essential assumptions concerning meaning, interpretation and transformation.

The thesis of the present article is that „philosophy as discourse" contains a more fundamental claim than the formula „philosophy as a literary genre" might initially suggest. The latter tells us something about philosophy's place within a contemporary cultural topology; the former attempts to tell us what its mode of existence is. The distinction is small only apparently. Codoban reconstructs philosophy as a distinctive operation whose medium is meaning. And here, perhaps, we arrive at the difficulty around which everything else will turn: meaning.

The operation in question has two interconnected functions. Philosophy produces sense by submitting historically sedimented significations to logical articulation. At the same time, it changes the world available to consciousness by changing the network through which consciousness understands that world: „philosophy is a discourse that, by

organizing the totality of the meanings of signifying rationality through the logic of operational rationality, in fact organizes the dialogue between humanity and the world. Discursively, it transforms the encounter between humanity and the world into a meaningful message. And meaning, as the discursive instance of the absolute in philosophy, is the place where humanity and the world are reconciled." (Codoban 2005, 87); „the reverberation of meaning alters the entire state of consciousness, giving it the structure of an experience of the world." (Codoban 2005, 88). Two functions, then, although it is not at all certain that, in the end, they really are two. For if changing the articulation of meanings changes the world as it is given to consciousness, and if changing consciousness means changing the way in which a world can appear at all, then producing sense and transforming consciousness may be two names (two sides?) of the same philosophical movement.

And perhaps this is where we must begin. Not with philosophy as something already given, whose definition we lack, but with philosophy as something that has first to discover, each time again and again, how it can still be philosophy.

2. What Is Philosophy?

The temptation to answer the question „what is philosophy?" by supplying a timeless essence belongs, perhaps, to the very conception of philosophy that Codoban unsettles. Or, to put it somewhat differently, it belongs to philosophy's persistent hope that beneath everything it has been (and it has been many things) there must remain something that it has always been. Yet the history of philosophy does not disclose a single concept lying intact beneath changing doctrines. What it gives us instead are transformations of philosophical practice within changing discursive formations (Codoban 2005, 22).

Philosophy has repeatedly defined itself from the standpoint of what a culture considered decisive. Under the thematization of Being, its privileged resources were ontology and categories. Under the thematization of knowledge, it defined itself cognitively and methodologically in relation to science. Under the thematization of communication and language, however, its appropriate reflexive category becomes discourse. This is not simply a change of vocabulary. If it were only that, very little would have happened. What changes is the place from which philosophy can say what it is (Codoban, 87-92).

This historical displacement should not be confused with relativism (although the suspicion, admittedly, is difficult to avoid). To say that

philosophy defines itself historically does not mean that anything whatsoever may count as philosophy. Rather, *the movement from essence to discourse* makes possible another, and perhaps more exact, question: what persists at the level of signifying practice when objects, genres, institutions, and philosophical self-descriptions change?

For Codoban, this is the level at which one must remain. The proper object of analysis lies in effective discursive practice and in the relations it maintains with neighboring cultural discourses. Philosophy is bordered by science, literature, religion, ideology and common experience. It touches all of them (sometimes too much), borrows from all of them, distances itself from all of them and, according to the configuration of a culture, finds itself pushed closer to one or another. Its cultural figure therefore changes when these neighboring practices change. Its identity is historical, then, without being arbitrary. A delicate formula, certainly. But perhaps philosophy has always inhabited precisely such delicate formulas: neither this nor that, and yet not simply something between the two.

3. Why Philosophy?

The question „why philosophy?" becomes urgent at the very moment philosophy can no longer justify itself as superior knowledge. If philosophy could claim to know not simply one region of reality but the principles of knowledge itself, its necessity seemed, if not guaranteed, at least understandable. Things become more difficult once modern science transforms knowledge by making it experimental, mathematized and operational.

Scientific discourse tends toward monosemy and referentiality because it has something determined to do. It specifies objects, establishes procedures, constructs operations. It succeeds, one might say, precisely by refusing much of what ordinary language carries with it. Its words must mean one thing rather than several things at once, or at least they must aspire to do so. Philosophy cannot do this. Or, better: if it did it completely, it would cease to be philosophy and become something else.

Under these conditions, philosophy can no longer credibly govern science from above as a universal theory of knowledge. The ambition to become „the science of science", or still more ambitiously „the science of the absolute", loses its discursive ground. A loss, certainly. But perhaps one of those losses without which one never quite understands what one had. For what philosophy loses here is also what allows it to discover something else about itself. Philosophy works with significations. It does not transform historically sedimented language into an entirely monosemic

nomenclature; neither does it subordinate meaning to experimental operations outside language. It orders, connects, tests, separates and brings together. Above all, it reduces polysemy without ever being able (or perhaps without ever really wanting) to abolish it completely (Codoban 2005, 63).

Why philosophy, then? Because there remains something that facts and procedures, however indispensable they may be, cannot do for us: articulate the world as *meaningful*. Human beings do not inhabit only a collection of objects upon which operations can be performed. We inhabit (is inhabit still too metaphorical here?) a world already traversed by meanings, distinctions, memories, names and expectations. Culture mediates between human being and world; philosophy performs this mediation discursively, putting into order the dialogue between them (Codoban 2005, 62, 63). Not ending the dialogue. Not even solving it. Putting it into order may already be enough.

4. Which Philosophy? Beyond Wisdom and Knowledge

Etymology has a peculiar authority in philosophy. Perhaps too peculiar. Because philo-*sophia* presents itself as love of wisdom, one is easily tempted to make wisdom philosophy's proper value, the value from which everything else might follow. Codoban nevertheless complicates this apparently obvious solution.

Wisdom does not stand beside scientific truth, artistic beauty, moral goodness or the sacred as simply one more autonomous cultural value (Codoban 2005, 10). It is better understood as an activity issuing from a rational disposition and coordinating values through a reasoned position of consciousness toward reality as a whole. Wisdom, then, is less one value among others than a certain relation to values. It does not disappear. But neither can it, by itself, guarantee philosophy's contemporary identity. Nor can philosophy simply return to initiatory discourse in its ancient or religious sense. One cannot simply go back (even if philosophy has often imagined that going back means beginning again).

And yet something of initiation remains. This „something" is important. Codoban will preserve the initiatory function, but only after transforming it, weakening it perhaps, and precisely through this weakening making it philosophically usable again. He will call it „profane initiation." (Codoban 2005, 89) Which philosophy, then? Neither scientism nor a restoration of sapiential authority. Neither science inadequately practiced nor literature unaware of itself. Philosophical discourse is less monosemic than scientific discourse and less polysemic than literary

discourse. It is less operationally referential than science and, nevertheless, more referential than modern literature. Its strange, perhaps even uncomfortable conjunction is that of polysemy and reference. Strange because the two appear to pull discourse in opposite directions. Necessary because philosophical reference to the world is never immediate; it is mediated by sense (Codoban 2005, 64, 66).

And here the question begins to change again. We are no longer asking only what philosophy says. We are asking what happens between language and world when philosophy speaks.

5. Philosophy as Discourse

We arrive here at what seems to me the conceptual center of Codoban's proposal: the principle of philosophical signifying practice consists in the action of logic upon signification. The formula appears almost too clean. The thing itself is not.

Literary discourse organizes signification through the relatively free play of semantic relations. Modern scientific discourse organizes statements through logical relations directed toward rigorous designation and operation. Philosophy does something different, although it never ceases to borrow from both. It begins from the significations of real language and subjects them to logical constraints without converting them into strictly scientific denotations. It reduces polysemy while preserving enough of its semantic density for philosophical sense to remain possible. Enough? Perhaps the word is too quantitative. What matters is that philosophy cannot suppress the semantic thickness from which it begins. Something always remains. A residue, one might say, if „residue" did not make what remains sound accidental. But this remainder is not accidental. It is precisely what prevents the philosophical concept from becoming a scientific term.

Philosophy therefore inhabits a structurally unstable space where logic and rhetoric, concept and metaphor, denotation and connotation continually correct one another. The instability matters. It should not be understood as a defect that a sufficiently rigorous philosophy would eventually overcome. Were logic completely to triumph, philosophical language would aspire to the condition of axiomatized science. Were signification to proliferate without logical restriction, philosophy would become indistinguishable from poetic discourse. Philosophy is neither one failure nor the other. Its identity consists, rather, in sustaining the tension. This is also why philosophical forms themselves become philosophically significant. Aphorism, dialogue, letter, commentary, essay, utopia,

meditation, system: these are not merely external containers into which an invariant philosophical content may be poured. The choice of a form participates in the production and reception of philosophical sense. *Discursivity therefore belongs to thought itself*. A statement easily written. More difficult to follow through all its consequences. For if this is true, philosophy cannot first think and only afterwards find words for what it has thought. The words, their order, their tensions, perhaps even their hesitations already belong to what thinking is doing.

6. Meaning as the Proper Medium of Philosophy

The distinction among signification, sense and reference allows Codoban to say more precisely what philosophical discourse produces. Discourse moves from significations toward sense and reference. Sense, however, is not simply another signification, larger than the others. It includes both global signification and the mode in which this signification is given for interpretation. The difference is decisive, even if at first it seems excessively technical. Philosophical reference is mediated by sense. In other words, philosophy does not simply point toward an independently delimited object and then attempt to describe it more or less correctly. It reconfigures the semantic field through which the thing toward which it points can first become intelligible as what it is (it becomes increasingly difficult here to say which comes first, *the thing* or *the meaning* through which the thing can appear. Perhaps this difficulty is not an obstacle to Codoban's proposal but one of its most important consequences.)

This provides the basis for the first function attributed here to philosophy: philosophical discourse produces meanings and articulates the meaning of the world's discourses. But „produces" requires an immediate precaution. Philosophy does not produce meaning from nothing. There is no philosophical *creatio ex nihilo* of sense. It receives a language already sedimented by history, collective practices, knowledge, imagination, traditions, previous discourses and the countless ordinary uses through which words have become both familiar and, precisely because they are too familiar, difficult to see. Codoban compares this semantic layer to stones removed from old buildings and reused in new constructions (Codoban 2005, 65). The image says almost everything. The stones are old; the building is not. And the new building does not abolish the traces left upon the stones by everything they have previously borne. Philosophy works upon this inherited semantic material. It reduces ambiguity, reorganizes relations and establishes distinctions so that a world may appear as intelligible. Not the world once and for all. A world. Perhaps even

this requires qualification. For philosophy retains a peculiar relation to the whole. Yet the whole is no longer what the classical philosophical system hoped to possess as absolute knowledge. It becomes a horizon against which meanings acquire their articulation.

Philosophy thus ceases to be a sovereign super-discourse entitled to validate every specialized knowledge. Its contribution is different and, perhaps, more modest: articulation. It exposes tensions among significations, tests conceptual oppositions, reconstructs implicit presuppositions, and makes visible horizons within which discourses can mean what they mean. More modest, certainly. But is it really less?

7. The Transformation of Consciousness: Philosophy as Profane Initiation

Something changes when Codoban moves from the semantic structure of philosophical discourse to its pragmatics. Until this point one could still imagine that philosophy's task is principally to organize meanings. Now another possibility opens: in organizing meanings, philosophical discourse may also reorganize the one for whom those meanings mean. Philosophy does not primarily operate upon things. It works upon consciousness. This proposition needs to be taken literally, but not too literally (a familiar philosophical inconvenience). As philosophical discourse unfolds, significations and logical syntheses accumulate, correct one another, enter into tension, and gradually *produce a sense* that reverberates across the field of consciousness. What changes is not a single proposition held by a subject. Something changes in the organization through which propositions, things and experiences can be encountered at all. Codoban calls the passage from one state of consciousness toward another experience of the world a „profane initiation." The expression is exceptionally exact because each of its two words corrects the other. Initiation says transformation, passage, a before and an after. Profane refuses the sacred authority through which traditional initiation guaranteed that passage. Something happens, but without mystery being mystified. This is the second function of philosophy: philosophical discourse changes the meaning of the world by modifying the consciousness of the person who practices or receives it.

The later development of Codoban's philosophy of religions confirms the fundamental importance of this notion. In *Sacru și ontofanie*, religious experience itself is approached through categories that preserve the transformative and initiatory dimensions already associated here with philosophical discourse. What appears in *Philosophy as a Literary Genre* as

a transformation of consciousness through discourse becomes, in the subsequent philosophy of religions, an investigation of those symbolic manifestations of the sacred capable of reconfiguring human self-understanding. The movement from discourse to sacredness does not replace the earlier thesis but expands its field of application.

Again, a precaution. Philosophy does not transform physical reality through a technology of operations. It does not move the objects before us. It changes, rather, the world-for-consciousness by modifying the relational network through which that world is grasped. A distinction understood differently, a category dismantled, an opposition reorganized can change what appears possible, necessary, relevant or questionable within experience. The objects remain exactly where they were. And yet, in a sense difficult to dismiss, the world is no longer quite the same. Transformation also requires duration. One cannot simply extract the final philosophical proposition from the path that produced it and suppose that nothing has been lost. Philosophical truth cannot be, under no circumstances, separated from its path (something we all know, as Codoban does, from Heidegger), from the movement through which discourse leads consciousness to it. The discourse and the consciousness traversing it form what Codoban calls a „semiotic machine" (Codoban 2005, 90). Consciousness struggles with what it does not understand and, in that struggle, becomes a consciousness capable of understanding differently.

Here philosophy unexpectedly recovers something of initiation without recovering esotericism. Philosophical education is consequently neither the transmission of information nor the acceptance of doctrine. It is (when it succeeds; and nothing guarantees that it will) a restructuring of the semantic and logical habits by which experience is organized. One enters the discourse with a world. One may leave it with another.

8. Codoban between Deleuze/Guattari and Hadot

At this point a comparison becomes necessary. Necessary not because every philosophical position must be legitimized by being placed beside better-known positions, but because placing Codoban beside Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari and Pierre Hadot allow us to see more exactly what is peculiar about his answer. Three answers, then, to one question. Or, perhaps, three places in which the philosophical act is made to occur.

For Deleuze and Guattari, philosophy is neither contemplation, nor reflection, nor communication (Deleuze/Guattari 1999, 10). Its proper task is the creation of concepts. Concepts are not waiting somewhere for

philosophers to find them. There is no *sky of concepts* (the image is extraordinarily efficient, Deleuze 1999, 9) from which philosophy receives what it subsequently names. Concepts must be invented, constructed, created. This is a strong claim. Philosophy is creative or it is not philosophy. The concept, moreover, is not an abstract universal under which things can simply be collected. It is a singular construction composed of heterogeneous yet inseparable components and defined in relation to a problem (Deluze 1999, 15). Philosophy therefore does not primarily represent a world already constituted independently of philosophical thought. It creates conceptual configurations through which problems become thinkable. The proximity to Codoban is obvious.

But perhaps it is precisely obvious proximities that require the most caution. Both accounts refuse to reduce philosophy to an accumulation of propositions corresponding to independently given objects. Both resist the assimilation of philosophy to science. Both insist, in different vocabularies, that something happens in philosophy that cannot be described as the passive reception of an already constituted reality. And yet the difference is decisive. For Deleuze and Guattari, the philosophical event is concentrated in the production of the concept. For Codoban, it is concentrated in the transformation of already available significations through their logical articulation. Perhaps we can put the distinction more simply: Deleuze and Guattari begin with what philosophy creates; Codoban begins with what philosophy inherits. The difference does not oppose creation to repetition. Things would be too easy if it did. Codoban's philosophy also creates (think only at „profane initiation"), just as Deleuzian concepts have histories and borrow components from other concepts. The difference concerns, rather, where one places the philosophical emphasis. Deleuzian philosophy is productive in the strong sense of conceptual invention. Codobanian philosophy is discursive and hermeneutic: it works upon sedimented meanings to disclose, reorganize and provisionally stabilize the intelligibility of the World. Provisionally. The word matters. For meanings, unlike stones, do not stay where they have been placed.

The distinction can be sharpened by asking about the material upon which philosophy works. Deleuze and Guattari begin with problems and with the conceptual components philosophy constructs in response to them. Codoban begins, so to speak, one step earlier (although „earlier" is obviously not chronological): with the polysemic significations of historical language. Philosophy begins when logic starts working upon them. But logic does not finish the work. Indeed, if it finished it completely,

philosophy itself might disappear. Something of signification remains beyond logical determination. This „residue" explains why philosophical discourse can never acquire the transparent monosemy toward which scientific discourse tends. Hence Codoban's image of philosophical discourse as a fabric (Codoban 2005, 69): logic threads itself through the warp of significations until an image of the World emerges. The metaphor should not be dismissed too quickly. A fabric does not contain thread on one side and warp on the other. Once woven, one cannot remove one without undoing the whole. What Deleuze and Guattari conceptualize principally in terms of creation, Codoban therefore conceptualizes in terms of articulation and production of sense.

Pierre Hadot takes us somewhere else. If Deleuze and Guattari relocate philosophy from representation to creation, Hadot relocates it from theoretical discourse to the mode of existence of the philosopher (Hadot 1999). Or perhaps relocating is already misleading. His thesis is historical before it becomes normative: ancient philosophy, reconstructed from the forms in which it was practiced, cannot adequately be understood as the production of abstract systems. Philosophical discourse belongs to a larger existential practice whose function is formative rather than merely informative. *Philosophy is a way of life* (see entirely the second part of the book). The formula has become so familiar that there is a danger of no longer hearing what it says. It says that philosophical discourse does not have its end entirely within itself (Hadot 1999, 31). One speaks, reads, meditates, examines, remembers and contemplates in order to become otherwise. Spiritual exercises, whether discursive, meditative, contemplative or practical, are directed toward a modification of the practitioner. The question therefore becomes not merely: what does philosophy say? It becomes: what does philosophy make of the one who philosophizes?

Here the distance from Codoban initially seems greater. Hadot relocates the center of gravity from discourse to life. Codoban relocates it from doctrine to the functioning of discourse. The two movements are not identical. For Hadot, philosophical discourse belongs within an existential choice and within the practices through which that choice becomes a particular manner of living. For Codoban, the specificity of philosophy has to be discovered precisely within discursive practice, in the action of logic upon signification. Yet perhaps we should not move too quickly from this difference to an opposition. Because Codoban's notion of profane initiation brings Hadot unexpectedly close again. For neither thinker is philosophy neutral information. Philosophy must do something to the one who

encounters it. A discourse that leaves consciousness entirely unchanged would, from the perspective opened by Codoban, fail to realize an important part of philosophical efficacy. Likewise, for Hadot, a philosophical doctrine separated completely from the form of life it is meant to sustain risks becoming something other than philosophy in its ancient sense. The difference, then, is not transformation versus non-transformation. It is a difference concerning the medium and scope of transformation. For Codoban, philosophical discourse restructures the consciousness that traverses it. For Hadot, philosophical practice transforms one's manner of living. Where, then, does philosophy happen (if „happens" is in fact the right word)? For Hadot, it happens to and through the subject: one does not simply acquire a discourse; one becomes, or attempts to become, otherwise. For Deleuze and Guattari, the decisive occurrence takes place in conceptual creation: philosophy exists insofar as new concepts are made possible. With Codoban, things become at once simpler and more complicated (as perhaps they had to). Philosophy happens in discourse, yet not simply because philosophy is discourse. It happens when discourse begins to work upon meanings already there: inherited, worn, displaced, sometimes almost invisible from excessive use, and makes a World, together with its sense, appear differently.

We can therefore speak of three forms of philosophical novelty: existential transformation in Hadot, conceptual invention in Deleuze and Guattari, and the rearticulation of meaning in Codoban. But even this neat division should make us suspicious. Hadot obviously requires discourse; Deleuze and Guattari obviously require language and inherited concepts; Codoban obviously requires creativity and transformation. The distinction does not separate three sealed territories. It indicates three centers of gravity. Seen in this way, Codoban occupies a peculiar position between the existential and constructivist accounts of philosophy. Against a purely Hadotian description, philosophy cannot be exhausted by a way of life because its contemporary specificity must also be located in a particular organization of discourse. Against a purely Deleuzian description, philosophical novelty need not be conceived exclusively as the invention of unprecedented concepts because philosophy always begins within a linguistically and historically inherited field of significations. What remains? A labor of sense.

Perhaps this is Codoban's most distinctive answer: philosophy is a historically renewed labor of sense, a discursive practice in which logic works upon the polysemy of language so that World and meaning may emerge together. Not once. Again and again.

9. Irony

The tension between logic and signification has what might be called a stylistic counterpart. But „stylistic" is too weak if it suggests ornament. It has an attitude corresponding to it: irony. Codoban reads Socratic irony and its subsequent transformations as manifestations of a specifically philosophical disposition. Irony is not merely humor, still less a rhetorical technique by which the philosopher hides what he already knows. It names the reciprocal distrust between logic and signification (Codoban 2005, 85). Logic mistrusts uncontrolled polysemy. Signification mistrusts the absolutism of logic. Philosophy requires both suspicions. Logic corrodes the proliferation through which every meaning could endlessly become another meaning. Signification, in turn, loosens the tendency of logic to imagine that what it has determined is all that could possibly have been said. Between them, philosophical sense occurs.

This is perhaps why irony belongs so intimately to philosophy. It prevents meaning from congealing too quickly into dogma. And it is dialogical, even where no explicit dialogue is present. A philosophical discourse that questions its own significations while subjecting them to rational articulation models (and perhaps even produces) a consciousness capable of maintaining critical distance not only from the world but also from itself. Here irony and profane initiation converge. To be transformed philosophically is not simply to replace one belief with another. It is to acquire, however precariously, the ability to place one's own significations at a distance without abandoning them altogether. The distance must never become absolute. If it did, we would perhaps no longer have irony but indifference. Nor may proximity become complete. If it did, we would have dogma. Philosophical consciousness lives (if the verb may be allowed here) somewhere between the two.

Why, then, call philosophy a literary genre? The question returns, and it should return. Otherwise the title of Codoban's project risks misleading us precisely at the point where it sought to clarify. The expression does not mean that philosophy is literature. It indicates philosophy's contemporary cultural position once the relations among the principal cultural discourses have been transformed. Modern science becomes increasingly operational, increasingly capable of producing objects as well as referring to them, and increasingly dependent upon formalized languages whose success requires the restriction of semantic ambiguity. Philosophy can no longer occupy that discursive territory without either becoming epistemology or imitating science badly. It therefore gravitates toward the literary pole because it

remains, fundamentally, a practice of signification. Gravitates toward it. It does not arrive there.

For philosophy's manner of signification and, no less importantly, its pragmatics distinguish it from literature. Philosophy retains logical constraint, reference, method and a claim to truth, even if none of these functions exactly as it does in scientific discourse. Philosophy is therefore literary without becoming literature. Or, to say it more cautiously, its contemporary cultural location brings it close enough to literature for the comparison to become illuminating and keeps it far enough away for philosophical difference not to disappear. Here the postmodern condition does not abolish philosophy. It makes its task both more precarious and more visible. Philosophy can no longer regain authority simply by pretending to speak from outside discursivity. There is no innocent metalanguage from which it can judge all other discourses while remaining itself untouched by language (see how Codoban reeds Derrida, Codoban 2005, 45,46,47,48). Its critical possibility must therefore lie somewhere else: in working within language while making the production of sense itself thematic. This also alters the meaning of metaphilosophy.

Metaphilosophy could easily appear narcissistic, philosophy looking at itself because it no longer knows what to say about anything else. And undoubtedly such a danger exists. But in Codoban's construction, philosophy's return upon itself has another possible sense. By asking how philosophical discourse works, philosophy may discover again what it can do. The apparent withdrawal becomes a possible recommencement. Philosophy begins again by asking why and how it can begin again.

10. Conclusion: Philosophy as Transformed Consciousness

We can now return to the three questions with which the inquiry began. The temptation is to answer quickly now that we have reached the end. But perhaps the path followed so far has taught us, if nothing else, to distrust answers that become too clear precisely when the problem is most difficult. Still, some answers are possible. What is philosophy? In Codoban's metaphilosophical reconstruction, philosophy is a cultural discourse whose specific signifying practice consists in the action of logic upon signification. Why philosophy? Because human existence requires an articulation of meaning that can be replaced neither by the operational efficacy of scientific knowledge nor by the self-referential play of literary discourse. Which philosophy? A philosophy conscious of its discursivity, capable of mediating between human beings and world by producing sense and,

through the production of sense, transforming consciousness. Three answers. But, once again, perhaps only one.

For if philosophy is what it is because it performs this labor of signification, then its necessity and its contemporary form already follow, at least partially, from its mode of existence.

The comparison with Deleuze, Guattari and Hadot makes the originality of this answer easier to see. Hadot restores philosophy to existence and practice. Deleuze and Guattari restore to it the irreducible productivity of conceptual creation. Codoban identifies another irreducibility: the work of philosophical discourse upon meaning. None of these three projects accepts philosophy as mere information. Each asks philosophy to do something more. Yet each place that „more" elsewhere. For Hadot, philosophy must alter the one who philosophizes by becoming a manner of living. For Deleuze and Guattari, philosophy must make possible what did not conceptually exist before. For Codoban, philosophy reorganizes the meanings through which a world may be given, and precisely thereby reorganizes the consciousness for which that world has meaning. His notion of profane initiation is decisive here. It shows that discursivity does not exclude transformation. It may, in fact, be the medium through which philosophical transformation becomes possible under conditions in which neither sacred initiation nor the classical figure of wisdom can simply be restored.

We can now see why the two functions announced at the beginning are so difficult to separate. Philosophy produces meaning because it transforms the semantic relations within which a world is given. And because it transforms these relations, it can transform the consciousness for which that world is meaningful. Meaning and transformation. Two things? I am no longer sure.

The broader significance of Codoban's metaphilosophical proposal becomes visible when it is placed in relation to his subsequent philosophy of religions. Read retrospectively, *The Sacred and Ontophany* does not mark a departure from the theory of philosophy as discourse, but rather its enlargement. The inquiry into meaning, discourse and consciousness gradually opens toward the question of the sacred, understood as one of the most profound dimensions through which human beings articulate their relation to reality. From this perspective, the two books belong to a common philosophical trajectory. The first establishes the theoretical framework by defining philosophy as a signifying and transformative discourse. The second investigates a privileged domain in which meaning reaches its greatest existential density: religious experience and the

manifestation of the sacred. The philosophy of religions thus appears as a continuation of the philosophy of discourse, while ontofany may be understood as a particular configuration of the more general problem of meaning.

Philosophy does not change the world by competing with scientific operations. Neither does it change it by legislating from an absolute standpoint that philosophy today can hardly continue to claim without ignoring its own history. It changes the world indirectly. The qualification is necessary, but it should not be mistaken for weakness. For to change the possible experience of the world is already to change something fundamental in the world we have. Certainly, the physical objects remain where they were. Certainly, nothing measurable has occurred. But what can be seen in them, what can be asked about them, what can appear necessary or contingent, tolerable or intolerable, meaningful or meaningless, may no longer be what it was. Sometimes nothing more happens. But perhaps philosophy never promised more than this. Or perhaps it did promise more, and precisely there lay some of its most magnificent failures. Codoban's conception of philosophy is therefore modest and demanding at once. Modest, because it deprives philosophy of some of its most consoling titles: supreme science, exhaustive system, possessed wisdom. Demanding, because once philosophy no longer shelters behind these titles, responsibility for the meanings it organizes becomes all the greater. Philosophy persists by metamorphosis. Its material is language. Its labor is the logical reorganization of signification. Its product is sense. Its event, if we may finally keep this word, is a transformed consciousness.

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