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Sic transit...
Onto-topological Readings of Post-Communism

ABSTRACT OF THE DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

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Abstract

The present dissertation is the demonstration at work of a reading procedure. Termed “onto-tropology” (from the Ancient Greek names of “being” and “figure” respectively), this procedure springs from a theoretical preoccupation focused on the question of metaphor and, especially, on the pluridisciplinary effervescence witnessed by developments related to this topic in the second half of the 20th century.

The thesis is structured in three main parts followed by an epilogue. As regards its main trajectory, it is an unearthing of the onto-tropological procedure from the more general question of “metaphor” as configured in “philosophy” and “linguistics” (to be understood not so much as two disciplines, but rather as to thematic and disciplinary galaxies). The results of this operation are then applied – in a dialogue with the modes of thought carved out by Heidegger, Derrida, Lacoue-Labarthe, Nancy and Granel – to politico-societal phenomena characteristic to the historical-ontological situation called post-communism.

The first part is an overview of the contemporary dimensions reached by the study of metaphor, suggesting that, in fact, this effervescence is a true event of the world, which, precisely because of this, can give room to a reflection upon the destiny of the contemporary world, as well as the destiny of theory in general. What results from such considerations is an attention focused on the way “something” (an event, a situation or a thought) *is made while it is written / inscribed* in a projection (“figuration”) of possibles that constitutes, in the most rigorous sense of the term, our mode-of-being – as *Da-sein* in a world.

But since the historical “moment” in which the explosion of research about metaphor takes place is – in a non-transitory meaning – the “present,” it seems only natural to focus the “attention” gained from the confrontation with the question of metaphor also on different modulations and declensions of the same “present,” which, in the part of the world in which we live, is called *post-communism*. The theoretically stipulated condition for such an application is the renunciation to the term “metaphor” in favor of a philosophically generalized concept of the “figural,” inspired by the deconstructive, post-metaphysical consequences drawn by Lacoue-

Labarthe from the interpretation of the – philosophical-political – Platonic “imprint” on the entire philosophy *as* onto-typology.

In the second part of this work I reconstruct the onto-historical genealogy of post-communism in a back-and-forth between its inevitably “local” (“Romanian”) and “generic” (“global”) features. The result is, strictly speaking, a discussion about the *wordliness* of post-communism, that is, about the way post-communism inscribes itself in the historical-ontological structures of a world that, after the withdrawal of the line of divide between an “Eastern” and a “Western” bloc, seems to have reached a round homogeneity, perfectly reflected in the term “globalization.” By means of (1) a reconstruction of Romania’s social modernization, (2) a reflection upon the meaning of what is called “transition” and (3) a commentary on a film that explores the personal political history of a central figure who, metonymically, incarnates, not only in the public discourse, but also in the self-comprehension of the Romanian society, *the very meaning* of communism, a threefold reconsideration of a history that seems to have reached in this way a kind of terminal point shows that, in spite of the ideological discourse and the political will associated with it, the balanced homogenization of the world under an “empire of welfare for all” remains an image-of-the-world (a direction and a meaning of history) that is blind to social and political turmoil, to divisions and separations, which, perfectly manifest and flattened already in the public discourse (our TV channels and press – about which it is useless to mention that they seek only what is splashy – have no other things to do), are precisely in this way *de-realized* (spectacularized) and robbed of any genuine political weight.

Consequently, the third part focuses precisely on such phenomena of separation (or division, schizophrenic cleavages of representations) (1) in the attempt at clarifying what communism has been about (and its hijacking in the pseudo-debate in which this attempt has failed), (2) in the repression of forms of resistance to the constituted global order and (3) in the dramatic social anomalies that this order cannot solve, precisely because it is – itself – a part of the problem. The perspective that I call onto-tropological builds, for each of these “cases” (to avoid the term “case studies”) the historical-theoretical background against which they can appear in their most profound articulations with Western history, which is, if we were to give some credit to Heidegger, nothing else but the history of metaphysics: a sign that the “current problems,” without being “perennial,” inscribe themselves *without remainders* in the schemata of thought and action that the present world, in spite of the always “groundbreaking” clink-clank

of the noisiest of its discourses on society and politics, inherits from a tradition whose two thousand year old roots do not affect in the least its dramatic *topicality*, both “concrete” and “practical” (to the bafflement, perhaps, of those who see philosophy – as metaphysics – only as lofty discourses held by philosophers in their solitude or in their highly specialized debates).

It is perhaps not completely meaningless, then, that the “Epilogue,” which also constitutes a fashion of concluding on what has been gained in this setting to work of the “attention” unearthed in the first part, seeks the conditions that always-already determine, *nolens volens*, a theoretical-practical program (that is, one which is inextricably one of thinking-and-action), which – springing from a different political will than the one that wants itself to be *realized* as an application of a “worldview” – would come to counter-pose itself to the global order consolidated, cemented and stiffened day by day, precisely in the name of “flexibility,” “freedom” and (retroactive) “anti-totalitarianism”, thus appropriating, in a torsion that irremediably *dis-torts*, even the inherited “icons” under which, since the French Revolution, the civil rejection of autocratic political orders could inscribe itself (“liberty, equality, fraternity”). Through the orderly unfolding of such conditions, concentrically disposed *around* the possibility of something radically different from the current political order, what only the critique can make appear is, again, a world-profile (without an appropriate representation), in its non-circumstantial rootedness in an epochal situation. A world-profile about which all signs seem to show that it is only now, after the clear disappearance of all political adversity of the same size (that is, capable of taking, at least nominally, the form of a polity and, implicitly, of an economic order, therefore, of an integral *polis*, which could constitute a “global enemy”: namely, in the most proper sense, capable of incarnating at least the *intention* – however “elusory” or “faked” – of a different world), that it can irreversibly install itself in its major alignments.

Keywords: metaphor, figure, onto-tropology, deconstruction, onto-typology, Lacoue-Labarthe, post-communism, capitalism, Spectacle, transition, ideology, metaphysics, Heidegger, Derrida, Nancy, Granel

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