

Philosophical Fragments 2

The Alibi of Time



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2026

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409- Video Games

The debate on video games often oscillates between two caricatural positions: for some, they are a source of intellectual and emotional degradation, for others, a harmless, even beneficial pastime, and for the most enthusiastic, a genuine art form. But this opposition misses the essential point, because it assumes that the game is good or bad in itself, as if it possessed its own moral nature. Yet the video game, like many human activities, is only an instrument, and a revealer: it does not only say something about itself, it says above all something about the one who plays it.

Some people find in it a space of relaxation, cooperation, or creativity, the game can then represent an activity among others, comparable to sport, reading, or music. It structures time, offers challenges, provides a sense of competence, more or less real, and can even nourish social ties, through matches with friends, online exchanges, or belonging to teams or gaming communities. The game then becomes a common language, a pretext for encounter, cooperation, or playful rivalry, it can serve as a virtual meeting place, help maintain long-distance relationships, and create complicity around shared experiences. In such cases, it does not constitute a particular problem, it is part of a structured existence, but for others, the game becomes a refuge, because it offers a clear, readable, immediate world, where rules are rather simpler and results more tangible. Faced with a complex, uncertain, harsh, and sometimes disappointing reality, this controllable universe appears as an easy and seductive alternative. The game then ceases to be a punctual activity and becomes a mode of existence, a way of inhabiting time and the world, though somewhat illusory. It also allows one to assume valorising or heroic roles, to explore identities more powerful, more competent, or more glorious than those one occupies in ordinary life. Yet the illusion does not end there, since beyond this existential form of “cheating,” where one temporarily inhabits a more “wonderful” identity, many players also cheat within the game itself in order to gain advantage; they manipulate rules, exploit glitches, or use external tools to secure victory. The virtual world thus reproduces the same desire for superiority found in ordinary life, but in an even more artificial

form.

The decisive question is therefore not so much the content of the game, but its temporality and its use. Certain genres, quite dominant on the market, rely on immediacy: rapid action, rapid reward, rapid frustration, then repetition, a logic of short cycles that corresponds to an ambient culture marked by constant stimulation and the difficulty of tolerating slowness and effort. In fact, the game does not create this “logic”, it stages it, condenses it, and amplifies it. Empirical research, however, nuances the picture, since not all games mobilise the same functions. Action and reflex games, very widespread today, strongly solicit attention, visual perception, quick decision, and several studies show that they can improve selective attention, information-processing speed, or certain visuospatial capacities, they can therefore sharpen skills useful in fast-moving and stimulus-saturated environments. But these benefits have a downside, because the same characteristics that make these games cognitively effective, intensity, repetition, strong emotional engagement, can also favour overload and dysregulation when practised excessively. They show that problematic use, especially in competitive online games, is associated with higher levels of anxiety, depressive symptoms, social withdrawal, or difficulties in emotional regulation, and even violent behavior. But again, it is not the game itself that is at fault, but the shift toward compulsive use. Action games mainly stimulate sensorimotor and attentional networks, whereas other, slower games, for example strategic or narrative ones, mobilise planning, perspective-taking, or symbolic distance. One should not forget the aesthetic dimension either, since some games do not rely on speed or competition, but on atmosphere, exploration, or contemplation. They offer experiences similar to those found in literature or art-house cinema, mobilising imagination, interpretation, and symbolic sensitivity. But here again, everything depends on the regime of use: a game can be lived as a simple stimulation or as a genuine aesthetic experience. The problem would therefore not be the genre of game in itself, but the fact that a single type of experience colonises all available time. When the same regime of stimulation occupies most waking hours, it ends up shaping expectations, reflexes, and the rhythm of the mind. Slow, ambiguous, or silent situations then become painful to endure, not because they are poor,

but because they no longer correspond to the dominant pattern. In this sense, the video game functions as a revealer: the one who seeks a challenge finds a challenge, the one who seeks an escape finds an escape, the one who seeks a release finds a release, and it amplifies tendencies already present. Thus, the anger, frustration, or excitement it provokes are often only the visible forms of a more general relation to the world, and the game can become a space for the expression of emotional immaturity or affective brutality, when the player cannot tolerate frustration, failure, or reflective distance. From then on, the essential distinction is not so much between “good” and “bad” games, but between different regimes of use, since the same object can nourish very different attitudes depending on the place it occupies in one’s life and on what one comes to seek there.
The problem truly appears when the game becomes an existential regime, for example when the individual can no longer tolerate reflective or frustrating activities, when everything must be stimulating, measurable, and gratifying. At that point, it is no longer a leisure activity; it becomes an inner structure, since the relation to reality systematically takes the form of a score, a level, a success, or an immediate failure. A concrete indicator is the place the game occupies in time, for duration often reveals the existential function of an activity. When the game organises the rhythm of the days, pushes aside other commitments, and becomes the centre around which everything is ordered, it ceases to be a simple leisure activity and becomes a structuring axis of existence, even a “replacement,” a life by proxy. For some people, it even becomes an existential crutch, a way to “fill” the days, to avoid boredom or anxiety, and to maintain a minimum of momentum in a life perceived as empty or uncertain.
In fact, video games are not systematically addictive; nevertheless, some are structurally conducive to addiction, because they rely on rapid reward loops, endless progression systems, unpredictable gratifications, and permanent connection devices that encourage replay. Some genres even push this logic to the extreme, such as “idle games", where the game progresses almost without the player’s intervention, automatically accumulating points, resources, or rewards, the player no longer truly acts, they simply watch the growth of a system running on its own. The activity then becomes a pure gratification machine, almost detached from any real

action, as if one were seeking the feeling of progress without even passing through the experience of effort. Yet addiction is not a fatality, but a risk inscribed both in the design of certain games and in the situation of certain players, especially in contexts of psychological fragility or existential emptiness.

Thus, the debate on video games does not concern only a technology or a form of entertainment, it reveals a deeper trait of our time: the search for intensity without consequence, the difficulty of inhabiting reality, the need for simplified and controllable worlds. The game indeed allows one to live extreme situations, war, domination, survival, heroism, without paying the real price. It offers the intensity of action, but without the weight of its consequences, as if one sought adventure while remaining sheltered from reality. This enthusiasm for virtual worlds also fits the climate of a society often marked by fatigue, disenchantment, and a lack of meaning. When reality appears dull, uncertain, or disappointing, ludic worlds, clear, stimulating, and gratifying, offer a form of substitute enthusiasm, an intensity without risk, an adventure without consequence. The video game is therefore not only a cultural phenomenon, it is the mirror of a society that prefers stimulation to depth. Thus, the game can be healthy as an occasional activity, even stimulating certain capacities, but problematic when it becomes a mode of being. The real question is not whether the game is good or bad, but what it does to the existence of the one who plays it, and that is where the true philosophical stake lies, and perhaps also the responsibility of each individual.

410 – Video Games and DIY

I mentioned to a video game enthusiast that one often observes increased irritability or excessive emotional outbursts among those who practise fast, competitive reflex games, and he replied that it was the same with people who do DIY, making or repairing things themselves, who get angry when

things do not work. It seemed interesting to me to reflect on the nature of the problem behind this analogy.

The comparison between video games and DIY, on the grounds that both can provoke frustration or anger, may seem sensible at first glance, but it turns out to be misleading when one examines the actual structure of these activities. Certainly, any exercise involving difficulty can provoke irritation: in DIY, for example, a screw that does not hold, a badly cut plank, a piece that does not fit. Likewise, in a fast-paced game, a mistake, a defeat, or an unexpected obstacle can trigger an emotional reaction, and on this superficial level the analogy holds. But it collapses as soon as one considers the rhythm and the nature of the experience, because in DIY failure is generally slow, situated, and inscribed in duration, since the work requires reflection, observation, and adjustment; the gesture is interrupted, attention shifts, and the body is engaged in real space. Frustration there is only a moment within a broader process, that of solving a concrete problem.

In fast reflex games, the structure is quite different, because failure is frequent, immediate, and followed by an instant restart; the system is designed to maintain continuous tension, made up of micro-frustrations and micro-gratifications. Thus emotion is not an accident of the process, it is in fact its driving force, anger or excitement become elements integrated into the game loop; they generate adhesion and engagement on the part of the player, which is precisely what the game designers seek. Moreover, the materiality of DIY accentuates the difference, because there one confronts real matter, with its resistances, its limits, and its unpredictability, as wood, metal, or paint cannot be manipulated at will; they impose a certain tempo, a certain attention, they induce a form of humility, a recognition of one's own limits, rather than stimulating a feeling of omnipotence. Error leaves a trace, it costs time, effort, sometimes money, thus one finds a form of material responsibility. In video games, on the contrary, the world is reversible, since failure can be erased in a second, the environment obeys relatively simple and fixed rules. The difficulty encountered by the player is not an organic resistance of matter; obstacles exist, but they are entirely programmed, therefore predictable, reversible, and without real

consequences, it is a programmed friction, designed to be overcome and not to impose a lasting limit. Their function is not truly to oppose the player, but to structure the experience and maintain engagement, this resistance is therefore functional, not existential. Thus even the most intense frustration unfolds in a world without lasting consequences, and as one may have several lives, even death is not irreversible.
Consequently, to state that the anger of the player and that of the DIY enthusiast belong to the same phenomenon is to ignore the very structure of the experience. The emotion may be similar, but the context that produces it, the rhythm that sustains it, and the world in which it is inscribed are profoundly different. The analogy is therefore not false, but it is reductive, as it reduces distinct activities to a common emotional reaction, and forgets that it is not only the emotion that matters, but the form of life that engenders it, the process that sustains it. This difference is also a difference of temporality, because DIY imposes a slow rhythm, made of waiting, adjustments, and revisions, where action is inscribed in continuity, whereas reflex games, on the contrary, function on very short cycles, where failure and restart follow one another without pause. This contrast of rhythm is not secondary; it shapes the type of emotions, reactions, and relation to the world that each activity sustains. Where DIY generates deeper and more durable affects, made of patience, real frustration, and concrete satisfaction, reflex games favour brief, intense, and repetitive emotions, linked to excitement, tension, and immediate relief. Even in sport, where failure also has no lasting consequence, the engagement of the body, physical effort, fatigue, and real risk introduce a gravity and an intensity that the simple click of a finger does not produce, which profoundly modifies the nature of the emotions and their educational value.
Another difference concerns the dimension of creation and accomplishment, as DIY involves producing something that did not previously exist and that remains after the action is completed. The effort leaves a durable trace in the world, matter is transformed, and this transformation persists, and in this sense, the activity generates not only satisfaction but confirmation: the individual sees their action embodied in an external reality. By contrast, in most video games, accomplishment

remains internal to the system: the world is reversible, victories are symbolic, and the environment resets. The sense of achievement is therefore often intense but transient, and this structural transience inevitably produces a residual sense of lack, a subtle dissatisfaction that fosters an underlying feeling of incompleteness and, consequently, a compulsive need for repetition. Yet creation and durable accomplishment are fundamental aspects of human existence, and this may explain why DIY more readily produces a deeper and more stable sense of fulfilment, a more equanimous mental state.

Thus, it is not the activity itself that makes one mature or immature, but the kind of relation it establishes to time, frustration, effort, and reality. DIY, through its slowness, its materiality, and its partial irreversibility, more readily offers conditions favourable to a certain maturity. Fast reflex games, by contrast, foster more immediate and reactive modes of functioning, especially when they become dominant in an individual's life, when they represent a significant portion of one's time. In other words, every activity induces an implicit education in one's relation to the world, and it is this silent education that touches on the question of maturity. When a practice accustoms the mind to slowness, resistance, and a certain irreversibility, it generally fosters greater emotional maturity; when it is based on immediacy, reversibility, and constant stimulation, it risks instead maintaining more impulsive and less elaborated reactions. And besides, if one believes the studies, between 3 and 6 percent of players develop a form of addiction requiring therapeutic support, that is, tens of millions of people worldwide, while it remains difficult to find specialised centres for victims of a pathological dependence on the screwdriver or the jigsaw.

411 – Irritation of Disagreement

Very often we feel a certain irritation when we receive, or even simply

encounter, ideas that oppose our own, a reaction that may be considered rather unreasonable, to say the least. It therefore seems useful to analyse this phenomenon and its causes.

First, it must be recalled that an objection does not touch only an idea, but also its anchoring, which means that any opposition affects, to varying degrees, a subjectivity, a position, an existence. Thus, when we believe we are discussing only the theses, opinions, or beliefs of an individual, we neglect the fact that most of the time these ideas are supported by a mental dynamic, by psychic structures that organise existence. They provide coherence, for they allow the person to tell an intelligible story about themselves and about the world; they link events, choices, and emotions into a whole that appears logical and bearable. They provide orientation, for they serve as a compass, indicating what must be done, what must be avoided, what has value or not, they give direction to action. They provide justification, for they legitimize what one is, what one does, or what one feels; they protect the image of the self by giving reasons for one's successes, failures, choices, or sufferings. Thus, to touch an idea is not merely to contest an opinion, it is often to shake the inner balance that it both supports and is supported by. An objection then attacks or unsettles not an isolated piece of reasoning, but an inner equilibrium, a disturbance of which irritation is the warning signal.

Next, without realising it, we often presuppose a community of principles with others, since our ideas seem so obvious to us, a presupposition that is frequently illusory. Thus, every objection comes precisely to break this apparent balance, it suspends what seemed self-evident and introduces a dissymmetry between the one who questions and the one who is questioned, something that can easily be perceived as a form of aggression. Dialogue then ceases to be a simple, peaceful exchange and becomes a trial. In fact, what may look like symmetry in an exchange is often only an implicit agreement, based on unexamined assumptions, where each person speaks without being truly exposed, since the foundations of their thinking are not challenged, until an objection or a question suspends what we took for granted, an intervention that is somewhat disturbing. For these reasons,

the standard social pact, concerned with consensus and tranquillity, tends to preserve this symmetry of comfort, where presuppositions remain intact and speech becomes mutually confirming, or differences are simply ignored, rather than welcoming the objection that disrupts this balance, introduces a dissymmetry between the one who questions and the one who must respond, and transforms dialogue into a genuine test. To avoid this problem, no one should explicitly disturb the presuppositions of the other, ideas must coexist without being truly challenged, dialogue must remain a space of mutual reassurance or acceptance rather than destabilisation. Furthermore, whether we like it or not, even when we hold firmly to our ideas, any expressed dissension casts a shadow of doubt, if only because it forces us to justify ourselves, which is not always easy, and sometimes even impossible in a reasoned way. We then find ourselves off balance, and the human mind does not tolerate intermediate positions, zones of suspension and uncertainty. The objection places us in this uncomfortable in-between, the “perhaps”, where what seemed evident ceases to be so, without a new certainty necessarily replacing it. We no longer know exactly where we stand, nor even who we are in this displacement, and irritation appears as a defensive reaction to this provisional instability.

One can also identify a more social reason, as recognising the validity of an objection means accepting a loss of symbolic control over the situation. It means renouncing, even briefly, the role of the one who knows, the one who holds, the one who concludes, the one who ensures and controls. All the more so because we easily confuse “being right” with authority, since the one who appears to hold the truth spontaneously occupies a dominant position in the exchange, even though “being right” concerns only the validity of an argument, whereas authority refers to a position of power or personal legitimacy. But in practice, the one who demonstrates an error in another is perceived as superior, more competent, or more lucid; the question of truth then becomes a matter of status, and the discussion no longer concerns only ideas, but the place each person occupies in the relationship. The objection is then experienced as an attempt at personal destabilisation, or even as an offence. Moreover, any expression that is not directly flattering becomes a loss of admiration or recognition, as if the

other person's words must first confirm our worth before they have the right to educate us or make us think. This leads to a constant quest for approval, where we seek less the possible truth than the maintenance of an intact image of ourselves, and in this logic, objection is no longer a tool for clarification, but a symbolic deprivation, a loss of status. From then on, irritation does not only signal intellectual disagreement, it betrays an emotional dependence on the validation of others.

More deeply still, the objection threatens the emotional benefit we derive from our representations, as an idea is not merely a proposition that is true or false, it reassures, protects, and provides a sense of moral or existential rightness, in fact it enhances us. Thus, a critique does not affect only an opinion or an argument, it strikes the comfort that sustains it, it does not touch only an idea, it disturbs an equilibrium, and the mind, like the body, reacts emotionally to the loss of stability. From then on, everything others say is spontaneously interpreted through this prism; it is no longer heard for its own content, but evaluated according to the symbolic gain or loss it represents for us. Listening becomes distorted because, instead of examining what is said, we measure how it affects our image. What others say then ceases to be a statement to be examined, it becomes a signal to be decoded,, we no longer ask ourselves, "Is this true?" but rather, "What does this say about me?"

For these different reasons, we must recognise that accepting an objection, trying to understand it and appreciate it as such, requires a rare virtue: the ability to prefer a possible truth to immediate coherence, to prefer a certain authenticity to psychological comfort, yet most of the time we prefer to be right rather than to reason. Nevertheless, irritation is the symptom of an inner conflict: something understands, but something refuses, something sees, but something does not want to see. In this sense, irritation is not a moral fault, but rather an indicator, as it marks the precise place where an idea is no longer merely thought, but actually inhabited, for where we become irritated, we are not defending a proposition, we are defending ourselves. Ultimately, irritation is a sign that thought has ceased to be a

movement of inquiry and has become a property to be defended. Admittedly, there is another reason to be irritated by disagreement during a dialogue, somewhat different and, in a sense, more legitimate, which arises from a failure of the dialogue itself, and more specifically from a refusal to engage in rational dialogue. When the other person retreats into stubborn certainty, moralizes the disagreement, shows bad faith, or fails to really listen, the exchange becomes impossible. It is no longer a disagreement about the content of ideas, but a disagreement about the importance of rationality and authenticity, that is, about the conditions that make a common path and the circulation of thought possible. Irritation is therefore not a symptom of closed-mindedness, but rather a reaction to the other person's closed-mindedness. However, it could be argued that this irritation is still based on certain demanding expectations, since it assumes that all interlocutors are willing to reason, to doubt, and to allow themselves to be moved, and this expectation is not neutral, as it is based on a conception of dialogue as an exercise in shared thinking. Irritation reveals less a personal hurt than an attachment to the minimum conditions of rationality, but it may be just another sign of our difficulty in accepting that others do not fit into the framework we deem necessary.

412- Video Games and Real Life

We have criticised reflex-based video games for functioning as addictive cycles of rapid tension and gratification, offering intensity and repetition without durable accomplishment. Yet we must acknowledge that some other games are structured in ways that produce more than fleeting stimulation. This category, more reflexive, includes strategy games such as *Stellaris*, involving long-term empire management, diplomacy, and planning across decades; sandbox environments such as *Minecraft*, offering open-ended worlds where players build, explore, and create without fixed objectives; simulation worlds such as *The Sims*, focused on managing characters, relationships, and environments over time; and complex

narrative experiences such as *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, with branching quests, moral ambiguity, and extended narrative arcs. They can generate sustained engagement, they involve planning, mastery, perseverance, and delayed gratification. A player may invest hundreds of hours building a city, shaping a civilisation, or completing a complex storyline. The satisfaction that follows is not merely a burst of excitement, as it resembles the completion of a long project, since the sustained challenge can cultivate a sense of competence or mastery, and reshape self-perception. In this sense, the experience is real and not superficial, the pride, the development of skills, the coherence of progression are psychologically authentic, and the mind does not invalidate the achievement simply because it occurred within a digital environment. Unlike the prophetic alarmism that refuses to see the beauty of such constructs, we acknowledge the psychological reality of the effort; our concern is not the falsity of the feeling, but the enclosure of the effect. The question is not whether video games can produce satisfaction, since they clearly can, the more serious question for us now is whether the long-term satisfaction generated by certain games is equivalent to the long-term satisfaction derived from real-life activity. To answer this, let us propose that we should distinguish intensity from durability, and durability from ontological weight, by which we mean the extent to which an action modifies a world that continues to exist independently of us, when we wonder what persists once the activity has ended. Already, in real-life long-term projects, like building a house, writing a book, raising a child, or cultivating a garden, the result does not remain confined to a closed system, as it alters shared reality as well. Others encounter it independently of one's presence, and it resists, ages, transforms by itself, and sometimes outlives its maker, thus, the satisfaction attached to such work is linked not only to internal feeling but to an external modification of the world. But in games, even those that offer long arcs of progress, the transformation remains internal to the programmed universe, it persists only as long as the system persists, the accomplishment is real within its framework, but the framework itself is contingent. Moreover, the world one transforms is a designed environment whose rules and existence are not fundamentally affected by the player's action, and its consequences do not automatically extend into shared material reality or the player's life.

We should specify that such an analysis reveals a structural distinction, which might have moral consequences, but is not in itself for us a moral judgment.

Real-life satisfaction is typically anchored in three dimensions: material or social transformation, as something in the shared world changes, irreversibility, as the action cannot simply be reset, and integration into one's broader existence, as the accomplishment affects future possibilities, relationships, and responsibilities. Game-based long-term satisfaction often lacks at least partially these elements. Even when progress accumulates, the environment remains reversible and merely artificial or symbolic, one can delete a save file, and the world collapses without consequence outside the system, and one's life can be in shambles in spite of game success. However, this does not mean game satisfaction is trivial, as for some individuals, mastery within a game may cultivate patience, strategic thinking, collaboration, or creativity, and provide a sense of accomplishment. These acquired capacities can have consequences on the individual, as they extend beyond the game itself, which implies that the digital activity indirectly contributes to real-world development, and the satisfaction becomes partially transferable from "inside" to "outside". The decisive issue is not whether digital satisfaction is "real," but whether it produces enduring transformation beyond its own boundaries. When a game shapes character, skill, or perception in ways that persist outside the screen, its long-term satisfaction approaches equivalence with real-life projects; when it remains enclosed within repetitive symbolic cycles, its satisfaction is intense yet self-contained.

Thus, the equivalence is relative, long-term game satisfaction can resemble real-life satisfaction at the psychological level, but in terms of ontological permanence, material consequence, and shared reality, they are not structurally identical. One stabilises and develops the self through acting upon the world, affecting it, the other stabilises it through mastery within a constructed universe, a limited and artificial environment. The difference might be considered subtle, but it is decisive, since in one case, the world changes and resists, while in the other, the system accommodates and resets, whether that difference matters depends as well on one's world

vision, on what we believe gives human accomplishment its weight and value, and in the end it will definitely affect our self-worth.

Then, on the social level, if the long-term satisfaction produced by certain video games can resemble real-life fulfillment at the psychological level, a further issue arises: “What happens when such enclosed forms of accomplishment become predominant within a society?”, or “What are the social consequences of such an activity?”. Once again, the issue is not that digital achievement is fictitious, as we have seen, it can be authentic, intense, and structurally coherent, the problem emerges when the primary horizon of accomplishment shifts from open and common world to closed systems, privileging a sort of “citadel of the self”. In many games, progress unfolds within a programmed universe where rules are established and rather clear, feedback is immediate, effort is measurable, and failure is reversible. This architecture produces a powerful sense of competence, yet it also habituates the individual to a specific model of action: one in which the environment is comparatively responsive, legible, predefined, and ultimately adjustable. By contrast, real-world accomplishment unfolds within a far less accommodating structure, as institutions are opaque, recognition is uncertain, outcomes depend on numerous uncontrollable factors, and mistakes cannot simply be undone, without mentioning the lesser power we are endowed with and the dramatic consequences reality can inflict on the individual. There is a fundamental structural and ontological principle: the world resists, it does not reset. Nevertheless, certain digital worlds develop a form of social durability when they persist collectively and shape ongoing communities. In some cases, online gaming collectives give rise to social bonds that are experienced as more intense, more consistent, and even more meaningful than certain family relationships. For example, a long-running online game like *World of Warcraft* creates stable social structures: guilds, hierarchies, shared histories, even economic systems, while certain real-world activities can be surprisingly ephemeral, for example a powerful marketing campaign may leave little lasting trace once funding ends or attention shifts, therefore the dividing line is not metaphysical but rather empirical, or practical. But if a growing number of individuals experience their deepest sense of mastery

within environments designed to be optimised and retried, they may find the stubbornness of reality increasingly frustrating. The difficulty is not that they lack ability, but that their habitual field of competence does not translate easily into shared material conditions, with potentially heavy existential and psychological consequences.

There is also a more immediate social dimension, as societies depend upon activities that alter common space: building, maintaining, educating, caring, producing, organising, participation in the civic and political process. These actions leave traces that persist independently of the actor, they generate structures and institutions others must inhabit, they affect everyone's life. When accomplishment becomes primarily symbolic and internal to digital systems, the link between effort and shared consequence weakens. One may feel productive without having modified anything that others must confront, which ultimately is the real challenge. The danger, therefore, as far as we are concerned, is not so much moral decline, a common criticism, but the structural displacement this implies. If the primary arena of perceived achievement is detached from durable social consequence, a subtle imbalance can develop between experienced fulfillment and collective contribution, individuals may feel accomplished while remaining externally disengaged, as the self stabilises, but the common world remains unchanged or decays, a problematic discrepancy. Yet this is not an inevitable outcome, since digital environments can cultivate strategic thinking, collaboration, discipline, even creativity. When these capacities migrate beyond the screen, the distinction between symbolic and real accomplishment narrows, thus the crucial question is whether this digital mastery remains enclosed, or whether it extends into embodied participation. For some marginalised individuals, however, this enclosed mastery can function as a preliminary step toward wider participation, offering a relatively safe space in which to experiment with competence, cooperation and initiative before confronting more exposed arenas. This structural displacement remains a challenge even when a game is explicitly designed to engage with the common world. Some designers have sought to address this social dimension. *Liyla and the Shadows of War*, for example, is a narrative game that aims to cultivate empathy by placing the

player in the position of a father trying to protect his family during the war in Gaza. Similarly, *Relooted*, a South African game, pursues an explicit political aim by symbolically "reclaiming" African artworks looted during colonial times and staging their return from European museums. In such cases, the digital medium attempts to move beyond its own enclosure by directing the player's attention toward external suffering or historical injustice. Nevertheless, a certain confusion persists between a change in perception and a change in material conditions. In both cases, the game deliberately connects its fictional framework to concrete historical and political realities, seeking to extend the player's engagement beyond mere entertainment, they attempt to bridge the gap between digital play and real-world issues by grounding their narratives in concrete political and historical realities. But in both cases, the transformation occurs primarily at the level of perception and consciousness rather than material reality. They show that games can engage ethical and political questions while their accomplishment remains representational and affective rather than structurally transformative. The satisfaction derived from such experiences is a form of moral satisfaction without material responsibility, as the player may feel they have "participated" in a struggle or "witnessed" a tragedy, although this internal movement of the soul occurs within a map that does not affect the actual territory. The danger is that the intensity of the representational achievement might satisfy the individual's civic impulse, leaving the shared world exactly as it was, while providing the self with the comfort of having done something in the symbolic realm.
Thus the problem is not video games as such, it is the potential redefinition of accomplishment itself. If fulfillment is increasingly located in reversible systems that reset rather than endure, society may gradually privilege stimulation over transformation, optimisation over responsibility, repetition over construction. Whether this tendency becomes destabilising depends not on technology alone, but on how individuals distribute their investments between constructed universes and the resistant world they collectively inhabit. The deeper issue remains the same: satisfaction may be psychologically real, yet its significance depends on what it transforms. When accomplishment changes a world that resists and persists, it stabilises both the self and the common space, when it unfolds within

systems that accommodate and reset, it may stabilise the self alone, and it is precisely at that divergence that the social question begins, that the fate of our shared world is decided.

413- Speechless Speech

It sometimes happens, in dialogue, that I adopt an unusual manner of speaking, one that unsettles, that appears strange or even absurd to some. It does not consist in affirming a thesis or proposing a conclusion, but in shifting perspectives, diverting the dialogue, introducing a gap, making what seemed obvious begin to waver. In such moments, I do not seek to present ideas, to demonstrate or to convince, but to "open" thought. I do not propose a thesis or a doctrine; I attempt to create a space for reflection. One may indeed draw parallels with the dialogical practices of Socrates or Zhuangzi, although the frameworks somewhat differ. Socratic discourse does not consist in expounding a doctrine, but in practising the *elenchos*: questioning, asking for clarification, pushing toward contradiction in order to lead the interlocutor to *aporia*, to the point where they no longer know what to say. Socrates feigns ignorance, evades ready-made definitions, diverts the moral certainties of his interlocutor, for the aim of dialogue is not to "fill" with content but to create an inner space where thought can begin to think itself by deconstructing itself. In Zhuangzi, one finds a radical distrust of "fixed" statements: he multiplies parables, paradoxes, and shifts of perspective, seeks to induce a "fasting of the mind," and introduces the idea that one can "remain silent all day without truly being silent." The aim is not to deliver a doctrine, but to provoke an inner displacement, an experience of spontaneity and ease with becoming, something that cannot simply be decreed. Language does not seek to close meaning but to create an interval, a space of play in which habitual categories loosen. This technique may also be compared to Kierkegaard's "indirect communication": instead of teaching frontally, discourse masks itself, fragments itself, even contradicts itself, so that the reader cannot abandon themselves passively but is compelled to become the original source of

meaning. Or again, one might think of the apophatic mystical traditions, where language turns against itself, undoes and negates itself, not in order to lapse into muteness, but to make room for an inner space where what truly matters can no longer simply be "said," only approached in the withdrawal of words.

This practice rests on a simple idea: it is not so much the content of an opinion that matters, but the attachment to it, which imprisons and must be loosened. Thus, instead of contradicting head-on, I ask questions, I reformulate differently, I introduce an unexpected point of view, I emphasise "secondary" terms, I joke, I tell stories, I play with the form. It is less about refuting than about loosening, not about "concluding" but rather "suspending"; speech does not settle matters, it interrupts, diverts, and sets things in motion. And when someone interrogates me, I do not answer the question, I answer the person who asks it, speaking less to the words than to the consciousness that produces them.

Yet this way of dialoguing often provokes resistance, as some do not understand the aim; they expect a clear affirmation, a stable position, a "for" or "against". Others feel threatened, as if the absence of a direct answer or firm conclusion were an evasion or a manipulation, an attitude perceived as discourteous. Still others cling to their opinion, repeating it insistently precisely because it serves as an anchor and provides a sense of security. The difficulty with this method, which is not really a method, lies in our habitual relationship to language: we speak primarily to stabilize, to situate ourselves, to affirm an identity. Speech that does not settle, that neither confirms nor definitively condemns, can produce vertigo, for it introduces an in-between, a "perhaps", an uncomfortable suspension, since the human mind does not easily tolerate indeterminacy. Yet this technique does not necessarily aim to relativise all discourse or dissolve every conviction, it simply seeks to avoid rigidity and to generate a certain distance. It assumes that thought gains flexibility and creativity when it accepts not to identify completely with its own formulations or cling to them, but for those who confuse opinion with security or certainty, such

flexibility resembles a threat. The difficulty, then, does not stem from a lack of intelligence, but from attachment: one wants or hopes that speech will say something definitive, that it will guarantee a position. When the intervention of another undermines that function, their speech appears useless, vague, or provocative. In reality, this way of dialoguing seeks to shift the centre of gravity: instead of defending statements, it invites examination of the very movement of thought. It does not seek to “win” a debate, but to transform the relationship to the debate itself.Thus, what disturbs is not what is said as such, but the fact that nothing is left undisturbed.

It also happens that this manner of speaking simply does not interest some people, they see no content in it, nothing substantial, only gratuitous play, perhaps absurdity, or mere rhetoric. They expect an answer, information, a solution, and instead encounter displacement, thus they perceive as emptiness what is in fact a change of stakes. Yet this displacement requires a particular vigilance: one must follow, catch things on the wing, accept not knowing immediately where one is heading, and refrain from seeking an explicit goal. This speech is less descriptive than performative, as it does not seek to add content, but to modify one’s relation to content, it does not so much solve problems as dissolve them, not by offering a solution, but by showing that they rest upon a fragile presupposition. What appeared obvious reveals itself to depend upon implicit assumptions, upon the conviction that one “truly” believes what they assert. In this sense, speech deconstructs rather than explains.

But the majority of interlocutors desire something else: they want solid concepts, a clear thesis, a satisfying conclusion. Even if often the mountain gives birth to a mouse, or the dialogue rather reveals that the “mountain” was only a fragile rhetorical construction. This “illumination of the obvious”, to borrow Zhuangzi’s expression, can disappoint: one expected a spectacular revelation and discovers instead that the question was badly posed, the initial proposition arbitrary, confused, or contradictory. Sometimes the interlocutor even ends up answering their own question, for what was expected from outside turns out to have already been present, yet this movement may be poorly received. The one who came seeking an

“official” answer may feel disrespected, as if their question had not been taken seriously. Frustration then arises from a misunderstanding: one expected transmission, they receive movement. But to understand such an approach presupposes a certain trust, even a form of surrender. One must accept leaving the immediate level of the request in order to move to another plane, where the aim is no longer to obtain an answer, but to see differently, to “free” the thinking. This displacement may appear elitist or unsettling. It demands active participation; one cannot remain a spectator or a simple consumer. Thus, this type of speech disturbs not only because it suspends certainties, but because it redistributes roles, as it transforms the interlocutor into a co-author of meaning. What was expected as a clear formulation becomes an inner demand. And if such a manner irritates, it is not so much because it is false, since nothing is asserted, but because it shifts the responsibility of thinking, inviting the subject to step outside themselves, to descend into themselves in order to open to being.

In response to this article, several criticisms have been raised, which we will attempt to address briefly.

It is said that we commit a performative contradiction by explaining our mode of dialogue, since explaining a destabilising practice would make it reassuring and thus betray its spirit. Yet it seems to us that explaining an approach does not cancel it; it simply allows one to understand its dynamics and effects, thereby fostering a certain awareness. Moreover, we have observed that these effects remain even when the interlocutor has been informed beforehand about the nature of the practice.
It is also argued that this “technique” introduces asymmetry and domination, since the one who masters deconstruction holds a power that can neutralise the other, undermine their confidence, and produce dependence. However, it seems to us that asymmetry is inherent in any pedagogical framework, indeed, it often constitutes its very structure. Such a framework becomes problematic only if deconstruction is treated as an end in itself rather than as a passage toward greater autonomy through the work and detachment fostered by the practice.

Such a practice may generate a certain exhaustion, since constant questioning can dissolve stability, produce a persistent sense of suspension, and lead to cognitive fatigue. Yet this risk of exhaustion arises only when suspension does not lead to reappropriation. Reappropriation becomes possible within a conscious framework, when time for reformulation and personal elaboration enables the interlocutor to reconstruct a more reflective and assumed position.

In other words, these criticisms point to real risks, but they do not in themselves condemn the practice. Destabilisation has meaning only insofar as it leads to freer and more structured thinking, which requires awareness and vigilance. Without them, it may indeed turn into domination or dissolution, but with measure and a clear purpose, it can instead strengthen the capacity to think for oneself.

414- The Betrayal of Translation

When teaching in a foreign language through an interpreter, we often assume that translation is a technical operation : words are transferred from one language into another, meaning is preserved, and the lesson takes its natural course. However, this seemingly “technical” transposition has in fact philosophical implications, since the action of translation does not merely transmit content, it carries underlying assumptions about what speech is for, a matrix which is affected by subjective and contextual factors.

Thus, in my classes with a Russian-speaking audience, I speak in English and rely on an interpreter, but periodically, I notice small modifications. For example, I repeat a word for emphasis, and the repetition disappears. Or I invite a participant by name and add, “Tell us everything,” yet only the name is mentioned. By adding this expression, I am not actually requesting

more information but signaling permission to speak directly, establishing an authentic relational space, encouraging the person to speak freely and without self-censorship. But when I ask the translator why something was omitted, the answer is simple: “They understood anyway.” On the surface, nothing essential is lost, since the information was conveyed, but something subtle has shifted, which is not a mere detail, a shift which concerns the very function of speech, its performative function. Sometimes, when I point out a discrepancy in the translation, the justification I receive is about culture: “In Russia, or in Russian, we do this, we do not do that…”. In many academic post-Soviet contexts, discourse tends to value concision, precision, and informational clarity, thus repetition may be considered redundant, emotional amplification unnecessary, “efficiency” and stylistic sobriety become a virtue. In such a framework, the task of the interpreter is to transmit the core content as “cleanly” as possible, without worrying about niceties.

However, philosophical practice does not operate solely at the level of information. When I repeat a word, I am not filling space, I am trying to intensify the attention, when I say someone’s name and invite them to “tell us everything”, I am not merely granting permission to speak, I am establishing a relational field. I am creating presence, not simply requesting more data. These elements may appear merely stylistic, but they are pedagogical and existential, and the same issues are at play in the students, since they generally have difficulty expressing themselves spontaneously, they remain silent, they hesitate, they search for safe or perfect formulations, remain formal and minimalistic in their answers. In response, my “free” or "excessive" style deliberately introduces emotional tone, irony, exaggeration, and even a certain theatricality. The goal is to loosen the atmosphere, to reduce fear, to signal that imperfection is allowed, that speech is an experiment rather than a performance, as irony, repetition, and intensity are tools meant to create breathing space. Yet the translators often remain formal, they flatten irony, neutralize exaggeration, eliminate “improper terms”, and reduce emotional color. What was intended as a destabilizing invitation to dialogue becomes a controlled, academic statement, the loosening effect of speech is retightened, its performative

dimension smoothed out. Again, nothing “incorrect” has been communicated, but the relational temperature and the effect has been modified.

In China, I encounter another type of shift, which does not consist so much in compression, but in softening. For example, if I tell someone, “You are lying to me right now,” the translation becomes, “You are not telling the whole truth”. Here the intention is different, the purpose of the shift is to preserve harmony and protect the individual image, to save face, reducing confrontation in order to maintain social balance. Yet in doing so, it dilutes the dramatic intensity and the deliberate shock I intend to provoke, a shock meant to force the person to confront the contradiction directly. Thus, in one context, speech is trimmed for efficiency, in another, it is softened for harmony, but in both cases, emotional and ironic dimensions are moderated in favor of formality. In each case, the translator adjusts not only words but the climate of the exchange, the modification reflects not only linguistic constraints but a cultural theory of what speech should accomplish, the imposition of social codes. This is not simply a linguistic problem, but a cultural and philosophical one, as it concerns hierarchy and equality, distance and proximity, control and exposure, since informational speech preserves structure and authority, harmonized speech preserves social equilibrium, formal speech preserves order. Relational speech, by contrast, risks unpredictability, it invites participation, vulnerability, exposure, and sometimes confrontation.

If one wishes to transform this dynamic, clarity is required, not only in what is said, but in how speech itself is understood. The role of the interpreter must be redefined, not as an editor, improver, or harmonizer, but as a faithful transmitter of tone, rhythm, irony, and intensity as well as content. Students must understand that repetition, emotional nuance, and even theatrical emphasis are not decorative, they are part of the philosophical work. Translation is never neutral, it always carries a theory of meaning, and often a vision of social order, it carries numerous existential implications. When teaching philosophy across languages, one is not only translating words, one is negotiating what it means to speak, to think, to risk oneself, and to be present with others.

415 – Exaggeration

A familiar injunction periodically returns: “One must not exaggerate”. The formula seems harmless, almost benevolent, since in itself it is not aggressive, yet it functions as an implicit, categorical norm: it draws an invisible boundary between what would be acceptable and what would become excessive. We may therefore ask where this fear and common prohibition of exaggeration originate.

To exaggerate, by definition, is to exceed the measure, however indeterminate that measure may be. Nevertheless, we observe that every culture rests upon a certain idea of balance, that is, upon an implicit representation of what is “too much” or “not enough,” of what is appropriate or inappropriate in speech, gestures, and affects. This balance is not merely aesthetic, it is moral and social, it regulates relationships, limits outbursts, protects group cohesion, and renders behavior predictable. It functions as a stabilizing principle, an invisible norm defining acceptable proportions and preventing rupture. Excess, however, does not exist in isolation: it only becomes visible against a background of restraint, just as restraint itself often derives its meaning from the possibility of excess, they operate in a kind of tension, a dialectical relationship. Excess is unsettling because it suggests a loss of control: too much emotion, too much enthusiasm, too much ambition, too much anger. Excess appears threatening, as if intensity might sweep away reason and dissolve the limits that guarantee relational stability and the coherence of the shared world. Exaggeration disrupts social order: the one who “does too much” stands out inappropriately, they step outside the common frame, attract attention, break implicit equality, and in a sense attempts to impose themselves. Within a group, this surplus creates contrast, introduces asymmetry and disrespect, and the injunction “one must not exaggerate” amounts to a call to order, a reminder to return to the shared norm, to be reasonable, to respect conventions. There is also a fear of ridicule, for exaggeration exposes, it makes the individual visible beyond what is

deemed appropriate, even grotesque. Excess may thus be interpreted as naivety, arrogance, or theatricality, as a desire to show off, whereas moderation protects, allowing one to remain sheltered from judgment, to remain invisible. “To live happily, live hidden,” advises the proverb. Although we should specify that not all exaggerations have the same nature: there is an exaggeration that reveals a structure by pushing it to its limit, and another that merely inflates the ego in order to protect itself from rational examination. Thus, exaggeration as a philosophical tool here should not be understood as mere rhetorical inflation, since properly used, it intensifies perception and brings into view structures that moderation tends to conceal.

Nevertheless, one cannot claim that the valorization of measure is identical in all societies, yet it appears that every culture defines in its own way an implicit boundary between the tolerable and the excessive. Without some regulation of affects, speech, and behavior, collective life would become unpredictable and conflictual. However, the content of this “measure” varies profoundly according to historical and symbolic contexts. In the French classical tradition, proportion, clarity, and restraint were elevated to the rank of aesthetic and moral ideals, even cardinal virtues. It drew inspiration from the ancient Greek ideal of just measure and the condemnation of *hybris*, an excess leading to downfall. Excess thus becomes readily associated with confusion, loss of reason, even vulgarity, it is suspect, even when born of authentic passion, disproportion disturbs because it threatens order and intelligibility. In China as well, though according to a different logic, excess is often criticized. The ideal of harmony and relational balance leads to suspicion of overly visible emotional displays, perceived as disruptive to the group. Moreover, excess singularizes the individual, extracting him from the collective fabric and exposing him as too distinct, too assertive, which is judged inappropriate in a context where cohesion and mutual adjustment take precedence over individual expression. Thus, in France excess threatens reason, in China it threatens harmony and integration; the symbolic foundations differ, even if the outcome, the critique of excess, may appear similar. Some other cultures, by contrast, have valorized forms of intensity, for

example the religious fervor of the great American Protestant revivals, where open-air sermons provoked tears and spectacular conversions, the heroic passion associated with *bushido* in feudal Japan, the “way of the warrior”, where absolute loyalty and readiness for ultimate sacrifice were regarded as the supreme expression of honor, the mystical ecstasy of Sufism or contemplative Christianity, the expressive flamboyance of certain Mediterranean, Slavic, or Latin American cultures. In such contexts, excess is not necessarily perceived as a threat, but rather as proof of authenticity, power, or fidelity to a higher value. Thus, while measure may be universal as a principle of regulation, the way excess is defined and judged remains profoundly cultural.

Furthermore, every genuine creation, every passionate activity, contains a share of exaggeration. The artist who innovates, the thinker who pushes an idea to its consequences, the individual who commits fully to a social or inner demand necessarily crosses limits. What first appears excessive may, over time, become a new reference, an object of admiration. The fear of exaggeration therefore reveals a tension between the security of the norm and the risk of intensity, it protects collective balance, yet may also restrain individual momentum. By condemning excess, stability is preserved, but greatness may be stifled. Thus, the formula “one must not exaggerate” is not merely a call for prudence, it expresses a suspicion toward what overflows, what exceeds, what rises beyond the average. The question remains whether every intensity deserves to be brought back to moderation, or whether certain exaggerations are precisely the condition of transcendence and self-realization.

It must also be acknowledged that exaggeration, particularly in discourse, is not necessarily a defect. Like caricature in drawing, it enlarges features in order to make certain lines more visible, as by accentuating one aspect, by forcing contrast, it illuminates what remained diffuse. Rhetorical excess may thus have a heuristic function: it simplifies, dramatizes, and makes perceptible a tension or contradiction that moderation would tend to dilute. What is perceived as excess can therefore be a pedagogical or critical

method, for if measure protects order, exaggeration reveals fault lines. This tension between measure and excess runs not only through cultures but also through the history of philosophy. Some thinkers have made moderation, the golden mean or rationality their ideal, others have seen in intensity, rupture, or radicality the very condition of truth. Between equilibrium and overflow, thought oscillates, as if no society and no epoch could definitively choose between the stability of order and the fecundity of fracture. Thus we may see Aristotle as a figure of measure, the Stoics as representatives of self-mastery, while Nietzsche embodies the affirmation of intensity and Kierkegaard that of passion. Even among the great philosophers of rationality, the tension strangely persists. Kant elevates reason and moral measure as ideals, yet at the cost of a radical and unconditional demand, the categorical imperative. Hegel values mediation and reconciliation, yet recognizes that truth emerges from conflict and from negativity pushed to its limit. Thus even so-called "rational" philosophy cannot entirely dispense with intensity.

416- Misunderstanding

A Russian student complains that during our exchange in the workshop, she was misunderstood, primarily because of the translator and her wrong interpretation of the word "funny" that I used, which according to her "misdirected the dialogue". And I answered her.

Indeed, it is certainly true that translation can sometimes shift the meaning of a word and redirect a dialogue in unexpected ways. The example you mention about the word "funny", meaning either "strange" or "amusing", illustrates this well, as a term often carries several nuances, and the translator may choose one that does not fully correspond to the supposed intention of the speaker. Although my usual translators are generally aware that I tend to prefer "amusing", more than "strange", since I aim to defuse

the dramatic dimension of what seems to be a problem. However, this situation raises a more general question about the principle of dialogue itself. We often assume that the value of a conversation depends on the perfect accuracy of what is transmitted, therefore if a word is not translated exactly, if an intention is slightly misinterpreted, we tend to conclude that the dialogue has been compromised, a rather misleading or inadequate assumption, as far as we are concerned. In reality, let us be realistic, misunderstanding is not an exception in any exchange, it is one of the normal and unavoidable conditions of dialogue. Even when people speak the same language, words carry different connotations, personal experiences shape interpretation, and meanings shift during the exchange. Dialogue is rarely a perfectly transparent transmission of ideas, and discrepancies in interpretations are constitutive of any mutual interactions. From this perspective, a misunderstanding does not necessarily invalidate the exchange, since from a thinking standpoint it remains interesting anyhow, and may even reveal something important. When a discrepancy appears between what was said and what was understood, it forces us to examine the meaning more closely. What exactly did one mean? Why was it interpreted differently? What assumption was hidden behind the word? Which paradigms are operating in the participants mind.

In that sense, what appears at first as a problem may not truly be one, the dialogue may indeed have taken a different direction, but that direction can still be fruitful. Thinking does not depend on perfect agreement or perfect translation, it often begins precisely at the moment when meanings diverge. Of course, translators should aim at accuracy, and your remark about nuances is in that sense legitimate. But the presence of a misunderstanding does not necessarily diminish the value of the exchange, on the contrary, it can become part of the philosophical work itself. Therefore, a dialogue can remain productive even when it contains imperfections, what matters is not that every word lands exactly where it was intended, but that the exchange continues to stimulate reflection. In philosophy, the slight displacement of meaning is often not the end of the conversation, but the beginning of it.

Ultimately, philosophical exchange is not merely an exercise in communication where one expects to receive a clearly defined object, as if meaning were a package to be delivered intact. It is rather an interplay between people who think differently, who approach words, ideas, and problems from distinct perspectives. In this sense, the value of the dialogue does not lie in the perfect alignment of meanings, but in the movement of thought that emerges from the encounter itself, even when that encounter includes shifts, tensions, or misunderstandings. And perhaps there is a small irony here, since on the very topic of misunderstanding, I seem once again to be misunderstood. Misunderstanding is often treated as something purely negative, as if it were the failure of dialogue. When they feel misunderstood, people also tend to interpret it as a personal offense, as though not being fully understood meant being disrespected or dismissed. Yet in philosophical work, as I often underline, misunderstanding can simply be a sign that different perspectives are meeting. Rather than something to resent, it can be something to examine, even to enjoy, since it reveals how our minds diverge and how thought begins precisely where meanings cease to coincide.

417 – The Silent Arrogance

There exists a particular figure in group discussion settings: the person who does not speak but judges, whom one might call the “silent arrogant.” In public, this person does not express themself, does not expose themself, does not take the floor, and later, in private, claims that “others bore them with their stupidity,” which is why they do not involve themselves in the dialogue. The contradiction is striking: this person deplores the surrounding mediocrity but does nothing to elevate it. Overall, they indulge in a sense of superiority at little cost, as they stand aloof, keeping their distance from the fray and avoiding any confrontation with anyone. Sometimes they are content to exchange complicit glances with a partner of the same ilk. Such behaviour is not rare. It may take the form, for instance, of a

philosophy professor attending a philosophy café, a place intended for collective free reflection. During the discussion, he says nothing; yet afterwards, in private, he harshly criticises the participants, points out their approximations, mocks their naivety and their ignorance, and expresses contempt for what he considers their superficial remarks, which he dismisses as “opinions,” a rather derogatory term in that profession. Yet he himself has said nothing, he has not taken the risk of exposing his own ideas to public confrontation, preferring to emphasise his status as a professor rather than entering the exchange. One finds a similar attitude in other contexts, for example in a professional meeting, when someone remains silent throughout the discussion but later, during the break, tells a colleague that “the meeting was of a dreadful level” and that “no one really understands the problem,” without having proposed the slightest idea. Likewise, during a public debate on health issues, someone may remain silent throughout the exchange and then comment afterwards on social media: “I am a doctor, and that debate was lamentable.” In such situations, the identity that is displayed becomes a form of armour. But actually, those who know themselves to be capable do not need to announce themselves in such a way, as the repeated invocation of a status reveals less confidence than fragility: the title then serves as protection against the ordeal of speaking.

This posture, apparently comfortable, may seem haughty, but in reality it both conceals and reveals a fear. However, we must distinguish between two forms of silence: the silence of listening, which welcomes and seeks to understand, and the silence of judgment, which keeps its distance and refuses to expose itself. The problem, therefore, is not silence itself, but silence that judges without any generosity. To risk speaking exposes us, since to take a position, propose ideas, or argue is to accept being contradicted, misunderstood, or even ignored. Thus the one who retreats behind a contemptuous silence avoids precisely this ordeal, rather than risk banality, they prefer a disdainful distance. And by implicitly declaring that others are speaking nonsense, by invoking a title or a presumed competence, they justify their silence.

This particular behaviour may be understood as a form of “defensive”

arrogance. Yet this posture is not merely pride, it is also a strategy for avoiding doubt, discomfort, and the loss of control that any genuine intellectual confrontation entails. The display of superiority protects one's self-image, for as long as one does not speak, one can preserve the illusion of possessing a more refined, more demanding, and deeper thought. The danger would be to discover that, when confronted with the reality of dialogue, this thought is not as exceptional as one imagined. Thus silence protects less a real thought than an image of oneself as a thinker, an image that survives only as long as it is not tested by dialogue. This could be seen as a form of defensive narcissism: the image of oneself as a thinker must be preserved at all costs, even if it means to censor oneself and avoid any situation where it could be put to the test, which psychology refers to as "vulnerable" narcissism, as opposed to "grandiosity" narcissism.

In a meeting or workshop, everyone speaks on an equal footing; no value is attributed in advance, and such horizontality destabilises those who base their worth on a function, a diploma, or an institutional position. If everyone may intervene equally, then a title no longer guarantees recognition: one must pass through the challenge of speech. Two forms of authority then clash: the authority of status and the authority of reason. The former is assigned in advance by some "hierarchy", while the latter must be earned through the test of argument. However, this second form of authority is unpredictable, as it depends as well on the judgment of others. Thus, this anxious arrogant accepts speaking only in contexts where a status, and therefore an authority, is granted to them in advance. Such an individual recognises only formal authority, attributed beforehand through a function or title, not the authority that is earned through the quality of one's words, the pertinence of an idea, or the strength of an argument. This second form of authority requires exposure, and therefore a certain humility: one must accept that one's words may be examined, discussed, sometimes contested, and thus accept being judged or evaluated by others.

Criticising in private is comfortable, as it allows one to maintain a distance, preserve a kind of imaginary purity, and protect one's image, one can then judge without being judged in return, especially when confiding in a friend or someone who will not dare contradict us. Yet thought that refuses the

public ordeal deprives itself of vitality, it becomes a dull commentary rather than a creation. Such an attitude reveals less an excess of confidence than a difficulty in bearing uncertainty and vulnerability. Silent arrogance is not the mark of assured superiority but rather of a fragility that protects itself, contrary to what one might suppose, it is actually the most discreet form of insecurity.

This is the paradox of arrogance: it displays superiority but in fact arises from fear. It proclaims a certain “height”, wishes to believe itself superior, yet dreads being tested. The more it affirms “I am worth more than others,” the more it belittles others, the more it reveals, in hollow form, a doubt about its own value. Genuine confidence has no need to retreat into a contemptuous silence or hide behind a status, as it accepts the risk of dialogue. And a thought that does not risk itself in dialogue may not truly be a thought at all, but merely the idea we entertain of our own intelligence.

418- Freedom and Authorities

Philosophy has always lived under the shadow of its authorities. Plato, Aristotle, Kant, Hegel and many others have provided concepts so powerful that later thinkers naturally hesitate to modify them. Respect for such figures is understandable, as their work established the very terrain on which we think. Yet philosophy would cease to exist if these concepts were treated as untouchable monuments rather than as instruments for thinking. Every major philosopher has, in fact, transformed the concepts they inherited. Aristotle reinterpreted Plato, often against him. Medieval thinkers reshaped Aristotle in order to make him compatible with theology. Kant himself reworked the rationalist and empiricist traditions he received. Hegel famously spoke of a “determinate negation”, a transformation that preserves something of what it negates. Even analytic philosophy repeatedly revises its own vocabulary. In this sense, the history of philosophy is not a museum of preserved meanings but a continuous

reconfiguration of concepts. Plato already recognised this necessity when, in the *Sophist*, he spoke of the philosophical "parricide" committed against Parmenides by claiming that "non-being is", in opposition to his predecessor's famous dictum: "being is, non-being is not". He was conscious of the scandalous nature of his dialectical move, but his gesture was not an act of disrespect, it was a condition of thought itself, since he considered that to think is to examine, displace, reinterpret. Concepts must be tested in new contexts, otherwise they become rigid formulas repeated out of reverence rather than used as tools for understanding and creativity. This issue appears clearly in the case of some discussions we had about analytic judgement. Kant defined it in a strict logical sense: the predicate must be contained in the definition of the subject. Such a formulation has undeniable clarity and works well in formal contexts such as mathematics or geometry. Yet when we examine the way concepts operate in ordinary language, this definition proves extremely restrictive. In many cases the predicate is not formally contained in the subject, yet it clearly follows from the meaning and internal structure of the concept. In this broader sense, the judgement does not produce new knowledge but explicates what is already implicitly understood in the concept itself. Extending the notion of analyticity beyond simple logic thus makes it possible to account for the semantic necessity present in many ordinary judgments.

Such an adaptation becomes even more necessary within philosophical practice, as this field does not operate primarily in the domain of formal propositions but in the analysis of everyday discourse, questions, and implicit assumptions expressed in usual speech. When a person formulates a question about their own situation, certain presuppositions are already embedded in the formulation itself. The task of philosophical practice is precisely to make explicit what is implicitly contained in such statements. In order to analyse these living forms of language, classical logical distinctions often need to be broadened or adjusted. Without such adaptation, the conceptual tools inherited from philosophy remain confined to formal analysis and lose much of their relevance for the examination of daily life.

Of course, such transformations require vigilance, since freedom is not licence. It is useful to know the original concept, understand the reasons for its formulation, and be aware of the consequences of altering it. Without this awareness, modification indeed becomes looseness, lack of rigor. But when the transformation is explicit and argued, it is not a betrayal of philosophy; it is philosophy at work. Nevertheless, over time, the origin of concepts naturally tends to fade, as ideas circulate, transform, recreate themselves, adapt to new contexts, and acquire uses that go beyond their initial formulation. The history of thought shows that concepts thrive on these successive shifts, they do not remain indefinitely attached to their source. Thus, while knowledge of the origin can shed light on philosophical work, it is not an absolute requirement, as concepts evolve and redeploy naturally according to the needs of a permanently evolving thought, just as we do not necessarily need to know the etymology of a term in order to use it.

What often appears to be a lack of rigor in the eyes of the formalist is often just a different approach, as it involves using inherited concepts to shed light on new areas. Philosophical practice operates in the living space of language and dialogue, where conceptual relations are less formal than in logic but not therefore arbitrary. Extending a notion such as analytic judgement is therefore less a distortion than an attempt to adapt a classical tool to another field of inquiry, wider and more indeterminate. Respect for authorities should therefore not mean submission, where we do not allow ourselves to adapt and transform concepts according to some task or project. The greatest respect one can show to a philosophical tradition is precisely to treat its concepts as living instruments rather than sacred relics. Fidelity to philosophy lies not in repeating the masters, the problematic and compliant behavior of the “good” student, but in continuing their work: questioning, adjusting, sometimes even betraying their formulations so that thought may remain alive. The issue is not to repeat “respectfully” what they have written, but to show that they have inspired us and taught us to think, which implies freedom and innovation.

And for those who still feel the need to shelter their thinking under the authority of others, let us recall that, among many others, Descartes and Kant made the autonomy of judgement a fundamental requirement. The

former does not invite us to piously collect inherited opinions, but to learn to conduct our own reason well, the latter summarised the very spirit of the Enlightenment with the unequivocal injunction: *"Have the courage to use your own understanding"*. As he phrases it, the issue is not learning philosophy, but learning how to philosophize.

419- The Manufacture of Problems

When we listen to them, some individuals seem constantly surrounded by problems, they always have some trouble or drama to share. But as we listen to them we are a little surprised with their confidences, since the situations they describe often appear rather ordinary or even trivial, they rarely appear as dramatic as the interpretation they give them. Events or contexts that appear quite ordinary to others are experienced by them as sources of anxiety, tension, or drama. A minor difficulty becomes a crisis, an ambiguity becomes a dilemma, a slight discomfort pains them, and everyday life is transformed into a continuous sequence of obstacles to overcome, of dissatisfactions that make their life strangely oppressive. From the outside, one wonders whether the problem truly lies in the situation itself or rather in the way it is interpreted, with a strong inclination towards the second hypothesis.

One explanation lies in the role that problems play in structuring a person's life, in providing meaning and direction, a "satisfying" story, as a difficulty provides a focus for attention, a narrative that organises experience. To say "this is my problem" is to define a position in the world, value to one's existence, and without such a focal point, life may appear vague, empty, or directionless. The problem then becomes less an obstacle than a form of orientation, a form of existential anchoring. Problems also generate emotional intensity, as ordinary existence is rather repetitive and uneventful, routine like, whereas conflict, disappointment and worry

produce lively agitation, stimulation and drama. Anxiety creates movement, urgency, and the impression that something significant is taking place, and for certain individuals, this intensity becomes almost addictive. In this respect, the manufacture of problems may also function as a form of diversion, in the sense described by Pascal. Agitation around difficulties prevents the individual from facing the quiet emptiness of existence, it is preferable to remain troubled than to encounter the unsettling experience of inner void. Calmness may feel boring, even unsettling, as if nothing important were happening, and such a person feels more alive in distress. Ordinary life can feel flat or uneventful, so exaggerating difficulties produces stimulation, anxiety gives the impression that something important is happening.

Another aspect concerns responsibility, as the problem becomes an alibi to evade any action or enterprise. When life is constantly filled with problems, it becomes easier to postpone decisions or avoid confronting more substantial questions. The difficulty itself serves as an explanation for stagnation: one cannot act because of being overwhelmed by circumstances. The problem functions as a protective screen, since the constant presence of problems creates a convenient justification for preventing initiative. In this sense, the problem becomes a protective screen that transforms hesitation or even cowardice into what appears to be a heroic struggle against circumstances. The individual presents himself as someone courageously confronting difficulties, while in reality the idea of the "problem" serves as intellectual protection against the necessity of acting, eliminating from the outset any existential project worthy of the name.

Arguments such as *"things are complicated", "the situation is too difficult"* allow us to remain paralyze*d, "until the day the problem is solved",* an indefinite postponement. Thus the person evades or defers responsibility, without fully realising it. The psychological comfort lies in the fact that the stagnation can be attributed to circumstances rather than to one's own hesitation, the problem protects the person from the burden of choice. As long as the difficulty persists, one does not have to risk acting, deciding, or failing. This is why some individuals maintain a permanent state of

difficulty: it justifies immobility while preserving the image of someone who is struggling rather than the fact of avoiding decisive action, the problem becomes a permanent justification for everything.

There is also a cognitive habit at work, since they have learned to scan reality primarily for what is wrong or threatening, focusing on the drawbacks and difficulties. Their attention gravitates toward imperfection, risk, or potential failure, they are unconsciously fascinated with negativity. Over time, the mind actually becomes quite skilled at detecting difficulties, even when they are minimal, although they are immediately amplified. This mental habit reinforces anxiety since attention continually returns to what is wrong, and over time, the mind becomes trained to manufacture problems automatically. From then on, any dialogue with such a person, any reflection on their part, tends to mainly refocus on "their problems", a theme that becomes a kind of permanent leitmotif structuring their way of thinking and living.

As well, we should not forget that in many environments, like family or friends, speaking about problems attracts attention, sympathy, and recognition, a type of social reinforcement, complaining can therefore become a form of social currency. Thus the person unconsciously touts difficulties because they bring listening and support from others. Complaining itself may then become a mode of existence, for someone who lacks a genuine project, work, or creation, speaking about problems becomes one of the few ways of occupying a place in the social world and "enhancing one's value".

Philosophically speaking, this attitude reveals a difficulty in accepting the ordinary nature of existence, composed of ups and downs, advantages and disadvantages, lacks and benefits, as life is never totally dramatic or perfectly coherent. Yet those who hope for constant significance may interpret this normal versatility or imperfection as a problem. The drama then lies not in reality itself but in the implicit demand that reality should

be otherwise, in the expectation of living in some kind of paradise where nothing ever goes wrong, a fantasized garden of roses, the refusal of normality. At a deeper level, this refusal of normality may also be understood as a refusal of finitude. To accept the ordinary nature of life is to accept that we are not the heroes of a great tragedy but simply participants in a banal reality. The manufacturer of problems prefers to imagine himself as the protagonist of his own drama in order to escape the banality of the human condition. In short, the "problem" is less a real obstacle than a psychological construction that organizes one's relationship to life, and a sort of existential consolation.. The paradox is that the person suffers from it while also needing it.

420- The Ordeal of Choice

In philosophical dialogue, as in life, certain forms of questioning tend to provoke resistance, particularly when the questions require choosing between two options: yes or no, pleasant or unpleasant, positive or negative, what can be called closed questions. Some interlocutors interpret such questions as an attempt to impose a rigid doctrine. They accuse the questioner of reducing reality to simplistic oppositions, of seeing the world in black and white, of refusing nuance, or even of seeking to manipulate. Yet this interpretation misunderstands the purpose and nature of the exercise, as the aim of such questions is not to claim that reality itself is simple or binary, which would be absurd, nor to steer the discussion toward a predetermined goal. Rather, they serve as a temporary methodological tool. By asking a person to make such choices, the dialogue forces them to clarify their position and to reveal implicit assumptions that might otherwise remain hidden in vague or ambiguous formulations, a task which is strenuous for rather indecisive persons. Actually, in everyday speech, many people prefer to remain in indeterminacy or ambiguity, at least on certain difficult topics. They surround their statements with qualifications, circumstances, nuances, and exceptions, seemingly to preserve complexity,

but especially to avoid commitment. Vagueness offers a form of comfort, as it allows one to speak without truly exposing one's thinking: when no clear position is adopted, one can hardly be questioned, criticised, or contradicted, and speech avoids compromising itself.. Although, the problem might also stem from the difficulty of having a clear consciousness of one's thoughts and feelings, which can be subtle, mixed, or confused. The requirement to choose disrupts this comfort, which naturally provokes reluctance. The proposal of simple alternatives obliges the speaker to determine what they really think, at least provisionally. The purpose of the exercise is therefore not to deny nuance or complexity, but to create a moment of intellectual tension in which the person becomes aware of the structure and nature of their own thinking by forcing themselves to decide, to identify an inclination, a tendency. In this perspective, the "yes or no" should be understood as a tool of navigation rather than as a final judgement or as a form of intellectual imprisonment. Clear alternatives help orient thinking without pretending to exhaust the complexity of reality. By contrast, vagueness becomes a refuge for insecurity, which disguises itself as so-called depth. Paradoxically, nuance itself often becomes more explicit only after such initial clarification. It is also important to distinguish real complexity from defensive vagueness, as genuine nuance is not an initial state but a conquest: one begins with a clear affirmation, which is then tested, refined, modulated and tested in relation to reality. Those who invoke nuance before having affirmed anything often use complexity as a form of intellectual protection, a kind of fog that prevents their thinking from being clearly examined. Once a position has been articulated, it becomes possible to examine its limits, to refine it, transform it, or even discover objections to it, but without an initial commitment, thought remains diffuse. Ironically enough, those who accuse such questioning of being too categorical are often the very people who view decisions in a rigid way, since they struggle to see their answers as provisional hypotheses, as a simple exercise in thinking.

Thus the criticism that such questioning reduces reality to "black and white" in fact reveals a deeper difficulty: the reluctance to choose and assume the responsibility of a choice, even for a short moment. Actually, it is not

uncommon for those who protest most vehemently against the requirement to give a "yes or no" answer or answer closed questions to be precisely those who find it difficult to make decisions in their own lives. Methodological resistance thus reflects a more general existential difficulty: deciding, choosing a direction, giving up other possibilities. The refusal to choose is in fact a refusal to expose oneself, a fear to really exist. To choose is to give weight and reality to one's thought, whereas a diffuse position remains a mere possibility, very uncertain. In this sense, the comfort of vagueness reflects a deeper fear of finitude: every "yes" implies the abandonment of a "no" and of all the intermediate possibilities that one might have preferred to keep open, an illusory feeling of omnipotence. Philosophical questioning, of course, does not aim to imprison thinking within rigid categories, but to momentarily sharpen them and work through them so that thinking becomes visible and therefore open to examination. Without such clarification, thought often remains suspended in a comfortable vagueness where nothing is clearly affirmed and nothing can truly be questioned. By refusing to make a choice in the name of an indeterminate nuance, the interlocutor does not protect the richness of reality, but rather evades its resistance and consistency. For it is precisely in the effort of determination that thought ceases to be a mere formless movement of consciousness and becomes an action that confronts its own solidity.

421- The Art of Interruption

Dialogue and monologue

In philosophical dialogue, clarity generally requires a certain discipline. The philosopher asks precise questions and expects concise answers so that ideas can be examined and clarified, otherwise, we have nothing substantial to work on. Yet in practice, many interlocutors tend to speak at length, as they shift topics, multiply explanations, get lost in lengthy preambles, try to

justify themselves, or react emotionally when they feel challenged. They have not yet integrated that the aim of dialogue is not the expression of the “self”, which easily turns into monologue, but the collaborative examination of an idea. When this “self” takes up all the space, the main issue itself tends to disappear, revealing a certain narcissism. In such situations, the philosopher must often interrupt, in order to return to the topic, ask for a shorter answer, clarify what was said, etc. But surprisingly, many practitioners find this difficult to do, even though they recognize it should be done, for diverse psychological and relational reasons. This difficulty in interrupting the chaotic flow of speech reveals a deep tension between the social function, the desire for connection, and the philosophical function, the demand for truth, an internal conflict over the very nature of dialogue, for philosophy is not a caress, but a surgery of the concept, considered as necessary gesture of care, rather than an aggression.

One reason, grounded in a feeling of emotional empathy, lies in a common confusion between kindness and permissiveness, a permanent dilemma familiar to many parents, when educating their child, or a confusion between empathy and indulgence. Some practitioners interpret empathy as the obligation to let everything be said, welcoming everything that is expressed with "kindness”, pretending that every comment is "interesting”. Yet empathy should concern the person, not the discourse itself, as one can welcome the person while still disciplining the speech. Out of fear of appearing cold or insensitive, some practitioners refuse to make this distinction, in their mind, interrupting or questioning the discourse amounts to rejecting the person. As a result, they allow the monologue to expand chaotically in the name of kindness, even when it prevents the dialogue from becoming a genuine exercise in thinking. When the practitioner thus wavers, he gives full power to the emotional state of his interlocutor at the expense of reason, which is not kindness but surrender. Kindness belongs to the sentimental register, it is the desire not to hurt or embarrass the other person. Thus out of concern not to bother or frustrate the other person, the inquirer hesitates to interrupt or to impose limits on the conversation. What begins as a legitimate intention to be considerate gradually turns into tolerance for behaviours that undermine the dialogue

itself. In trying to remain kind, one becomes loose, allowing speech to expand indefinitely, even when it drifts away from the question. Yet kindness does not necessarily require the absence of boundaries. On the contrary, a clear framework can itself be a form of care, as it allows the exchange to remain focused, peaceful and meaningful. The practitioner's passivity here is not benevolence but a form of resignation: he abandons the other to his own chaos. He lacks intellectual discipline, he is "tired," he prefers the "tranquility" of disorder to the effort of determination. Interruption is actually an act of care, of generosity, not of control, when we really want to understand the other person and this person to self-understand.

One can interrupt calmly, without harshness, in an appropriate manner, by peacefully returning to the main issue, by asking for a shorter answer, or a one sentence summary. When this is done with a composed tone and genuine attention, the intervention does not rush the interlocutor but helps them clarify their thinking. Not forgetting that such attention allows the other person, often too anxious, to take some distance and regain a calmer, more reflective perspective on what they are saying. In such a context, asking someone to stop, to focus on the question, or to answer briefly is not a lack of courtesy but a methodological necessity, as genuine listening does not mean allowing endless speech, and clarity requires discipline. In fact, another common confusion is the one between active and passive listening: active listening means engaging with what is said in order to clarify and examine it, we "cut" to hear better, whereas passive listening simply allows the speech to continue without intervention or critical attention, without real interest of understanding.

It is striking to note that those who resist this framework the most often recognize its usefulness after the fact. When asked for feedback at the end of a dialogue, they say that the exchange was beneficial precisely because it was structured, when left to their own devices, they tend to go off in all directions, which quickly becomes anxiogenic: they no longer know what they are saying, as if they were being overwhelmed by their own thoughts without being able to control them. The framework then produces a paradoxical effect: what initially seemed restrictive becomes soothing, and

by limiting the dispersion of speech, it allows thoughts to come together and be constructed more clearly. Some people even feel bound by a kind of implicit duty to fill the silence during the exchange, for fear of making the other person uncomfortable, but by filling it, they end up losing themselves. The framework frees them from this pressure and enables more conscious and deliberate speech.

Social Codes and Philosophical Discipline

Another reason for non-intervention is more of an ethical nature, grounded in the idea of politeness, which belongs to the social register. It concerns the rules that govern ordinary social interaction, which do not necessarily coincide with the requirements that keep communication orderly and intelligible. Allowing someone to speak without interruption may appear respectful, a common principle in usual exchange, whereas stopping them may seem rude, abusive or authoritarian. But there is a misreading of what respect means, as it is not to let someone speak freely, but treating them as a rational individual capable of rigor and precision. Stopping someone and inviting them to this requirement is a higher form of regard than letting them ramble while you nod without really following. Interruption is in fact the act of breaking through social veneer, allowing the emergence of being. Then, philosophical dialogue is not simply a space for expression, it is a space for thinking, and without a certain structure, speech easily becomes diffuse, and ideas remain unexamined. For this reason, it cannot function as a mere democratic debate in which everyone speaks freely for as long as they wish. The dialogue requires a method and a guide who ensures that the questioning remains focused and that answers remain clear and concise, someone who maintains the framework of the inquiry. Plato himself suggested that a group discussion, like a ship at sea, needs a pilot to guide it; without such guidance, the conversation risks drifting aimlessly rather than advancing toward understanding. But this issue is often ignored, thus the gesture of interrupting someone appears unkind because it seems to wound their feelings, and impolite because it seems to violate conversational etiquette. This reveals a common mistake: they confuse

hierarchy with function, as the pilot is not superior to the passengers, he simply performs a role that the others do not have. Another factor is the desire to be liked, and some practitioners unconsciously seek the approval, affection or appreciation of their interlocutors. They suppose that interrupting someone or insisting on a clear answer will provoke irritation, frustration or rejection, a refusal to continue the dialogue, so in order to preserve a pleasant atmosphere and maintain the exchange, they allow the conversation to drift. They fear that stopping someone or asking them to answer briefly will be perceived as aggression, thus the dialogue becomes an arrangement of comfort rather than a search for truth. However, when the philosopher falls in this trap and avoids his responsibility, the dialogue becomes chaotic and loses its philosophical focus. In this context, emotional reactions, or mainly the fear of them, can intimidate the practitioner. When an interlocutor becomes defensive or upset, the questioner therefore hesitates to maintain the frame of the dialogue and impose rigor, he fears a resistance that he often imagines to be more exaggerated than it really is. Yet such reactions arise precisely when the questioning touches something important, a difficult issue provoking an almost unavoidable reaction. When the interlocutor reacts emotionally, the practitioner may feel responsible for that discomfort, and to avoid emotional escalation, they allow the speech to continue, which transfers control of the group dialogue to the most emotional participant. A calm but firm interruption does not then harm the dialogue, it helps restore clarity and tranquillity.

In exchanges, certain rhetorical markers often signal that the speaker is about to launch into a long, justificatory discourse rather than answer the question directly. Expressions such as “yes, but…”, “the problem is…”, “it’s because…”, or “you have to understand that…” frequently function as openings for lengthy explanations, detailed contextualisations, or self-defence. They indicate that the interlocutor is moving away from a concise response toward a narrative that may become increasingly diffuse. An experienced practitioner learns to recognise these signals as early indicators of a possible drift in the conversation and intervenes quickly, which he prevents by returning to the question, by asking for a shorter and

more precise answer, and in this sense, the interruption can be viewed as a preventive move. However, some practitioners are not sufficiently attentive to these rhetorical markers, or they lack training, they let the discourse unfold, hoping that something clearer will eventually emerge from the "explanation", until they find themselves overwhelmed by what all they hear. By the time they realise that the speech has become confused or excessive, the discourse has already expanded so much that it becomes difficult to bring the dialogue back to its focus. Sensitivity to these markers is therefore an important practical skill in philosophical dialogue, as it allows the guide to intervene at the right moment and preserve the clarity of the inquiry.

Cognitive and Psychological Obstacles

Finally, some practitioners do not value their own authority, they mistrust themselves, they are busy “worrying”, occupied with their own anxiety and lack of confidence. They allow the interlocutor to continue speaking because they fear not having “fully understood” the person yet, hoping that some illumination will eventually appear at the end of the discourse. Instead of working with what has already been said, they wait for a supposed completion of the speech. Yet the longer they wait, the more the discourse expands and the more they feel overwhelmed by it, as they get caught up in numerous details of a confused narrative they cannot handle. At the same time, they fear not knowing what to ask or what to say once their interlocutor stops speaking. As a result, they are no longer truly listening, as they are preoccupied with their own internal worries, they simply “gain time” by letting the other person continue indefinitely, wondering endlessly about their next move. At times, this hesitation reveals certain cognitive difficulties that inhibit the practitioner. They struggle to conceptualize the situation clearly and therefore do not know what question to formulate. They may have difficulty perceiving the rational connection between the question asked and the type of answer expected. Their questions remain vague or imprecise, and a discrepancy appears between what they ask and what they actually wish to understand. Lacking this clarity, they become uncertain about how to proceed and allow the discourse to continue rather than intervene.

As well, interrupting someone is essentially setting a boundary, and people who have difficulty setting limits in their personal life often reproduce the same pattern in the philosophical setting. The practitioners who “struggle” in such fashion most likely haven't resolved, privately, whether they are there to be liked or to be useful, what is their function and identity. Moreover, inciting someone to stop presupposes a minimal psychological and intellectual stability, the capacity to accept a certain frustration and to trust the process more than the immediate comfort of the interaction. Without this inner authorization, the frame cannot hold. They forget that their authority does not so much come from their status in the discussion or their personal value, but from the method itself., which they are supposed to master. Their role is to guide the process of inquiry. Interrupting, returning to the question, and asking for brevity are not acts of domination but tools that allow thought to become visible. When the inquirer hesitates to exercise this authority, speech continues endlessly, chaotically, and the dialogue loses its direction. But when the frame is established and calmly maintained, participants often discover that brevity and precision open a space where thinking can truly occur. But many people unconsciously associate authority with violence or authoritarianism, so when they interrupt someone, they feel they are being unfair or oppressive, they feel guilty, as if stopping someone meant refusing to listen to them. They anticipate anger, tears, or resentment and therefore avoid this micro-conflict in order to preserve a superficial peace. Such reactions are typical of people-pleasing and conflict-avoidance patterns: fear of upsetting the other person, of being rejected, of appearing harsh. In order to preserve the image of the kind and empathic practitioner, they place affective security above the philosophical requirement of clarity. Thus, they put this affective security above philosophical requirements of clarity, maintaining psychological comfort, for others and themselves, at the expense of one’s own leadership function. They do not attribute themselves legitimacy in their role, they do not dare to inhabit the structural asymmetry of the dialogue, they doubt themselves. They confuse equality of dignity with equality of function: because all participants are equal as persons, they hesitate to assume their specific role in guiding the dialogue, they fall in some egalitarian trap, they actually fear taking power, as the term has for

them a negative connotation. We could say that the practitioner is a "host of the logos": he welcomes the guest, but imposes the rules of the house, reason.

Yet in a philosophical dialogue, authority is not domination, it is structural power: the responsibility to protect the framework that makes thinking possible, the guarantor of reason. Without that framework, dialogue dissolves into conversation or therapy. Authority in dialogue is not hierarchical power but methodological legitimacy. The facilitator must feel entitled to guide the process; without this internal legitimacy, the practitioner hesitates and willy-nilly the impulsive interlocutor takes control of the conversation. Nevertheless, this authority is not personal authority, it does not rest on the prestige or personality of the facilitator, but on confidence in the method itself. The participants should implicitly accept this framework and, to some extent, surrender to it, trusting that the technique of questioning will help clarify their thinking. In this sense, the authority belongs less to the individual who leads the dialogue than to the process that structures it.

The Conditions of Thinking

Some practitioners therefore prefer to remain agreeable rather than risk conflict, the result is that the relationship is protected, a superficial “friendliness” is installed, but of course the rigor disappears. As well, long explanations might appear rich and intelligent, thus practitioners may be fascinated by what is told, by a personal story or the intricacies of some explanation, they hope to get something meaningful from it, they are seduced by the ongoing speech, and in the process forget the purpose of the exercise. Yet philosophical dialogue is not primarily “storytelling”, or associative thinking, it is rigorous construction and clarification of thought. And indeed, in the immediate, the interlocutor is satisfied, of expressing oneself, but afterwards, they realize that no real thinking has taken place. The problem might also reside in the lack of clarity about the goal of dialogue, which is often a confusion between two different “goods”: the “good” of expression and the “good” of truth-seeking. If one genuinely believes that clarifying an idea matters more in this moment than

preserving the interlocutor's comfort, interruption becomes not only possible but natural, and necessary. Hesitation reveals that another priority is silently at work, as concern for the relationship, the atmosphere, or the practitioner's self-image, are placed above the intellectual inquiry. If the practitioner is not fully clear that the goal is clarification of thought, they may be tempted to prioritise free self-expression, being heard, storytelling, psychological relief, and immediate reactions. Indeed, these are legitimate human needs, but they are not the aim of philosophical dialogue. Some persons experience difficulty in tolerating tension, when a fruitful philosophical dialogue generally produces a certain psychological and intellectual pressure, as questioning, interrupting, requesting precisions, inviting to make choices, demanding a clear answer, necessarily creates friction, and some practitioners instinctively try to reduce or avoid this tension because it feels uncomfortable. Stopping someone often creates a brief silence and hesitation that certain people find difficult to tolerate, as they prefer a continuous flow of speech, avoiding the anguish of emptiness. Yet real thinking often emerges precisely from such interruptions, when the person gathers themselves and finally answers after a brief moment of disturbance and reflection. This difficulty is then reinforced by a confusion about their role as philosopher animator, they tend to see themselves primarily as helpers, listeners, friends, therapists or even professors, rather than as the guardians of the thinking process. In doing so, they prioritise emotional comfort over intellectual clarification, whereas the task of philosophical dialogue is precisely to maintain the conditions in which thinking can emerge. By letting the person speak endlessly in the name of freedom, the practitioner actually abandons rational dialogue, as freedom of speech without structure produces chaos, not thought. Paradoxically, by "letting someone speak," the practitioner believes they avoid violence, yet they produce another form of it: they abandon the interlocutor to its chaos, leave the group in a fog, and betray the philosophical contract of the dialogue. Not interrupting evasive or emotional speech is itself a decision, one that sacrifices thought to affect and method to spontaneity. Their own violence, passive violence or violence of abandonment, becomes a blind spot they ignore, and the chaotic speech continues when the philosopher unconsciously prefers comfort over clarity. Establishing a rational and

peaceful framework requires accepting a certain firmness and self-mastery, authority here does not suppress dialogue, it makes genuine exchange possible. The requirement is simple: to insist calmly on clarity, brevity, and relevance, so that the conversation becomes a space where thinking emerges, which implies that the philosopher forgets about himself, his doubts, his self-image and places shared reflection above emotional concerns.

422- Apology of Servitude

Servitude is usually understood as constraint, dependence, and external obligation, a regrettable situation, it appears, both socially and existentially, as something rather negative. Yet this judgment rests on an implicit assumption: that servitude is necessarily imposed. But if one shifts from being subjected to service, to choosing to serve, the meaning might change, and what seemed like an abasement may become discipline, commitment, or devotion. The musician submits to harmony, the thinker to reason, the monk to a rule, the soldier to duty, and these forms of submission are not humiliations but structures. They do impose limits, yet these limits generate form, precision, and strangely enough a higher degree of freedom, a more challenging way of being, as without constraints and rules, there is nothing but emptiness and chaos. Although the cognitive discomfort with such an idea lies partly in the word itself, “servitude”, endowed with a negative connotation, as one would prefer to use more “positive” words. But retaining the term “servitude” forces us to confront the tension contained in the term rather than dissolve it.

The ambiguity is already present in the word’s origin, in Latin, between *servus* meaning “slave”, and *servare*, meaning “to keep”, “to preserve”, “to watch over”. Thus “servitude” implies both ideas of “subjection” and “service”, the opposition between “being held” and “being devoted”,

between “containment” and “contribution”, between “imposed limitation” or “chosen commitment”. The separation, however, is not always clear, as one may be subjected to a constraint and later assume it consciously, in which case, acceptance is not resignation but appropriation. The constraint is no longer merely endured; it is reinterpreted, reoriented, and used as a principle of action. Freedom then lies not in the absence of constraint, but in the way it is taken up. Resignation, by contrast, leaves the constraint external, as one submits without transformation, without integration. The difference is subtle but decisive: in one case, the subject remains passive, in the other, the subject is reconfigured through what initially limited it. There are numerous reasons that explain why servitude is so often rejected. Egocentrism resists any decentering, pride refuses dependence, and a reductionist view of the self equates freedom with independence, with “self-serving” rather than “other-serving”, a reduced conception of self. Added to this are fear of domination, attachment to immediacy of desire, and a logic of possession and greed that sees any limitation as loss. From this perspective, servitude can only appear as deprivation, and indeed, it often is. Servitude can suppress autonomy, weaken responsibility, foster passivity, establish relationships of domination, and even distort our relationship with reality, by directing perception and judgment toward what is expected rather than toward what actually is. Although, more fundamentally, servitude is rejected because it challenges the person, since it threatens not only their comfort but their very identity, thus the resistance is not just moral or emotional, but structural. Then Spinoza critically reminds us that most forms of accepted servitude are lived as necessity and justified as freedom: one obeys passions, habits, or social conditioning, while believing or claiming to act freely, and in such cases, this unconscious servitude is merely a comforting illusion.
Yet there remains another possibility, as servitude can organise chaos, provide orientation, enable learning, cultivate humility, and sustain commitment. By submitting to a rule, a method, or a principle, by dedicating oneself to a cause, one develops a more structured way of acting that provides a more substantial capacity to act. But this requires a form of surrender, not as collapse, but as renunciation of a superficial reality, as accepting a more challenging way of being. One relinquishes the fantasy of

absolute control in order to align with something more transcendent, wider, more demanding. What appears as loss then becomes reorientation, we accept being bound by the rules in order to exceed our own self. At its highest, servitude becomes an ideal, since to serve a community, humanity, truth, beauty, or justice is to orient oneself beyond self-interest. To serve, in its nobler sense, is to become the custodian of what exceeds us, truth, harmony, justice. Servitude can then be requalified not as a loss of freedom, but as an entry into structure, as a freedom without form remains empty, whereas a chosen servitude becomes a fuller, more demanding freedom.It is to recognise that meaning is not self-generated, but emerges in relation to what exceeds us. Submission to reason disciplines thought, devotion to beauty disciplines creation. and attention to the other disciplines the self by confronting it with what resists it and exceeds it. In each case, one accepts constraints in order to overcome one's limited identity. Such an ideal reverses the usual hierarchy between having and being, as servitude, in this sense, does not accumulate but transforms. It privileges orientation over possession, commitment over control: what really matters cannot be owned, only served. The petty individual rejects all forms of servitude because he sees it as a threat to his comfort, while the idealist seeks the highest form of servitude in order to shape his character and accomplish his destiny. A "great" servitude, therefore, frees us from petty concerns, whether material or psychological, and from established moral or social norms, it frees us from ourselves so that we may better "become". The issue, therefore, is not whether servitude is positive or negative in itself, it is whether it is imposed or assumed, endured or appropriated, degrading or structuring. Where it diminishes, it is servitude in the ordinary sense, where it elevates, it becomes the condition of freedom.

423 – The Diktat of Moods

There are people who are periodically at the mercy of their moods.Their

face, their words, their behaviour betray an obvious disturbance, yet when questioned, they respond in a passive-aggressive manner: “I am fine”, “everything is fine”, “there is no problem”. This denial is puzzling. Why do they not acknowledge what is nevertheless manifest? For others as well as for themselves, if only they were willing to see it. It is not a matter of ignorance or unconsciousness, as we all experience affects that pass through us without our having willed them: a dark mood, irritation, diffuse fatigue, so many movements that largely escape our control. But still, one must be able to recognise them, for this recognition opens up a distance, a form of self-mastery. Yet it requires working through the gap between what we feel and what we are, and in the moment, this effort is visibly too painful.

Thus, many refuse this admission, for recognising one’s mood is to confess a form of powerlessness, to observe that something is acting within us without our mastering it, a rather unpleasant movement of the soul. For some, this is unbearable; they prefer to assert a compact identity: ‘this is how I am’, or else to deny their affects altogether. From that point on, the temper is no longer a passing phenomenon, it becomes a definition of the self, or else it serves to preserve an image of control. An ontological shift occurs: the individual no longer feels a mood, a temporary possession, they “are” their mood, a total identification, and thus they protect it. Ironically, the desire to appear in control is precisely what renders the individual a slave to their affect. Recognition is perceived as weakness, whereas it would in fact be the very act of sovereignty, the passage from a suffered state to an object of reflection.

From then on, the interlocutor who perceives this affective state becomes suspect, and if they dare to say it, they are seen as intrusive, as an accuser. A simple observation becomes an aggression, yet it is not the other as such that is disturbing, but the fact that they make visible what one refuses to see, the violation of an “open secret”. Instinctively, one thinks that acknowledging one’s discomfort would only aggravate it, that by naming it one gives it more weight. Yet the opposite is true, for to name a state is to situate it, to cease identifying with it. What one refuses to recognise acts all the more strongly, precisely because the phenomenon remains

unacknowledged. This common reaction could be called a “mistake of feeling”: the belief that admission strengthens the affect, whereas it is in fact the first step in creating distance from it. Conversely, denial imprisons, it allows the mood to govern without restraint. Over time, it sometimes becomes possible to return to these moments, to recognise that the irritation had no solid foundation, that it stemmed from a passing state, from fatigue, from a random inner disposition. But this belated lucidity does not change the fact that, in the moment, the individual identified with it, which in the long run may generate resentment.

These people say they are “like that”, but this assertion sounds like a protective system: they are not at peace with themselves, they endure a form of pain, and their sensitivity makes them vulnerable, to the gaze of others, to criticism. Any questioning is experienced as a personal attack. Contrary to their supposed “neutrality”, these people do not lack affects; on the contrary, they have too many, but they are devoid of mediation, of critical distance, and they undergo their own states without understanding them. They react to events without attempting to grasp what, within them, makes them so reactive. Their attention is absorbed by their own inner agitation, to the point that they no longer truly see others in those moments, and perhaps even afterwards. Thus, what could be a source of self-knowledge becomes a form of confinement: the mood is no longer a signal to be interpreted, but a reality to be endured or denied. And as long as it is neither recognised nor thought, it continues to act, silently but effectively. And as long as the denial persists, it functions as a form of emotional blackmail towards others, for the denied mood occupies the space, weighs upon the exchange, imposes a silence, without its author ever having to answer for it, a tyranny of the implicit, that of an affect that “does not exist”.

424- Not answering

Some people do not answer messages they receive. Even a simple acknowledgement such as “ok” seems to pose a problem. This absence is often interpreted by others as negligence or disrespect, yet it reveals something more structural, which should not be underestimated. In fact, to answer a message is never neutral, it is a form of engagement, more dramatic and anxiogenic for some persons than for others. Even the smallest reply establishes a minimal bond, a trace of presence, the affirmation of a posture. It declares “I have seen you”, “I recognise you”, “I enter into relation”, however briefly, and implicitly, “that is who I am”. For some, this is already too much: too much risk, too much effort, too much responsibility.

First, there is first a form of mental inertia, since to respond requires interrupting oneself, shifting attention, accepting a slight displacement of one’s focus and internal continuity, becoming available. What appears trivial becomes an intrusion, a disturbance, the message is not heavy in itself, but it introduces a rupture, as minimal as it maybe, and consequently a certain resistance, as some people view this brief interruption as an unpleasant burden. There is also a reluctance toward commitment, since to reply is to open a sequence, it risks prolongation, expectation, obligation, consequences. Silence, on the contrary, preserves a form of sovereignty, as one remains unbound, undefined, unavailable. A diffuse perfectionism can also intervene: one does not want to respond too quickly, nor inadequately, nor superficially, our image is at stake. One postpones in order to respond better, but this “better” never arrives, and the ideal reply paralyses the actual reply.

Sometimes the issue is cognitive or emotional overload, the message is experienced as one more demand, an additional claim, another among many. For some anxious persons, even the slightest minimal answer becomes symbolically charged. Even a banal “ok” is no longer light, it is one more item in an already saturated field. Then comes indecision, as there is often a difficulty in hierarchising, in establishing priorities, especially when

we allow accumulation through postponement. Ironically, everything appears equally urgent or equally insignificant. As a result, nothing is treated, any message remains suspended, not by accident, but by incapacity to choose or resolve. Another factor is indetermination, one does not know what to say. The simplest response becomes problematic because it implies in the mind a position, and not knowing becomes a reason for silence, as if clarity or certitude were a prerequisite for any utterance. Procrastination then settles in, one will answer later, at the right moment, when one is ready, when things are clearer, when the response will be more appropriate, and this deferred moment becomes a fiction that justifies inaction.
There is also an affective dimension, since to reply is to expose oneself, to accept the gaze of the other, to risk disappointment, irritation, refusal, or simply existing in a way that can be judged. Silence thus protects us against this exposure.

Pride may also play a role, where not answering becomes a statement: I am not constantly available, I am not at your disposal, I have more important matters. The absence of reply functions as a subtle assertion of hierarchy and self-importance, thus silence can become a form of power. The one who does not answer controls the rhythm, imposes uncertainty, leaves the other waiting. What appears as passivity is in fact a way of governing the relation without assuming it.

Therefore, not answering is not merely a lack of politeness or care, it is often a strategy, conscious or not, to avoid a series of micro-engagements. A way to protect oneself, to remain intact, at the cost of a relationship left hanging, undefined, and silently strained.

425- The relief of yelling

Some people claim that in the midst of a conflict, after expressing anger, after shouting or even insulting someone, especially a close person, they feel better. This observation can be taken at face value, as if the outburst had a healthy or cathartic function, but what exactly is this “feeling better”? Does it indicate the resolution of a problem, or merely the temporary relief of a tension that remains intact? To understand this phenomenon, one must look beyond the surface of the emotion and examine the mechanisms at work.

When someone yells at or insults the person their interlocutor, the target is often secondary, as the act is not primarily about the other, but about oneself. It functions as a regulation mechanism for internal tension, a hasty way of dealing with what cannot be contained: by discharging outward a painful inner agitation, an unresolved affect, rather than confronting these states inwardly. Here, speech is not used to communicate, but to evacuate. Yet, faced with emotional overload, several paths are possible: to contain, that is, to hold the tension without immediately acting on it, through self-mastery, to analyse, that is, to examine and clearly articulate what is being felt, or to discharge, that is, to release the tension through an outward expression, often impulsive. Yelling and insulting belongs to the last category : they transform a vague, painful and diffuse discomfort into a clear, directed act, what was internal becomes external, a conversion that produces immediate release. This last option is often chosen because it offers the quickest relief with the least effort, avoiding the difficulty of restraint and the challenge of self-examination, but let us examine its diverse components.

The first mechanism of such behavior is externalisation: instead of experiencing the bothersome “something is wrong in me”, the pain of self-doubt, we shift towards “you are the problem”, a basic “survival” reaction, or regressive defense.. This shift is generally accompanied by a sense of

moral righteousness, of "being right", as anger gives the individual an intense certainty of their own legitimacy. There is an unconscious conviction that shouting expresses a "truth" coming from deep within, fully grounded, when it is actually just a psychological or physiological reflex when feeling powerless.

Although for some, this stance is quickly mixed with guilt, because the excess of the reaction, or its partiality, its violence, becomes difficult to ignore once the tension has subsided. But at the time, this simplification reduces inner conflict in an easy way, as blame clarifies what was somewhat confused, the "easy" resolution of a complex relational issue. The second is the restoration of control, since psychological tension generates a sense of passivity, a feeling of powerlessness, the impression of being overwhelmed. Speaking violently inverts this position, as one acts, one strikes, one imposes, and the sense of power replaces the feeling of being subjected, restoring a sense of agency rather than being acted upon. Our anger does have some effect upon others, although often short-lived, superficial or illusory. There is also a physiological dimension, as anger mobilises the body and then releases tension, the discharge is real, and the relative calm that necessarily follows the outburst can be experienced as a form of well-being. It is similar to hitting something or breaking it: the relief is real, but short-lived. Identity is also at stake: when the self feels threatened, criticised, inadequate or fragile, attacking the other "revitalizes" it, as it tries to reclaim its integrity. Moreover, it avoids the risk of questioning oneself, the outburst fortifies the self, it becomes a shield, although it can be called a pseudo-fortification, a "cardboard shield": it feels strong because it is loud, but it leaves the person more vulnerable to guilt and further instability later. Over time, this behaviour can become an ingrained pattern, a common scheme for many people. It seems to work, as it provides a momentary sense of power with some effect on others, as relief follows anger, thus it is repeated, and what was once maybe occasional becomes habitual, the mechanism reproduces itself, it even becomes a dependency. But in reality this relief is deceptive, it is not truly a positive state, in spite of lessening some initial discomfort. It is closer to scratching an itch than to resolving a problem: it feels good because the irritation is momentarily reduced, but

scratching does not eliminate the itch, it even further amplifies the pain. Yelling soothes, but it often does not alter the condition that made it necessary. Indeed, after a fit of anger, the tension drops, the body calms, the inner pressure decreases, which is experienced as “feeling good”, but it is a “negative good”, a certain relief of discomfort, not the establishment of something positive. The Immediate relief is real, as the nervous system discharges, as adrenaline peaks and falls, providing a short sense of release, sometimes even pleasure. But nothing is resolved, the underlying tension remains intact, and it will return, often with greater intensity. We learn to depend on discharge rather than reasoning, a quite primitive and unsatisfying dynamic. Although we may genuinely feel better, this is only a functional relief, not a transformation that would constitute a real overcoming of the situation. As well, secondary effects often appear: guilt, shame, and the need to justify, in spite of the attempt to neutralize those feelings by some rationalisation, such as “You deserved it”, which replaces any form of rational analysis of the situation and any self-examination. In this dynamic, the other person becomes an “emotional outlet”, a container for one’s emotions: the partner receives what the individual cannot process and becomes the receptacle of their instability. Instead of managing their emotions, the individual transfers them, thereby creating a form of psychological dependence. We should add that the one who receives this discharge is not neutral: they can either absorb it in a submissive way, reinforcing the pattern, or transform it by naming it and reintroducing dialogue; in this sense, the evolution of the situation depends in part on their capacity to respond rather than merely endure. This creates a silent asymmetry: one discharges, the other absorbs. On the surface, the one who discharges appears powerful, since they act, impose, and affect the other. Yet a deeper reading reveals the ambiguity of this asymmetry and reverses the perspective. The one who absorbs demonstrates a different kind of strength: the capacity to contain, to endure, to not immediately react. This requires a form of inner stability that the one who discharges precisely lacks. However, this “power” is fragile and ambivalent. To absorb is not necessarily to understand, nor to transform. It can become a passive submission, a silent accumulation of what is not one’s own. If the absorbed tension is not processed, it turns into resentment, fatigue, or

eventual rupture. Thus, the apparent strength of the absorber can easily become a weakness. The real question is not who is stronger, but whether the absorbed affect is sublimated or merely stored. Otherwise, the container becomes saturated, and what was endured returns, maybe in another form, or at another time.

But the real question is not why the person feels better, that is obvious, such outbursts discharge tension. But over time, resentment accumulates, dialogue deteriorates, what presents itself as spontaneity is in fact a structural avoidance. The paradox is that the person does feel momentarily better, but this "better" is functional, not transformative. It hides the real problem instead of addressing it. One might then ask what lies behind such a "method". Often, it is the mark of a repressed disposition: someone who struggles to express tension directly, fears confrontation, and accumulates until overflow; such a person tends to please others excessively, seeking to be agreeable, to be liked, even loved, while remaining fundamentally uneasy with conflict and the presence of others. The explosion then compensates for this chronic inhibition. What appears as excessive indulgence often functions as a form of avoidance: silence becomes a shield, maintained as long as possible, until accumulated tension forces an explosion. Both silence and outburst, though seemingly opposed, serve the same function: to bypass the demanding middle ground of open, rational and difficult dialogue. Thus, the deeper question is not whether the relief is real, it is, but we must ask ourselves whether it promotes mutual understanding and self-actualization, or whether it perpetuates avoidance and primitive defense mechanisms. One useful and probably healthier strategy, instead of venting our rage on the other person, would be to focus on our own state of mind, admit that we are angry instead of merely expressing it, an already difficult step, and then explain the nature and source of our anger. But of course, this implies a certain humility, which contradicts the arrogance contained in the angry emotion. Thus, angry reactions should not be too quickly normalised or legitimised, as if they were a natural expression of authenticity, as they reveal a fragility, a difficulty in sustaining tension, contradiction, or frustration. Rather than treating them as justified responses, it would be more reasonable to see

them as indicators of a limit, a point where one's capacity to think, to relate, or to endure is compromised. In this sense, anger calls less for validation than for examination, although avoiding the trap of guilt. It invites a reflection on the strategies we adopt in facing others and ourselves, on the ways we protect, assert, or evade. To question anger is not to deny it, but to refuse to let it define the terms of our existence and our relations, so that it remains a strategy of exception.

426- The good life

When people ask how to lead a good life, they usually wonder how to make life pleasant, successful, or satisfying. They imagine that life is in itself something neutral, even deficient, which must be improved, corrected, or optimised. The question already assumes that life, as it is, is not enough, it is not pleasant or fulfilling by itself. And perhaps the problem with their existence, their feeling of lack, of missing out, already lies in this assumption.

Life is not an object we receive in order to evaluate it afterwards, as a consumer examines the product they acquired. It is the very condition of experience, movement, relation, perception or thought, of the totality that composes our being, or its transcendental power, what makes any evaluation possible. In this sense, life is not "good" as opposed to "bad", as it is "good" in a more fundamental way, because it is what allows anything to appear as good or bad at all, the grounding of reality. Not because it is pleasant in itself, but because it is what makes any experience of pleasure or displeasure possible. To ask how to make life good is therefore to overlook that one is already immersed in what makes value possible, the very condition of such value judgment. One might object that consciousness allows us to step back from life, to evaluate it, and even to reject it, as in the case of suicide. In this sense, life would not be "good" in itself, since one can decide to leave it. But this objection overlooks a crucial

point: this evaluation itself is still a function of life, the capacity to judge, to refuse, or even to negate one's own existence does not place us outside life, but expresses one of its possibilities, and even the rejection of life remains rooted in it. The question is not whether life can be refused, but how we relate to the life we are already living. This also requires distinguishing between life understood as mere survival and life as the broader movement of existence. What is often rejected is not life itself, but a certain way of living, reduced to necessity or deprivation. In this sense, even the decision to renounce one's biological life can be interpreted as an expression of a demand for meaning or coherence, not as a simple negation of life as such, but as a refusal of life reduced to mere survival, understood merely in its biological or empirical dimension, a rejection of a form of presence reduced to necessity.

Thus life provides criteria for valuation, in the sense that things are called good or bad to the extent that they promote life, are in accordance with it, sustain and intensify it, enhance its power and continuity, or affirm rather than diminish it. Although we should specify our point: it is not because life exists that we should value it, but what we call value already comes from how life works. It is not an ontological or logical consequence, but a pragmatic orientation, an immanent way of valuing.

In fact, what people often seek is not life, but a certain pleasing arrangement of circumstances: comfort, recognition, security, intensity. When these are absent, they conclude that life itself is lacking, something is missing or failing. And this confusion leads them to treat life as a problem to solve, rather than a reality to inhabit and enjoy. It is therefore not so much life itself that is at stake, but the way we look at it, as the same situation can appear unbearable or meaningful, empty or rich, depending on the perspective through which it is experienced. We tend to attribute value to external conditions, while neglecting the interpretative lens through which those conditions are lived.

This does not mean that all lives are equivalent in their conditions. There are situations of extreme hardship, where survival itself becomes the primary concern, and where the range of possibilities is drastically reduced. In this sense, some lives are undeniably more difficult than others. But difficulty does not settle the question of value, as conditions shape experience, but they do not exhaust it. A life is not only what happens to it, but how it is lived. To reduce its value to external circumstances is to treat life as an object, rather than as the very condition of experience. This also implies that we are not speaking only about “my life” as a personal and reduced narrative, but about life as the broader condition within which such narratives take place. In this sense, dissatisfaction often reveals less a defect in life than a rigidity in our way of perceiving and judging it, a biased partiality, or a reductionist perspective. Saying that life is good by itself does not mean that everything is pleasant, nor that suffering disappears, it simply means that life does not need to be justified by external criteria in order to have value. The question is then displaced, as we do ask “how do we make life good”, but “how do we relate to what is already given?”. In this sense, the initial question is not wrong, but misdirected. It seeks a method where perhaps a shift of perspective is required.
In practice, this abstract misunderstanding of life translates into a very concrete pattern of dissatisfaction, a persistent characteristic encountered in those who are always oriented toward what is missing rather than what is present. Whatever they have is quickly devalued, not because it lacks intrinsic worth, but because it is already theirs. Desire often becomes structured around absence: what is distant, unattained, or imagined appears charged with value, while what is given loses its intensity. This movement creates a chronic restlessness, where fulfillment is constantly postponed, as each acquisition is immediately absorbed and rendered insufficient. One does not so much live one’s life as stand beside it, projecting oneself toward a hypothetical “more” that never stabilises. In this sense, dissatisfaction is not the consequence of a lack in life, but the effect of a gaze that cannot dwell, that cannot recognise value except in what escapes it. They attribute value to some external reality, not in themselves and the fact they “are”. And at the same time, ironically enough, they fear satisfaction, as according to them such a feeling of

fulfillment would deprive them of motivation and power, since they seek growth and improvement. Yet this fear rests on an illusion, the belief that satisfaction would be "too easy", and would lead to stagnation, whereas genuine satisfaction is neither immediate nor passive, but requires a capacity to recognise and inhabit what is, a disposition often so lacking. Yet this fear rests on an illusion: the belief that satisfaction would be easily attained and would lead to stagnation, whereas genuine satisfaction is neither immediate nor passive, but requires a capacity to recognise and inhabit what is, a disposition often lacking.

Furthermore, they just overlook the fact that this endless deferral does not sustain their vitality, it dissipates it. What they call motivation is often nothing more than a tension fueled by deprivation, a fragile state that depends on never achieving its goal. In refusing any satisfaction, they refuse anchoring, and thus remain suspended in a perpetual projection that neither fulfils nor stabilises. In doing so, they quietly devalue their own life, treating what is given, what is lived, and what is already there as insufficient or negligible**.** Life is devalued precisely because it is taken for granted, as are all things taken for granted.

Genuine power does not arise from permanent dissatisfaction, but from the capacity to recognise, inhabit, and work from what is already present, their own life. Although we should distinguish between satisfaction grounded in awareness and satisfaction grounded in blindness, a distinction that requires a certain sagacity. One should then distinguish between pleasure and joy, as what is commonly called a "good life" tends to seek banal satisfaction, or mere pleasure, that is, the accumulation of favourable circumstances, always external and unstable. It depends on what is added. By contrast, joy does not result from addition, but from adherence to what is, it does not require more, but a fuller presence to what is already there. Where pleasure sustains the movement of projection and dissatisfaction, joy implies a form of lucid consent, a capacity to inhabit one's own existence without devaluing it. But for many, being joyful is not considered a worthy "occupation", they prefer usefulness, without realising that joy is perhaps

the most useful condition of all, as it sustains action, clarifies judgment, and gives consistency to our life. Joy does not paralyse, it overflows into action, often with greater power and efficiency than need, greed, or ambition.

427- Bad Faith

The term "bad faith" is used here in a philosophical sense, not merely as dishonesty toward others, but as a form of self-deception, a subtle and often unconscious hypocrisy toward oneself.

Bad faith is not reducible to deliberate lying, as is often believed, where we assert something we know to be false while pretending that it is true. In ordinary language, bad faith refers above all to an attitude of duplicity toward others, where we know we are wrong, when we are cheating or distorting the facts, yet we continue to argue in order to obtain something, to save face, out of sheer contrariness or ill will. In the philosophical sense, particularly in Sartre, bad faith is rather a lie to oneself, a way of inhabiting reality, a mode of existence, in which one avoids certain truths, such as one's freedom, one's responsibility, or one's cowardice, while pretending to confront them and to act freely, giving oneself the image of a lucid and sincere person. Nevertheless, bad faith does not only arise from ill will, it may also stem from good intentions, for instance when we deny what is problematic in someone we care about in order to preserve a reassuring image or the relationship. But when traditional bad faith emphasises duplicity toward the other, philosophical bad faith emphasises the duplicity toward oneself. The latter is more substantial, because deceiving another may remain a passing episode, an external, relational function, whereas deceiving oneself defines a lasting mode of being, one that profoundly shapes our relation to our own self, to truth, freedom, and responsibility. Bad faith may be conscious, strategic, but it is most often diffuse, structural, almost invisible to the one who practises it, although these are not two

watertight forms. It would therefore be mistaken to freeze bad faith into two separate categories, one deliberate and the other implicit. In the reality of dialogue, one observes a constant sliding: an individual may begin an exchange in sincere bad faith, genuinely convinced by his own protective narrative, then, under the pressure of a precise objection or irrefutable proof, feel his defence falter and engage in a more determined resistance in order to prevent the emergence of what he is beginning to glimpse and thus preserve himself. A bad faith that is initially diffuse can therefore become strategic when it is put in difficulty, and conversely, a conscious bad faith can, with time and repetition, turn into sincere conviction. The boundary between knowing and not knowing is blurred, unstable, which makes bad faith all the more difficult to grasp. And it is in this grey zone that bad faith changes its nature: in order not to collapse before the truth that is emerging, consciousness performs a tactical shift, moving from instinctive blindness to fierce and deliberate resistance. The individual begins to sense that he is lying to himself, and it is precisely because he senses it that he redoubles his rhetoric, his aggressiveness, or his linguistic confusion in order to seal the cracks. This moment of tension is a dramatic spring in one's relation to oneself, when consciousness finds itself in the paradoxical state of one who both "knows and does not know", fleeing a lucidity that has become threatening to his inner equilibrium. Bad faith is therefore not a static state, but a movement of evasion that radicalises itself as truth draws nearer, in the face of an insistent reality. In this sense, bad faith may appear as an almost structural possibility of consciousness, a tendency that can never be entirely eliminated. Yet this apparent inevitability does not neutralise its significance: it is not because bad faith is recurrent that it becomes acceptable, nor because it is difficult to escape that it ceases to be problematic. Its persistence does not diminish the demand to confront it, but rather intensifies its need.

Thus, the individual in bad faith does not see himself as deceitful, he experiences himself as sincere, and that is precisely where the problem lies. Contrary to common opinion, this sincerity is in fact no guarantee of truth, it is often the effect of a coincidence between the discourse one maintains and the image one wishes to have of oneself. The individual adheres to his

own narrative, telling himself a story in which he appears coherent, reasonable, or moral, and this adherence produces a “powerful” feeling of conviction. Yet this sincerity is partial, it rests on an implicit selection of what is seen and what is ignored. Certain aspects of the situation are brought to light, others remain in the shadows, not through deliberate lying but through a discreet work of the mind that avoids whatever might alter the inner equilibrium. Thus, bad faith is not merely deception, it is first of all a psychic economy, a way of preserving a certain image of oneself while retaining the conviction of being perfectly honest. It is this “sincerity” that makes bad faith so solid and so difficult to dislodge. The individual in bad faith does not feel that he is playing a role, he adheres to the image he gives himself, to the feeling of being “right”, of being a “good person”, of having no choice in his actions, through adherence to a certain fatality or to the weight of circumstances.

In his relation to others, one may speak of manipulation, insofar as the individual presents his position as necessary, self-evident, or morally irreproachable, which has the effect of neutralising any contestation. By invoking fatality, circumstances, or the feeling of being “right”, he displaces responsibility for every problem outside himself, and he implicitly places the other in a difficult position, since to contest this discourse almost amounts to contesting reality itself or the integrity of the person. Thus, the particularity of this situation is that such manipulation is not necessarily conscious. Bad faith, although rooted in one’s relation to oneself, rarely develops in isolation, as it is often reinforced, stabilised, and even legitimised within relationships, through implicit agreements, shared narratives, or the desire to preserve harmony. Yet it is also through the other that it may be fractured. Not, however, through mere presence or benevolent exchange, but through a form of resistance capable of interrupting the narrative one maintains about oneself. The other is therefore not a remedy in itself, but a possibility: only insofar as he introduces a tension, a contradiction, or an asymmetry can he become the occasion for a rupture.

The individual in bad faith does not see himself as manipulating others, he does not feel that he is playing a role or calculating his effects, because he fully adheres to the image he gives himself, to the narrative he constructs about the situation. He experiences himself as sincere, constrained by circumstances, or faithful to what he believes to be right. It is precisely this adherence to his own narrative that makes bad faith so solid and so difficult to dislodge, insofar as the individual experiences himself as coherent and full of good will. There is therefore a genuine subjective conviction, he believes in his own rationalisations, to the point of stubbornly resisting any contrary evidence. The liar knows that he is lying, while the man in bad faith is, as Sartre says, both mystifier and mystified, "convinced" by his own lie. This "sincerity" is both partial and oriented, it rests on a forgetting, an active repression of what disturbs, "my cowardice", "my freedom", "my responsibility", one selects the aspects of oneself one is prepared to see, amplifies them, and occludes the rest, or at the very least reduces its importance. It also operates through a discreet redefinition of meaning: the facts are not denied, but reinterpreted in such a way as to remain compatible with the image one wishes to preserve. It is a comfortable attitude, we adhere to a role, to a reassuring identity, rather than a radical authenticity that would accept the whole truth about oneself.
Bad faith does not merely distort facts, it seizes language itself in order to turn it into a zone of exclusion, a "linguistic" bad faith. One of its subtlest manifestations lies in the systematic use of soothing redescription. Through a discreet labour of euphemism, fault becomes an accident, an imponderable, manipulation becomes a strategy of adaptation, and cowardice becomes necessary prudence. This semantic operation makes it possible to maintain an intact image of oneself by substituting for the right word a term whose moral charge has been neutralised, a practice of "redescription" designed to eliminate any negative connotation. But bad faith crosses a further threshold when it deploys the strategy of the "ineffable". Faced with a precise objection that threatens its narrative, the individual takes refuge in semantic vagueness or decrees that the explanation lies "beyond words", that it would be too long or too complicated to explain, that words fail him, or simply that the other would

not be able to understand. By affirming that his feeling is too subtle to be formulated, or that the situation is of such complexity that escapes any definition, he renders his position unassailable. The recourse to vague concepts and to the ineffable serves here not to express a genuine depth, but to erect a barrier against reason. By refusing to name precisely what he lives or what he thinks, the subject ensures that no contradiction will be able to reach him: what is vague can neither be examined nor refuted. Speech is then no longer a tool for unveiling truth, but a pathology of evasion in which one speaks in order to prevent the other from understanding and criticizing.

Sincerity is often invoked as a proof of truth: the one who speaks "sincerely" would, by definition, be worthy of trust. Yet sincerity is only a feeling, a belief, it expresses an individual's adherence to what he says, not the validity of what he asserts. The sincere individual may not be lying, but neither is he questioning himself. He speaks from within his own conviction, without critical distance, without putting his presuppositions to the test. In this sense, sincerity is deeply subjective: it expresses fidelity to oneself rather than attention to reality. Yet any thought worthy of the name requires precisely what sincerity ignores, a capacity for distance, doubt, and even suspicion toward one's own certainties. Sincerity reassures, but it guarantees nothing; admittedly, it may be the expression of an upright conscience, just as it may be the tranquil mask of illusion.
An important manifestation of bad faith consists in displacing responsibility, for whatever fails is always the fault of circumstances, of others, of the system, of chance. One explains, one justifies, one contextualises, but one never truly examines oneself, explanations are circumstantial, not existential, one externalises causality and reality. Bad faith then functions as a moral immunity, protecting one's self-image against any injury. It also manifests itself in the relation to ideas, for one does not seek truth, but the confirmation of what one already thinks, and contrary arguments are ignored, distorted, or psychologised. Another strategy consists, instead of responding to the content, in attacking the interlocutor's intentions, motivations, character, or the form of his speech. Discussion becomes a trial of intentions, not a work of thought. Bad faith may also take an emotional form, feeling becomes the criterion of truth: if an idea disturbs me, it is

false, if it comforts me, it is right. It excels in the art of neutralising relation, where affect replaces argument in order to paralyse all critique. Anger or irritation can moreover function as strategies of avoidance, not as responses to reality, but as means of escaping it, to push others away, by short-circuiting the demand for rationality, consciously or not.
In such a context, disagreement is no longer a divergence of views, but a wound inflicted, a reaction that stands in the place of an argument. Every contradiction is experienced as an aggression, every objection as a symbolic violence. Within this affective regime, it becomes impossible to distinguish between being contradicted and being humiliated. By erecting his feeling into an authority, the individual renders all contestation illegitimate, since to question becomes to attack. The one who seeks clarity is then perceived as violent, while the posture of the victim confers a form of immunity. Dialogue is thus neutralised, placed under the regime of guilt.
Bad faith is also found in the moral domain. Some experience themselves as being on the "good side", convinced that they are defending a just cause. From that moment on, the examination of means becomes secondary, in this sense, everything becomes permissible, as bad faith is legitimate by principle: since the cause is noble, manipulation, exaggeration, or denial appear excusable, moral conscience then serving as an alibi. On the social plane, bad faith takes the form of conformism: one adopts the opinions of the group, repeats the dominant slogans, places oneself in the camp of the "good", without any genuine examination. What matters is no longer to be right, but to belong to the right clan, thought becomes a sign of identity.
There is also a more silent, more passive bad faith, which consists in not wanting to know, or pretending not to know, in avoiding disturbing questions, in taking refuge in routine or agitation. One does not lie, one deceives no one, but one maintains oneself in a comfortable ignorance, a bad faith through inertia. Finally, bad faith is often existential, when the individual persuades himself that he has no choice, that he is determined by his character, his past, his wounds, his social role, and hides behind a fixed identity in order to avoid responsibility for his decisions. He pretends to be an "object" in order not to have to be a free subject. It is, moreover, difficult to determine with certainty the degree of consciousness involved, in others as in oneself. Bad faith is precisely that ambiguous place where

one knows and does not want to know, where one sees without fully recognising what one sees. It is precisely the “power” of this ambiguity that makes bad faith both omnipresent and difficult to grasp. At the same time, such an analysis should not lead to an overinflation of the concept. Bad faith does not account for all cognitive or existential difficulties, it is not mere error, ignorance, or emotional reaction, but a more specific structure: a partial awareness of what one avoids, combined with an active resistance to examining it. It begins where we no longer simply ignore something, but resists what we already sense to be true, or what we might consider as such. Thus, bad faith has a thousand faces, lying, justification, emotion, morality, conformism, inertia, or flight from freedom. But all these forms obey the same logic, avoiding the ordeal of truth while giving oneself the illusion of lucidity and clear conscience. It is not simply a moral fault, it is a strategy of psychic survival, a way of preserving oneself from the vertigo of having to think, to choose, and to transform oneself. Therefore, our aim is not to imagine a complete eradication of bad faith, as if one could reach a state of pure transparency toward oneself, as such a project would itself risk becoming another illusion. The issue is rather, as much as possible, to prevent bad faith from settling, from solidifying into a stable identity or an unquestioned discourse, to maintain a form of vigilance that keeps it exposed, fragile, and revisable.

428- Peaceful thinking

Peaceful thinking is not a secondary virtue in philosophical practice, it is one of its conditions. To think philosophically is not merely to produce arguments, but to examine them, to suspend immediate reactions, to allow ideas to unfold and confront one another without being reduced too quickly to agreement or rejection. Without a certain inner quiet, thought is captured and viciated by impulse, by affect, by the need to respond rather than to understand. Peaceful thinking does not eliminate intensity, it makes it workable, it creates the space in which distinctions can appear,

contradictions can be seen, positions can be evaluated and transformed rather than defended. It is therefore not opposed to rigor, but enables it. In this sense, philosophical discourse is not merely descriptive or demonstrative, it has a performative function, it does not aim primarily at propagating or defending a doctrine, but at producing an experience, making thought undergo a movement, a displacement, an ordeal through which it is tested and transformed.

This need for peace is particularly evident in philosophical consultations, where individuals often arrive in a state of anxiety, confusion, or inner tension that directly affects their capacity to think and the quality of their daily life. In such a context, thought tends to become reactive, circular, or defensive, driven more by the need for reassurance or justification than by a genuine examination of ideas. Establishing a peaceful context is therefore not a matter of comfort, but a methodological necessity, as it allows a certain distance from immediate affect, so that reason can begin to operate. Without this minimal pacification, questioning remains superficial, thinking is chaotic, reason is faltering, as the person is not truly available to what is being examined. Pacifying does not in itself solve problems, there are also cognitive issues to be dealt with, thinking skills, but it creates the conditions under which the issues affecting one's mind can be worked through rather than simply endured.

This peaceful disposition is closely linked to a form of perspectivist thinking, since to consider multiple perspectives without immediately privileging one requires a certain distance from one's own position. Without such distance, each viewpoint we maintain, each belief we hold, is experienced as an extension of oneself, any challenge to it is felt as a personal attack, a rather anxiogenic attitude. Peaceful thinking allows perspectives to be held, compared, and even inhabited successively, without the need to fix oneself within any of them. It also requires the capacity to grant a certain credit to positions one does not immediately appreciate, to recognise that what appears to us weak, misguided, or disagreeable may nonetheless contain a form of coherence or relevant insight. This does not imply naïve agreement

or a mere formal recognition, but a suspension of impulsive dismissal, allowing ideas to be examined before being judged. Therefore, in order to think rationally, one must temporarily legitimize what one rejects. It does not imply that all ideas or perspectives are equivalent, we might still harbour inclinations or preferences, and make value judgments, but our own thoughts can be examined without immediate attachment. In this sense, peace is not the absence of judgment, but the condition that makes a more lucid judgment possible, not driven by the urgency of emotion or identification.

There is a common reluctance toward peaceful thinking, but it is rarely an explicit refusal of peace itself. It is more often a rejection of what peace is believed to entail, as many associate it with a loss: loss of intensity, loss of engagement, loss of identity, loss of excitement. In this sense, peaceful thinking appears less as a gain than as a shortcoming, a flaw, a weakness. For some, thought is inseparable from tension, as conflict gives it energy, urgency, and direction, they need to fight for their opinions, they function properly only when they are in a crisis mode. To think peacefully would then mean to think weakly, without force or necessity. For some, passionate, dramatic or romantic, true thought does not arise from distance or tranquility, but from trial, from flesh and blood. To think, then, is to expose oneself, to confront, to collide with reality until one feels its harshness. Suffering is not an accident, but a source, a guarantee of authenticity, as what costs nothing would be worth nothing. From this perspective, peaceful thought appears suspect, as if disembodied, abstract, even illusory, incapable of grasping the density of reality. Only thought permeated by tension, conflict, or wounding would seem to measure up to existence.

The game of opposition, of being for or against, sustains a sense of aliveness that peace seems to dissolve, and without friction, thinking risks appearing empty, bland and uninteresting, thus such adepts of “excitement” seek opponents for rhetorical confrontation. Others fear that peaceful thinking leads to passivity, as in their view, if we suspend judgment, tone down one’s speech, adopt distance, or refrain from immediate reaction, we risk tolerating ethical wrongdoing and injustice. Anger and indignation are often seen as signs of seriousness, thus, to relinquish them appears as a betrayal

of responsibility, peace is then conflated with resignation, cynicism, or indifference. As we see it, peaceful thinking does not suspend action or involvement in social issues, rather it aims at freeing action from reactivity, so that engagement is not merely intense, but lucid and proportionate to the situation, more strategic. Although, those who appear more peaceful or less immediately reactive may be perceived with a certain suspicion, or even a form of scorn. Their distance can be interpreted as aloofness, their restraint as weakness, their quest for clarity as a lack of engagement. But this reaction may also conceal a more ambivalent attitude, where what is dismissed as passivity is in fact a mode of being that one does not easily access, and which can provoke a form of unease for those who are more "nervous", or envy among those who are haunted by anxiety and depend on tension to sustain their sense of vitality.

We should consider attachment to identity, as many people define themselves through their positions, their convictions, their oppositions, and their speech provides them with an image. To loosen these attachments, to entertain multiple perspectives, is to weaken the boundaries of the self. Peaceful thinking introduces for them a form of fragility or uncertainty, for if one is no longer fully identified with one's views, what remains? Social habits play their role as well, as we can observe a common, persistent orientation toward lack, toward what is missing or unsatisfactory, which structures much of human activity, fueling desire, ambition, competition, and critique. Any attempt at moderation interrupts this movement, for without dissatisfaction, one fears losing motivation, as if the absence of tension meant the absence of life. More fundamentally, this reflects the idea that meaning itself depends on tension, as if without conflict, desire, or dissatisfaction, existence would lose any direction. Actually, peaceful thinking is often misunderstood, it is taken to mean emotional numbness, indifference, or withdrawal. Yet it may instead consist in a form of clarity that does not depend on agitation, a capacity to see without immediately reacting. What is rejected is often not peace itself, but a caricature of it. There is also a cognitive dimension, as peaceful thinking requires holding ambiguity, delaying conclusions, and resisting the impulse to simplify, all of which demand effort. It is easier to take a side, to decide quickly, to reduce

complexity. Resistance to peace can thus reflect a preference for “economy” over depth.

Finally, peaceful thinking challenges a certain conception of power: if power is understood as domination, assertion, or intensity, then peace appears as weakness. But if power is understood as the ability to remain steady, attentive, and responsive without feeling overwhelmed, alienated, or weak, then peace takes on an entirely different meaning. The reluctance toward peaceful thinking reveals less a rejection of peace than a set of assumptions about what thinking must be. It exposes a tension between two ways of inhabiting thought: one driven by conflict, anxiety, and affirmation, the other by distance, lightness and openness. The question is not so much which one is preferable, but what each one makes possible and what it prevents. We must therefore be capable of peaceful thinking, in order to determine what attitude is appropriate in each circumstance, rather than being blindly driven by passion or attachment.

Yet peaceful thinking should not be understood as requiring the prior “elimination” of agitation, as stimulated or even troubled thought can itself become material for philosophical work, provided that the subject is capable of introducing a distance between thought and self. Emotion, irritation, or even forms of obsession may serve as powerful starting points, not as obstacles but as raw material, insofar as they are not merely endured or expressed, but examined. In this sense, peace is less a given state than a capacity, the ability to move between intensity and clarity, to suspend identification when needed, and to re-engage without being overwhelmed. Conflict and tension do not necessarily negate peace, they rather reveal whether such peace is superficial and formal, or genuinely integrated into the activity of thinking.

Such a tension is not merely psychological or situational, it runs through the history of philosophy itself. Certain traditions have conceived existence as fundamentally marked by lack, tension, or unrest. Thus in Arthur

Schopenhauer, life is driven by an endless striving, rooted in the will, such that any satisfaction is brief and immediately gives rise to new desire, thereby continually renewing dissatisfaction. And in many Buddhist readings of Gautama's teaching, conditioned existence is marked by *dukkha*, a pervasive unsatisfactoriness, so that forms of "peace" based merely on reconciliation with existence are regarded with suspicion, as subtle modalities of illusion rather than genuine liberation. Conversely, other traditions have affirmed the possibility of a more serene relation to existence. For Zhuangzi, life unfolds as a process of transformation and play when freed from rigid attachment to identities and perspectives, and opened to a light, flexible way of inhabiting the world. For Baruch Spinoza, a peaceful joy expresses an increase in the power to act, rooted in rational understanding rather than in mere passions. For Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, even the presence of imperfection and conflict is integrated into a rational order, where what appears as tension contributes to a broader harmony. In a more paradoxical way, Nietzsche's notion of *agon*, understood as a form of contest or creative struggle, does not simply invalidate peaceful thinking, it just contests a peace that would suppress conflict and tension, but it can be reconciled with a more demanding peace: a steadiness capable of sustaining, and even affirming, struggle, without sliding into resentment or destructive domination. Thus, it is not simply a matter of pitting doctrines against one another, but of revealing distinct ways of understanding what it means to live and think, by grounding one's stance toward "peaceful thinking" in deeper philosophical commitments regarding the nature of existence.

429- The value of life

Recently, I proposed the idea that life is "good" by definition, in that it can be taken as the fundamental criterion of other values: things are considered good or bad insofar as they sustain, intensify, or affirm life. In other words, life is not only a condition for all our activities, but also the measure by

which we evaluate them. This proposal was criticised on the grounds that it confuses a “condition of possibility” with a “value”: being alive is indeed necessary in order to pursue any goal, but from this necessity it does not follow that life itself is the ultimate good. To make such a move, the critic argues, would violate the principle, famously formulated by David Hume, that no “ought” can be derived from an “is”. From this perspective, affirming life as the highest value appears arbitrary, no more justified than choosing for example smoking or any other aim, elevated as the supreme end simply because it exists and provides some “goodness”.
This criticism is interesting, and it seems logical, but it rests on a simplification: it treats all conditions of possibility as equivalent, as if life were merely one enabling factor among others. Yet life is not simply a condition; it is the condition within which any valuation can occur. Without life, there are no preferences, no goals, no justifications, no “oughts” whatsoever. The comparison with smoking therefore fails, as one may choose smoking or reject it, but such a choice already presupposes being alive. The relation is asymmetrical: life grounds all values, whereas particular values do not ground life.

This is where an appeal to the “principle of reality”, often forgotten, can be decisive as well: a value must remain compatible with the conditions that sustain it. Thus a value that does not support life, not compatible with it, would undermine the very field in which it can be held. To affirm a practice that annihilates the possibility of any further valuation is not merely a different choice; it is a self-defeating one. Reality imposes a limit: values cannot coherently or substantially negate the condition of their own existence. This principle can be used for example to criticize hedonism as an absolute value: If pleasure is pursued in a way that damages the body or mind, through addiction or self-destruction, it progressively erodes the very capacity to experience pleasure. The value consumes its own condition: the subject becomes incapable of sustaining the enjoyment it seeks to maximize. We cannot ignore the “given” within which we operate, live, and think: it is both what constrains us and what makes our freedom possible. The principle of “sufficient reason” reinforces this point. To posit a value is to claim, implicitly or explicitly, that it has some justification. But what could

justify elevating one arbitrary preference, such as smoking, to the status of ultimate value? Without a grounding, such a choice remains contingent and unexplained. Life, however, occupies a different position, it is not justified as one preference among others, it is that which makes justification itself possible. It provides the horizon within which reasons can appear and be assessed.

Thus, the move from life as a condition to life as a value is not a naïve leap from “is” to “ought”, it is simply a recognition that certain “oughts” are rooted in the structure of reality and reason. To affirm life is not to derive a norm from a mere fact, but to acknowledge the condition that makes any norm thinkable and livable. The objection therefore reveals a genuine logical caution, but it overlooks the uniqueness of life as a condition, justifying its primacy. Not all conditions of possibility are equal, some are contingent and interchangeable, others are foundational, and life belongs to the latter. It does not impose a formal moral system, but it establishes a minimal orientation: if anything is to matter at all, life must already be affirmed as presupposition. In this sense, life is not simply one value among others, it is the ground from which all values emerge, without which the very question of value disappears. The issue rests on a distinction between contingent conditions and foundational conditions.

This asymmetry between condition and value is not entirely new, Friedrich Nietzsche already understood life as the ultimate criterion of value. The difference is that, whereas Nietzsche privileges the most intense and life-affirming forms of existence, our argument is structural or ontological rather than qualitative: it is life as such, as the condition of any valuation, that grounds value, not life at its peak.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that every specific action must aim at the indefinite preservation of a particular biological existence, even choices such as risking one’s life or deliberately ending it can remain compatible with this view, insofar as they still presuppose life in general as the condition of their meaning and justification. Unless, furthermore, we consider life to be the fundamental principle of all that exists, not in the

biological sense, but as the power of being, movement, and affirmation of reality itself, as we can already see in the early Greek thinkers or in certain ancient cosmologies, in which case every individual existence would be merely a transient expression of it. Thus, what is at stake is not the mere prolongation of life at all costs, but the recognition that any valuation, including the decision to negate one's own life, can only arise within the horizon that life itself makes possible. Indeed, this leads to a tragic necessity: if life is the ground of all value, then its total destruction constitutes the absolute limit of all valuation, that is, the point beyond which no meaning, norm, or justification can subsist, not as a moral transgression, but as the extinction of the very possibility of meaning.

430- The Goodness of Being

« What is, is good, because it is, and being is good. »

This formulation, seemingly naïve, in fact commits to a deeply radical metaphysical position. It does not claim that everything that happens is in itself beneficial or morally right, nor that every situation should be accepted without reservation. It affirms something else, more unsettling: that being as such possesses an original value, prior to any particular evaluation. In other words, before even distinguishing between good and evil, there must first be something that is. This ontological priority prevents us from reducing "being" to our judgments, our preferences, or our indignations. It imposes a reversal: it is not being that depends on the good, but the good that depends on being.

Such a thesis immediately clashes with the modern, subjectivist sensibility, shaped by a constant moral vigilance. How can one maintain that being is good in the face of violence, injustice, or suffering? The difficulty stems from a confusion: we conflate the fact that something exists with the

judgment we pass on it. To say that being is good does not mean justifying every event, nor that everything that happens is morally acceptable, it means recognizing that the very possibility of judging already presupposes a primary positivity. It means that, in order to judge anything as bad, there must first be something. In other words, judgment presupposes existence, it does not ground it.

This reversal is not neutral, it implies that our judgment is not sovereign, as it rests on a given that it does not produce and cannot simply disqualify. We may condemn, criticize, seek to transform, but we cannot decree that what is should not be, as if our norms had the power to cancel reality. This introduces a limit: judging does not grant the power to abolish the real. One may condemn what is, but not demand that it should not have been. Indignation thus loses its illusion of sovereignty, since it rests on what it claims to judge. It becomes relative to a reality it does not master and must first recognize and understand before judging.

It is precisely here that the classical objection of David Hume arises: one cannot derive an “ought” from what is, as existence, in itself, contains no norm. This critique is valid, but it misses the point. The present thesis does not attempt to derive morality from being, rather, it asserts that all morality presupposes being as its condition. It does not confuse the level of fact with that of norm, it simply establishes their order. This shift allows us to understand what is implicitly being criticized: a contemporary tendency to absolutize moral judgment, to treat good and evil as primary categories, as if reality had to conform immediately to our demands. From this perspective, existence itself becomes suspect as soon as it fails to meet our criteria. The world is summoned to justify itself, and whatever escapes this demand is rejected as scandal or absurdity.

Moreover, this stance tends to elevate our constructed morality into an unsurpassable horizon for all judgment about the nature of things. As if we already knew, with certainty, what reality ought to be, how it should unfold,

what forms it should take. Any divergence between the world and our expectations then becomes a fault of the world itself, and our indignations are automatically legitimized. Yet this moral certainty, far from being a strength, often reveals a closure: it turns judgment into reflex and critique into immediate condemnation, granting our subjectivity a form of omnipotence.

Such an attitude tends to spare us the demand of understanding. Instead of seeking to grasp the reason why things are as they are within the economy of the real, we reject outright whatever does not fit our schemes. The world is no longer questioned, it is filtered; it is no longer understood, it is judged. This avoidance to understand, concealed beneath the appearance of moral awareness, may well be one of the most subtle forms of intellectual complacency. It contains a form of metaphysical impatience, as it refuses the priority of what is given, it demands that reality immediately conform to some ideal. It also reflects a deeper difficulty in bearing the ambivalence of existence, in recognizing that the negative does not necessarily destroy the value of being, and that what we consider “bad” may have its own reason for being. After all, what would good be without evil that makes it possible and thinkable? No mountain without a valley, to borrow a familiar image from modern philosophy.

To affirm that being is good is therefore not to deny the tragic, but to alter its status. Evil is no longer an objection against being itself, but a determination internal to what is, and the judgment that designates it as such always grasps only a partial aspect, detached from the whole from which it proceeds. It does not abolish the original positivity of existence, rather, it reveals its complexity and its tension.

One may in fact recognize, throughout the history of thought, several attempts to articulate this intuition: a tradition that identifies the real with rationality, a metaphysics that sees the world as fundamentally harmonious, or again visions according to which all reality proceeds from a superabundant first principle, assimilated to the Good or to Beauty, from which it necessarily expresses something. These perspectives do not coincide, but they converge in refusing to reduce being to a mere inert

material subjected to our judgments. This does not mean that we should remain powerless or refrain from acting to transform the world. On the contrary, by apprehending more deeply the dynamics of the real, we might become more effective, more realistic in pursuing our ideals, and more humble in our expectations. Action does not disappear, it changes status. It no longer consists in imposing a preconceived form upon reality, but in working with it, from within it, taking into account its constraints and its possibilities.

One does not liberate human beings by teaching them to reject or hate what is, the world or themselves, by declaring their nature fundamentally bad. By affirming that being is good, one asserts that every authentically moral transformation begins with a fundamental “yes” to reality, rather than with a will to annihilate it or with resentment. This implies an acceptance of oneself, a form of reconciliation that is anything but complacent, but rather a condition of any genuine demand. In a world where many feel alienated by arbitrary, artificial, socially imposed norms, this gesture of reappropriation becomes not only salutary, but indispensable.

In this sense, this thesis on the positivity of being calls for a certain restraint in judgment. It reminds us that every indignation, however legitimate, rests on a ground it does not produce. It invites us to distinguish the critique of reality from its outright rejection. One question remains, more demanding: if being is primary and, in a sense, good, what does it then mean to judge? Is it to correct reality, or to learn how to situate oneself within it without denying it? And above all, what becomes of our relation to the world if we cease to believe that its value depends solely on our approval?

431 – The Illusion of Autonomy

Most of our choices are not truly our own. We believe them to be free because no one has explicitly imposed them on us, yet they have been shaped, oriented, and filtered by social expectations we have never really

examined. This is what is called heteronomy: not a visible obedience, but an invisible dependence, a tendency to externalize one's existence, to delegate oneself. The individual then acts less out of inner necessity than under the effect of implicit yet determining constraints. His choices are not so much his own as they are responses to expectations: he conforms, adjusts, anticipates the gaze of others.

One of our main concerns is to satisfy social norms in order to be accepted. We adopt behaviours, opinions, and postures that do not stem from a developed conviction, but from a need for integration. Being recognized becomes a silent priority, guiding our decisions without our full awareness. This desire for acceptance is accompanied by another, more affective one: to please in order to be loved. The individual does not seek merely to be tolerated, he wants to be appreciated and desired. As a result, he modulates his discourse, softens his positions, avoids conflict, not out of lucidity, but out of social prudence. What he calls "relationship" often rests on a tacit compromise: not to disturb in order not to be rejected, not to be isolated, at the harsh cost of alienating and betraying themselves. In the domain of thought, this heteronomy takes on a particular form. The individual listens to masters, experts, figures of authority, not to enter into dialogue with them, but to take shelter in them, to feel flattered. He borrows ideas rather than constructing them, repeats formulas, cites references, adopts frameworks without questioning them. Thus, one readily quotes Nietzsche to appear bold, Spinoza to seem wise, without these references ever having been truly worked through, questioned, or confronted with one's own experience. Citation becomes a piece of furniture, not a tool, thinking becomes an activity of repetition rather than of production or confrontation, a discourse that circulates without ever being inhabited by a genuine subject.

His autonomy, therefore, is reduced to marginal spaces. It is exercised in the satisfaction of small desires, in the management of comfort, in choices without consequence, he decides what does not engage him and delegates the rest. This pseudo-freedom feeds a subtle egocentrism: the individual believes himself to be at the centre of his decisions while mastering only their surface. Contemporary man is sovereign in choosing his brand of

coffee, yet heteronomous in his fundamental values, he considers himself free because he has opinions, but these opinions are rarely examined. They are immediate, reactive, emotional, often borrowed from a media or social environment. They give the illusion of a personal position, whereas they are merely fragments of collective discourse, masked behind the screen of sincerity, which gives them an appearance of authenticity.

Contemporary heteronomy no longer presents itself as a visible constraint imposed from outside, it no longer takes the form of political or religious obligation, it manifests itself as a spontaneous, almost voluntary adherence. The individual does not feel dominated, he believes to be in agreement with himself, which is precisely what makes this dependence difficult to perceive. Thus, becoming autonomous does not simply consist in claiming one's freedom, but in examining its conditions, analyzing what shapes and determines one's choices. It requires recognizing what, within us, still obeys, often against our own will. Not in order to free ourselves from it entirely, another illusion, but to introduce distance, awareness, and demand. For true autonomy is not given, it is not decided by a mere act of will. It is built against a deep tendency toward ease, imitation, and conformity. It requires an effort rarely undertaken: to think without guarantees, to act without approval, to exist without immediately taking refuge in the gaze of others. And it would be illusory to believe that we are exempt from it, for this mechanism runs through all of us, to varying degrees.

432- The Trap of Rigor

Some people express a strong demand in dialogue. They refuse any form of indulgence, adaptation or pedagogical adjustment that might soften the rigor of the exchange. For them, dialogue does not consist in accompanying or supporting, but in confronting, exposing, and requiring a clear and accountable response. They draw a sharp distinction between two modes:

that of formation, where one helps build a capacity, and that of genuine dialogue, which can only take place between already capable individuals, with a marked preference for the latter. In this perspective, any attempt to adjust the level or reduce the tension appears as a form of condescension, to demand less would already be a betrayal. These individuals assume that everyone, regardless of their situation, can meet this demand, provided they show honesty and courage. They value a certain harshness, seen as the mark of true respect: to yield nothing, to soften nothing, to protect nothing. The problem is that this demand, in presenting itself as universal and categorical, ignores the actual conditions of its exercise. It presupposes a capacity already formed where, most of the time, for most people, it is still in the making. By refusing any “mediation” or temporal adjustment, it risks turning dialogue into a selective ordeal, where only those who already master the codes can enter. Thus, the proclaimed universality becomes, in practice, a form of exclusion. In such a context, any slowness, hesitation, or difficulty in elaboration is interpreted as a failure, confusion or silence are seen as strategies of avoidance or protections of the ego. Yet these moments can be constitutive of the work of thought itself, and by disqualifying them, one impedes their development. What might have become an emerging thought is dismissed as insufficient and futile. The problem is that this posture confuses intensity with depth. It makes emotional cost a criterion of transformation, as if all genuine thought had to pass through some form of violence. But a trying experience is not necessarily a fruitful one: demand can become pressure, and pressure an obstacle. Moreover, this refusal of mediation can itself become a form of protection. By rejecting the work of accompaniment, one avoids confronting another difficulty: that of encountering fragile, unfinished thoughts, slow to emerge yet potentially fertile. Immediate clarity is preferred to gradual construction, the clear answer to hesitant inquiry, yet it is precisely there that thought takes shape, searches, and transforms itself.

By continually raising the conditions of dialogue, one risks ending up speaking only with oneself. Demand, by refusing all mediation, turns exchange into a selective test, and those who do not respond immediately are excluded. The number of interlocutors shrinks, not for lack of reality,

but due to an excess of conditions. The result is a paradoxical effect: not a "purer" dialogue, but a more rigid monologue, in which thought no longer truly confronts alterity, but merely confirms itself. The problem is also ethical. In presenting itself as rigorous, this posture tends to become proud and uncompromising, it absolutizes its own demand and exempts itself from any self-questioning. The absence of patience is presented as a virtue, the lack of compassion as a sign of lucidity, yet such harshness may betray a certain closure: it refuses to recognize the vulnerability of the other as an unavoidable reality, the essential prerequisite for any genuine encounter, not merely a moral weakness. In this sense, it lacks humility and distance, as it assumes that truth is immediately accessible to whoever seeks it, and that any delay is a defect of will.

Such a posture leaves little room for self-questioning, the one who demands places himself from the outset on the side of the norm, of "truth", rather than on the side of what remains to be examined. The demand itself becomes unquestionable, introducing a form of rigidity, not necessarily doctrinal, but in the very manner of thinking, in the posture imposed. Dialogue is thus marked by constant tension, where the other is less welcomed than evaluated. What is lost is not merely conviviality, but a certain quality of listening and availability, without which exchange ceases to be a genuine encounter, a shared construction. For without a certain form of compassion and patience, not complacent but attentive, dialogue risks losing its authenticity: it becomes a forced ordeal rather than an encounter. Demand, detached from any recognition of the other, ceases to be an appeal and becomes an injunction; it no longer reveals, it constrains. This posture also leaves little room for humour, poetry and distance, for any form of displacement that allows thought to loosen its grip on itself, which is not a matter of empty frivolity, but rather an ability not to identify entirely with one's own expectations. Without such detachment, thought hardens, it becomes so serious that it takes itself as an "objective" norm, losing in flexibility what it gains in rigidity. Demand then ceases to be a practice and becomes an identity, it is no longer a means of questioning or confronting, but a position to be defended. As a result, any examination appears as a threat, not to a particular idea, but to the integrity of the one who holds it. Such an attitude is often accompanied by a sense of serving a standard that

transcends the individual, as this standard is no longer merely adopted, but is experienced as necessary, almost viewed as a mission. Yet this identification reinforces closure, as what might otherwise be questioned as a practice becomes untouchable, because it is conflated with truth itself. Admittedly, this kind of “theory” highlights the danger of a thought reduced to mere “diplomacy”. But by radicalizing demand, it risks producing the opposite effect: not stronger thought, but rarer thought, reserved for those who already know how to respond. The issue is therefore not to abandon demand, but to understand how to adapt it to the concrete conditions in which reflection can emerge, how it can be exercised without preventing thought from appearing, how to maintain demand without stifling what it seeks to bring forth.

This posture does not belong to a clearly defined category of individuals, but to a certain configuration of demand. It can be found among those strongly attached to truth, rigor, and coherence, but who tend to absolutize these requirements to the point of turning them into an unquestionable norm of which they see themselves as the guardians. It also appears among those who have formed themselves without guidance, less socially inclined individuals, for example autodidacts, who turn their own trajectory into a universal model, assuming that everyone should be able to operate at the same level of intensity. It is also found in personalities who struggle with ambiguity or hesitation, preferring immediate clarity to gradual elaboration. In some cases, this radicality functions as a form of protection: by raising the level of demand, one reduces the situations in which they might be challenged. This demand can indeed be fruitful in certain contexts, where it fosters precision and clarity, but sterile in others, where it prevents thought from emerging at all. The problem is therefore not the demand itself, but its inability to situate itself, to articulate itself in a more contextual manner.

433- The Aesthetic Experience

We often hear the saying “There is no disputing matters of taste”. This familiar expression seems to settle the question in advance, as what concerns taste would be purely subjective, beyond argument, beyond justification. One may express preferences, but not truly discuss them. Aesthetic judgment would thus belong to a private and intimate sphere, inaccessible to rational examination.

Yet this idea, despite its appeal, its apparent common sense, rests on a reductive understanding of both taste and argumentation. It assumes that argumentation can only take the form of demonstration, and that anything that cannot be proven must remain beyond discussion. At the same time, it reduces aesthetic experience to a simple feeling, immediate and incommunicable. In practice, however, we can argue about aesthetic matters, even if this possibility is not always fully realised. It is true that most exchanges in this domain remain at the level of preference, where one simply says “I like” or “I do not like,” without further elaboration, as going beyond this requires effort and attention. Yet it is possible, and sometimes it is done, to move further: we compare works, we analyze form and content, we justify our preferences, we try to show others what we perceive. We then speak of balance, coherence, intensity, expressivity, we attempt to make something visible, to articulate what gives a work its force or its weakness: the tension between elements in a composition, the rhythm of a sentence or a musical phrase, the use of contrast or silence, the relation between composition and meaning, the precision or excess of detail, the unity or fragmentation of the whole. We may point to the way a color disrupts an equilibrium, how a gesture carries meaning, how a narrative unfolds or fails to hold together, etc. In doing so, we do not merely express a feeling, we try to show what in the work produces this feeling. One source of confusion may lie in the way argumentation itself is understood. It is often conceived in a rhetorical sense, as a means of persuading others or asserting that one is right, and in such a framework, disagreement appears as a confrontation of opinions, where each seeks to

prevail. But it can be conceived in a philosophical sense, as a means to deepen ideas, provide background, identify paradigms and presuppositions, elaborate general problems, clarify distinctions, and test the coherence and limits of a position, not in order to prevail over the other, but to make the object to make the subject of our dialogue more intelligible. Therefore, in aesthetic discussions, argumentation can take a different form, which does not aim primarily at convincing others about the validity of our judgment, but at making some object more perceptible, more comprehensible, at clarifying what is seen or experienced. The other is not simply an opponent to persuade, but a partner in the attempt to bring an experience to expression. Disagreement then becomes a way of testing and refining perception, rather than a struggle for dominance. The difficulty lies in the nature of the object, as aesthetic judgment does not concern facts to be verified, but appearances to be analyzed. It does not aim at proof, but at developing our capacity for perception and interpretation. Argumentation, in this domain, does not consist in demonstrating that something is beautiful or ugly, original or banal, but in clarifying the relations and structures through which a certain experience is produced.
In this sense, aesthetic experience is not merely subjective, but already structured by meaning. As G. W. F. Hegel suggests, the work of art is not simply felt, it is the sensible appearance of an idea, what we encounter in it is not a raw impression, but a form that carries intelligibility within itself. To respond aesthetically is therefore not only to “feel”, but to grasp, however implicitly, a certain necessity in the way the work is constituted. Although other thinkers, like Alexander Baumgarten and Immanuel Kant, recognise that aesthetic judgment is not purely arbitrary, they maintain a gap between sensibility and conceptual thought, Hegel seeks to overcome this division by showing that the sensible itself can carry intelligibility, allowing aesthetic experience to become a genuine object of thought rather than a mere feeling. Such a perspective implies that aesthetic experience is not purely immediate, as even when it appears as a feeling, it already involves a form of recognition, an implicit understanding. One perceives something as harmonious, as dissonant, as excessive or restrained, these are not merely arbitrary impressions, but ways of organizing what is perceived. To deny the possibility of argumentation in aesthetics is therefore to deny

the possibility of shared perception. If judgments of taste were entirely incommunicable, discussion would be pointless. Yet aesthetic discourse persists, precisely because individuals assume that something can be made clearer, contested, or refined through exchange. This does not mean that aesthetic argumentation functions like scientific reasoning. Its criteria are more fluid, its conclusions less definitive, and agreement is never guaranteed or necessary. But this does not render it meaningless, it simply indicates that argumentation can take different forms, adapted to the nature of what is at stake. Nevertheless, the persistence of the reductive view, purely subjective and beyond concepts, may be explained by a desire for clear boundaries, as it is easier to separate feeling from reason than to examine their interplay. But such a separation obscures the complexity of experience, where perception, emotion, and understanding are intertwined.

To take aesthetics seriously is therefore not to abandon argumentation, but to rethink it. It is to recognize that reasoning does not always proceed by proof, and that understanding can emerge through description, comparison, and the gradual articulation of what is first only sensed.

434- The Alibi of Time

Lack of time is often invoked as an indisputable fact. It has become a reflex formula, a way of closing the discussion before it even begins. “I do not have time” functions as an absolute argument, which dispenses with examining what, in reality, occupies or clutters existence. Yet, when this assertion is questioned even slightly, it quickly begins to crack, as what then appears is not so much a shortage of time as a saturation of the mind. Time, in itself, is no more lacking today than it was yesterday; what has changed is the way it is invested. Many people indeed confuse “being occupied” with “being preoccupied”, yet these two states are radically different. Being occupied implies action, a grasp on reality, an engagement in identifiable tasks. Preoccupation, on the contrary, belongs to an inner

movement, often diffuse, made up of anticipations, worries, uncertain scenarios that loop endlessly without ever being resolved. Thus, a large part of what is called “lack of time” is in reality a proliferation of parasitic thoughts, where the mind is saturated not by actions, but by tensions. One does not do so many things, we think too much about what we could, should, or fears having to do, about what might happen, generally in a negative way. This mental inflation produces a constant feeling of urgency and saturation, without necessarily corresponding to any objective reality. This confusion has concrete effects. It makes life heavier, more anxiogenic, because the individual is constantly caught in an inner flow that never stops. It then becomes difficult to be truly present to what one is doing, since part of one’s attention is always captured elsewhere, in a latent anxiety. The external world becomes secondary, filtered through this internal agitation. More than that, this saturation reduces one’s availability to others, because listening, engaging in dialogue, and thinking together require a certain inner space, an ability to suspend one’s own preoccupations. Yet the one who is invaded by their thoughts is never entirely there, as they are physically present, but mentally scattered. The other then becomes just one more element, an additional burden within an already overloaded whole. In this perspective, the voluntary interruption of the daily flow is not a luxury, but a necessity. As suggested by Marcus Aurelius in his *Meditations*, it is a matter of withdrawing temporarily from the turmoil, not in order to flee the world, but to recover a form of inner sovereignty. This suspension allows one to break with the automatic chain of preoccupations, to reintroduce a critical distance, and to restore substance to time. Without such moments of retreat, existence is reduced to an indistinct continuity in which nothing can truly be thought, nor chosen.

Finally, this situation affects one’s relationship to oneself. For being available to oneself does not simply mean being alone with one’s thoughts, but being able to examine them, to order them, to put them to the test, and to establish priorities. Yet constant preoccupation prevents this work, it maintains a form of confusion in which everything becomes mixed together, without hierarchy or clarification. But this turmoil is not merely endured, it is also sustained, for pausing to reflect would mean seeing what is really at stake, and thus becoming capable of making a decision. Yet such

clarity exposes one to a form of loneliness: the loneliness of having to take responsibility for one's choices without being able to attribute them to circumstances. The flow of concerns thus offers a paradoxical refuge, it keeps the individual in a state of dependence that spares them from having to make a decision. Thinking, in this sense, is not merely about clarifying; it is also about stepping out of a certain comfort, that of a restlessness which both excuses and protects.

To say "I do not have time" is therefore often to conceal a crucial problem: the inability to distinguish the essential from the secondary, real action from mental agitation. It is not time that is lacking, but the mastery of attention. And as long as this confusion persists, the individual remains trapped in an urgency that they themselves help to produce, while declaring themselves its victim. One thus elevates their own inner agitations into an objective necessity, transforming a confused subjectivity into a supposedly real constraint, whose effect is less to illuminate action than to suspend it, in a paralysis as sterile and burdensome as it believes itself to be legitimate.

435- The Genius Syndrome

Some individuals see themselves as bearers of a singular and profound truth, one that appears entirely self-evident in their own eyes. They have the feeling of having grasped something essential, of having reached a level of consciousness that others, the common run of people, do not attain. They have uncovered some fundamental truth that changes everything. Yet this conviction is accompanied by a recurring observation: no one, or almost no one, recognises this supposed truth. The individual remains ignored, marginalised, ostracised, or simply misunderstood. From this arises a tension, often silent, between inner certainty and the absence of external recognition.

Nevertheless, this discrepancy is generally not interpreted as a problem by the “unrecognised genius”. On the contrary, it often becomes a confirmation: if others do not understand, it is because they are not up to the task, their message is too powerful, too disturbing for the masses and for the elite. The world’s incomprehension is thus perceived as indirect proof of superiority, for the less recognition there is, the stronger the conviction becomes, and isolation turns into a sign of election. A subtle reversal takes place: what should constitute an objection becomes an argument, the absence of resonance is no longer a sign of weakness, but a mark of exception. The individual places themselves outside the “vulgar”, not on the basis of effective recognition, but in the name of a supposed singularity.

This phenomenon is often accompanied by a fantasy of purity that is both pervasive and decisive. In this context, thought is conceived as intact, original, and preserved from any contamination by common opinion, expert evaluation, the constraints of language, or the demands of communication. Any attempt at clarification, adaptation, or simplification is then perceived as a degradation, a betrayal of this supposedly superior truth. Engaging in dialogue becomes problematic, as it requires making oneself understandable, accepting criticism, or even altering one’s own thoughts, all concessions experienced as unacceptable compromises. Recognition itself becomes suspect, for if an idea is understood or valued, it is because it has lost its purity. Thus, incomprehension is no longer an obstacle, but proof. This concern for preserving absolute integrity protects thought, by shielding it from all testing, all transmission, and ultimately all reality. To this is often added a more discreet but decisive dimension: envy. For this posture does not unfold in a vacuum, it exists within a world where others are recognised, heard, and valued. This prominence of others, experienced as unjustified, clashes with the conviction of embodying a superior truth. Envy then appears, not as an admission, but as an underlying force that reshapes perception, as others are judged superficial, the public is declared blind, and the criteria of recognition are disqualified. What they desire but do not obtain, through repeated frustration, they eventually claim not to want; unable to gain recognition, one comes to deny or despise it, and what remains inaccessible is suddenly declared without value. Thus, envy never

presents itself as envy, it disguises itself as intellectual rigour, authenticity or critical lucidity. But this displacement comes at a cost: it prevents any questioning of the possibility that the absence of recognition may stem not only from external injustice, but also from an internal limitation. However, a difficulty arises, for one cannot indefinitely ignore the strange status of an unrecognised truth. A truth that never manages to be clearly formulated, transmitted, or to produce an effect on others, to be recognised and appreciated, can it still be called a truth? If it remains enclosed within an inaccessible subjectivity or a solipsistic discourse, if it becomes nothing more than a monologue, it escapes all testing, it is neither confirmed nor refuted, it is merely preserved, which makes it questionable. Admittedly, this mechanism protects the individual, but at the cost of weakening thought, without their realising it. For thinking does not consist merely in being convinced, but in risking exposure, formulation, and contradiction. An idea that never leaves itself encounters nothing, and does not transform.

One might then see in this “genius syndrome” not an excess of truth, but an inability to confront the very conditions of truth. Thought becomes self-referential, circular, self-sufficient, it no longer seeks to convince, nor even to be understood, but simply to sustain itself. The paradox is that this posture gives the individual the feeling of intellectual intensity, while it avoids precisely what would give strength to thought: confrontation, which it never actually encounters. It produces an impression of depth, but without real substance, since it is grounded in no exchange, no challenge. In a way, it claims to seek such exchange, yet it puts in place everything necessary to avoid it, through its arrogance, its resentment, and its contempt for others. Thus, far from being the sign of an unrecognised genius, this attitude often reveals a more ordinary difficulty: accepting that truth cannot simply be declared, that it is constructed within a shared space, at the risk of being challenged, as any scientist knows. For a thought that never encounters others is measured against nothing, and what is measured against nothing may just as well be nothing.
We should add that such a posture may also generate a depressive tendency. The conviction of possessing an exceptional truth provides a

certain exaltation, but it coexists with the repeated experience of not being recognised, understood, or valued. The individual thus oscillates between a feeling of superiority and a feeling of failure: the world is considered too mediocre to recognise them, yet its indifference remains painful precisely because recognition is secretly desired. Resentment, discouragement, and withdrawal can then reinforce one another. The more the individual withdraws or becomes contemptuous of others, the less likely genuine recognition becomes; and the absence of recognition in turn confirms both their isolation and their conviction of being exceptional. Grandiosity and dejection can thus sustain each other within the same circular structure.

436- The Confusion of Categories

She states with conviction: “my son does not lie”, and she presents this as an objective observation, as a moral certainty. Yet as soon as a concrete example of his lying is put forward, her certainty begins to waver. But instead of simply acknowledging the fact, she requalifies it: “Yes, but that is because he was anxious.” As if the cause cancelled the act. This shift, entirely ordinary, is revealing: it does not deny the lie, it claims to neutralise it. She does not contest the fact that the child lied, but introduces an explanation that seems to attenuate its significance, even to erase its nature. Anxiety thus becomes a kind of implicit justification, as if the lie changed its nature once it is motivated. Yet every human action has a reason, and lying is no exception. One lies out of fear, shame, a desire for protection, self-interest, or habit, but these various reasons do not transform the lie into anything other than a lie. They explain its origin, provide its genesis or motivation, they do not alter its structure. Moreover, confusing explanation with justification is a common mistake. To explain an act is to account for its conditions and underlying logic, to justify an act is to validate its legitimacy. The passage from the psychological to the moral occurs when outlining the reasons for an act becomes a way of

preserving the image of the one who committed it; explanation then turns into justification. In the present case, the psychological explanation slides into a form of moral denial, for one does not merely want to understand why the child lied, but to maintain the idea that, because of this, he does not lie, that this lie is not really a lie. This mechanism reveals above all an attachment to a representation, that of a sincere, upright, trustworthy child. To recognise the lie would undermine this "myth", introduce a fault, a contradiction, a stain. It is then more comfortable to reinterpret the fact than to modify one's representation of the person. But in doing so, one loses a valuable opportunity, for recognising that a child lies is not to condemn them, it is to open a space for a genuine understanding of their pattern of thought. It allows the mother to see what leads him to lie, to question his fears, his strategies, and his relationship to truth, while refusing this acknowledgment prevents such work. And if it is true that, in general, he does not lie, there is every reason to understand the circumstances that led him to betray himself.

There is also a deeper confusion: the mother believes she is protecting the child by denying the lie, whereas what is actually protected is the image she holds of him. But this denial does not truly protect him, it merely spares them from confronting the child's actions, it suspends the possibility of understanding what has taken place, of assuming the consequences, and it maintains an apparent coherence at the cost of blindness. This shift occurs when the effort to explain an act in psychological terms becomes a moral attempt to preserve an image. Analysis then ceases to clarify the lie and becomes a means of absolving it. The child is no longer helped to think about what he does, he is maintained within a reassuring fiction. Of course, refusing to analyze in the name of moral exigency alone would lead to a sterile moralism, in which one judges without understanding. For without psychological lucidity, judgement becomes mere condemnation, devoid of any educational or human value. Yet the demand for truth does not consist in claiming that the other never lies, but in being able to name things as they are.

To say "he lied because he was anxious" is a correct statement, provided one does not forget the first part: "he lied." The reason does not negate the

fact: “He lied because he was worried”, not simply “He was worried”. Since to suppress the fact in favour of the cause is to deprive oneself of the possibility of thinking both together. The lie and its reason must be held together, neither dissolved into one another, nor separated from one another. Ultimately, this type of protective statement does not tell us that the child does not lie, it tells us what, in the adult, makes the acceptance of lying difficult, hence the denial. And perhaps that is where the real issue lies, or the real lie, driven by a fantasy of purity.

In fact, the cause is often the best way to downplay a fact or phenomenon. We see this, for example, in the legal system, where the distinction is nevertheless formalized: the cause can become a description that overshadows the misdemeanor, to the point of turning understanding into a quasi-justification. Mitigating circumstances: when a defendant commits a serious act, the defense cites a difficult childhood, trauma, or social pressure, and the debate shifts from what was done to what was endured. Impaired judgment, when it is claimed that the individual was not fully in control of their actions due to a mental disorder or intoxication, and the act committed takes a back seat to the mental state, rendering the individual not criminally responsible. Crime of passion: a violent act is reclassified based on emotion, jealousy, anger or despair, woven into a narrative that makes it seem almost inevitable. Similarly, in everyday life, the cause often tends to influence judgment by downplaying the severity of the act, especially to justify oneself, one’s loved ones, or those for whom we feel a certain sympathy.

437 – Dialogue and Competition

There is a common way of conceiving dialogue as a form of combat, not in a metaphorical or playful sense, but as a genuine confrontation aimed at establishing a balance of power. From this perspective, to engage in a discussion does not mean to examine an idea, but to assert oneself against

an interlocutor, and thought becomes an instrument of victory, a pursuit of glory. Those who adopt this posture value intensity, tension, and emotional cost, as a form of thinking that does not disturb, wound, defeat or destabilise appears to them without value, to the point where humiliating others can become a source of pleasure. Rigour is conceived as an ordeal, whose worth is measured by the harshness of what it imposes. Any form of mediation, suspension, or caution becomes suspect, a sign of weakness, even a betrayal of authenticity. The process of testing ideas turns into a staging of violence, and the search for truth gives way to a display of force. By contrast, philosophical dialogue does not value injury as such. It may unsettle, even disturb or strike, but this tension remains in the service of clarification and the pursuit of understanding. The test is neither spectacle nor a criterion of value, but a shared demand oriented toward the transformation of thought, not toward victory.

Within a competitive framework, dialogue takes the form of a duel, there is implicitly a winner and a loser. The aim is no longer to learn and discover, to transform one's own thinking, but to make the other yield. Understanding becomes secondary, persuading, even defeating, becomes essential. Listening itself is redefined, it is tolerated only as a strategy, not as an openness. A dialogue conceived as combat easily slides into a moralism of superiority, it no longer seeks to cooperate with the other, but aims to prove oneself more lucid, more intelligent. And when dialogue becomes a duel, changing one's mind is experienced as defeat rather than as a gain in lucidity.

Such a conception rests on a specific idea of truth, as it is no longer what is constructed within a shared space, but what resists, what imposes itself, what triumphs. It is thus associated with force: force of argument, force of character, force of presence. What does not impose itself is perceived as weak, and therefore suspect, of a lower order. Yet the point is not to reject tension or contradiction as such, but to question what occurs when they become the sole model of dialogue, to the detriment of any other form of encounter. What must be distinguished is the fruitful tension necessary to philosophical practice, and the impulse toward domination, which stifles thought.

This conflictual logic produces several negative effects. It tends to disqualify any form of slower, more hesitant, more reflective thinking, reducing the richness of ideas to their capacity for impact. And we often observe in these individuals a kind of stubbornness in repeating their ideas, a tendency to restate them in a circular manner, or to produce rambling speech aimed solely at flooding the discussion, all with limited creativity. What is lost are nuance, complexity, subtlety, and even the possibility that thought may remain a dilemma, a problem, an enigma, rather than a mere clash or verdict. It also encourages the personalisation of exchanges, since it is no longer ideas that confront one another, but positions, characters, identities, statuses. It also produces a form of closure, for if dialogue is a combat, it becomes difficult to admit a transformation of one's own position without experiencing it as a defeat. The very possibility of changing one's mind is weakened, assimilated to a loss. Thus, what could be a moment of new insight is experienced as a setback, a defeat. The paradox is that dialogue, which is meant to open toward otherness, turns into a mechanism of identity reinforcement: instead of introducing a shift, it consolidates positions, and one emerges from it "more oneself" than when entering. This distinction can already be found in Plato, who opposes dialectic to eristic. The former aims at a shared examination of a question, through the testing of positions, in view of a more adequate access to truth. The latter, by contrast, consists in prevailing in the discussion, regardless of the validity or relevance of the arguments. In this logic, speech becomes an instrument of victory rather than of inquiry. This corresponds to the opposition between philosophy and rhetoric, which concerns not only techniques, but the very purpose of discourse, to inquire together or to persuade the other. It would, however, be simplistic to oppose a peaceful dialogue to a conflictual debate, for Socratic dialogue itself contains an agonistic dimension: it tests, destabilises, and compels one to respond and to contradict oneself. Yet this agon does not aim at victory over the other, it aims at a transformation of the subject. This distinction sheds light on the possible slide from dialogue to combat, when the issue is no longer the transformation of thought, but domination within the exchange. In one case, dialogue serves to confirm oneself, to prove that one is "the best", in the other, it obliges one to take risks, to dare uncertainty, to go beyond

oneself, and to transform the terms of the exchange. These are not merely two styles of exchange, but two ways of defining what it means to think, and what it means to be oneself.

This does not mean that all confrontation should be avoided. There are moments when tension is necessary, when opposition clarifies, when contradiction stimulates thought. But when the model of combat becomes exclusive, it tends to reduce dialogue to a binary logic: to win or to lose. One who values the injury inflicted on the other as proof of value reveals a deeper confusion, since they conflate the strength of the logos with the violence of the ego. Harshness, aggressiveness, the capacity to strike the other then become the signs of a supposed veracity, as if the correctness of an idea were measured by its power to hit, to wound. By linking truth to force in this way, the individual acting in bad faith justifies their aggression and imagines themselves as the "armed hand" of truth. Dialogue becomes combat, not in order to illuminate, but to prevail, and this type of confrontation favours reactivity, immediate opinion, rapid response, striking formulas, whereas the search for truth requires, on the contrary, slowness, hesitation, and the capacity to suspend judgement. This does not mean promoting a soft or purely empathetic dialogue, as conflict is useful or necessary, but it must remain in the service of clarification, not of glory. And the one who wants to win at all costs is often the most heteronomous, they remain dependent on the gaze of others, they can exist only through the recognition of their victory. Their strength is not autonomy, but a disguised submission.

One may then ask whether this way of conceiving dialogue does not reduce its possibilities, for if thinking consists only in asserting oneself, it becomes difficult to think with the other. Yet there is another possibility, that of a dialogue in which the aim is not to prevail, but to be transformed, a form of thinking that accepts not to emerge intact from the exchange, but changed. The question is therefore not to choose between combat and the absence of conflict, but to determine what one expects from dialogue. Is it a matter of triumphing, or of understanding? Of asserting oneself, or of exposing oneself? Of convincing, or of seeking the truth? Of affirming oneself, or of transforming oneself? Of holding a position, or of putting it to the test?

Depending on the answer, it is not merely the style of the exchange that changes, but the very nature of what is called thinking.

438 – Dying for One's Ideas

At times, thought takes the form of an extreme demand: to be ready to die for what we assert, for what we think. The proposition appears noble, even heroic, it lends a particular gravity to the idea, as if its value were measured by the intensity of the commitment it elicits, an imperative that, in certain circumstances, may indeed impose itself. Thinking would no longer consist merely in reflecting or examining critically, but in committing oneself to the very end, to the point of risking one's life, or at least what gives consistency to our existence, reputation, relationships, security, with the conviction that only such commitment could guarantee the authenticity of a person and of their ideas.

Such a position has undeniable force, it reminds us that ideas are not mere intellectual games, but that they engage the one who holds them, for they entail consequences. It introduces a form of responsibility: if I am ready to pay the price for what I say, then I must be all the more attentive to my words. It thus stands in opposition to a light, inconsequential speech that asserts without assuming, to a floating, dilettante, or insubstantial form of thinking.

Yet this radicality also involves a shift. Through this "total" commitment or the willingness to die as the ultimate criterion, the question is displaced: it is no longer a matter of knowing whether an idea is true, but whether one is sufficiently attached to it to sacrifice oneself for it. Thought then becomes a test of loyalty rather than a search for truth, and the intensity of commitment takes precedence over the validity of the idea. This shift is not without consequence: if I must be ready to die for what I think, am I still able to question it? The demand for fidelity tends to rigidify thought, it transforms the idea into a position to defend, not a hypothesis to examine. What should remain open becomes untouchable, for to abandon it would

mean betraying oneself. A form of dramatization results, where thinking becomes a grave, almost tragic act, in which each assertion engages an identity, a form of life or death. Yet this dramatization can prevent precisely what constitutes the exercise of thought: the capacity to suspend, to doubt, to shift one's positions. A thought that can no longer be abandoned ceases to be thought, it becomes conviction. The appeal to the figure of the "noble cause" may even constitute a trap, for dying for an idea can become a way of sacralizing one's own ego, a narcissistic exercise. By sacrificing oneself for what one affirms, we render the idea, and through it, oneself, untouchable. Absolute commitment then dispenses with examination, for what is ready to be paid at the ultimate price can no longer be questioned. There is here a particular form of bad faith: using the radicality of sacrifice to evade the trial of thinking. Heroism, through its emotional intensity, imbues actions and ideas with a sanctifying effect that renders them almost untouchable.

One may then propose a shift, less psychologically charged but more fruitful for thought. Rather than asking, "Am I ready to die for this idea?", it would be more pertinent to ask, "Am I capable of examining this idea critically, even if it forces me to transform it or abandon it?". The first question engages loyalty, the second engages freedom. It is less spectacular than the first, but more formidable: it does not require dying for an idea, but accepting that the idea may die within us. For thinking does not consist merely in holding fast, but in allowing oneself to be displaced. It is not a matter of proving one's strength, but of accepting a certain vulnerability in the face of what we discover. The trial is not that of "total" sacrifice, but that of questioning, less "sensational", less romantic, yet more demanding. Hence, the value of an idea is not measured by the willingness to die for it, but by the capacity to work on it, to confront it, to modify it. A living thought is one that can change without betraying itself, that can lose without disappearing. It does not protect itself within the absolute of commitment, it remains within the openness of examination. For fidelity to thought does not consist in dying for one's ideas, but in never ceasing to question them. From this point on, it is no longer a matter of dying for one's ideas, but of dying for truth, a crucial shift. Dying for one's ideas implies fidelity to determined contents, which are elevated to the status of dogma. Dying for

the truth, on the contrary, implies fidelity to an exigency, not to positions. It means being ready to modify one's representations, to see one's certainties collapse, to renounce what defined us, if necessary. The "death" in question is, in a certain sense, more radical: accepting the disappearance of what we were attached to in order to make room for what reveals itself, with the existential upheaval this entails.

In this perspective, the real trial is not to sacrifice oneself for an idea, but to consent to the possibility that truth, if it emerges, may transform us, even undo us. At the same time, this death is not exceptional, it can become almost daily. Each time an idea to which we were attached falters, each time a certainty cracks, something in us must consent to disappear. It is not merely an opinion that is abandoned, but a part of oneself, a way of understanding oneself, sometimes a position with which one has strongly identified. This is why the trial is difficult, as it does not consist in defending an idea to the end, but in accepting that it may not hold. It requires a form of stripping away, a capacity not to cling to what reassured us. In certain spiritual traditions, this has been called the "little death": a series of discreet, repeated renunciations through which the individual gradually detaches from attachments, not out of rejection of the world, but out of an exigency for truth.

This death is less "awesome" than heroic sacrifice, yet in a sense more radical. Dying for an idea may be a singular act, supported by a strong conviction. Dying to one's ideas requires constant vigilance and availability, a readiness to be affected, displaced, called into question. It does not flatter the ego, it challenges it. Understood in this way, fidelity to truth does not consist in clinging to what one believes, but in accepting that thought may transform us, sometimes against ourselves. It is not a final death, but a series of transformations through which something dissolves so that something else may appear. One does not die for an idea because it is "ours", but because it is what has survived all our critical assaults. Nevertheless, it is not necessary to oppose these two attitudes radically. Dying for an idea may find its legitimacy when it is rooted in a deeper fidelity to truth. Under certain conditions, commitment "to the end" is not merely

attachment to a position, but the expression of an exigency that has been tested, worked through, and put to the trial. When an idea is not merely asserted, but long interrogated, confronted, traversed by doubt, then holding onto it may become something other than a reflex of loyalty, but a way of responding to what one recognizes as just. Dying for an idea is problematic only when such commitment replaces the search for truth. But when it proceeds from it, when it is its outcome rather than its starting point, it may appear as its ultimate consequence. The exigency of truth does not necessarily lead to sacrifice, but it may, in certain cases, render it intelligible. What is then defended is less the idea itself than the fidelity to what, within it, has withstood examination, once that idea has been long tested, traversed by doubt, and worked through to the point of no longer being a mere adherence, but a recognized exigency. Thus, commitment no longer precedes truth, it follows from it. What might have appeared as rigidity becomes a form of coherence. The question, then, is perhaps not whether one should be ready to die for one's ideas, but what, within an idea, is worthy of attachment. And what merits such fidelity is never the idea as such, but the ordeal of truth that has tested it.

439 – The Fear of Authority

The fear of authority is sometimes clearly identified, but more often, in a deceptive way, it is perceived or presented as a critical stance, almost as a sign of emancipation. One no longer speaks of fear, but of mistrust toward power, refusal of domination, valorisation of autonomy. Yet this flattering "translation" masks a less noble reality: this refusal is not so much a form of freedom as it is only a reaction, and every reaction, by definition, remains dependent on what it claims to escape.

In fact, the one who has a problem with authority does not step outside the power relation, he merely reverses its poles. He refuses to obey, but does not question the very logic of authority, because he does not think it

through, he simply undergoes it differently. And most likely, as soon as a favourable position presents itself, he becomes authoritarian himself, sometimes with increased harshness, not out of conviction, but out of compensation, without even realising it. For there is a familiar phenomenon at work: what has not been integrated returns in the form of a fixed pattern, a repetition, operating unconsciously. Thus, authority experienced in the past as something unpleasant becomes an invisible matrix structuring future behaviour. One re-enacts what they have lived, either by submitting to it or by imposing it. When such individuals face authority, they either lose their composure or become aggressive. In all these cases, they remain trapped within the same pattern.

This shift is particularly visible in situations of fragility. When the individual feels threatened, challenged, or uncertain, he tends to resort to rigid authority in order to reassure himself: he imposes rules, cuts others off, disqualifies objections, rejects interlocutors, refuses discussion. This “disguised” authority then becomes a shield against anxiety, a way of freezing an unstable reality. In such situations, individuals tend to react sternly, becoming indignant or forbidding; their tone turns formal, and their authority takes on a moral character.

Moreover, this reactive authority is often incoherent, it is rejected when it comes from others, and claimed when it serves one’s own interests, a double standard that reveals an absence of guiding principle. It is not driven by a reflection on the legitimacy of authority and its mechanisms, but an opportunistic management of power relations, on a case-by-case basis. More subtly still, the fear of authority can produce forms of indirect authoritarianism. The individual avoids explicit confrontations, but exerts diffuse pressure: irony, insinuation, guilt-inducing remarks, irritation, contempt. He does not command, but he steers, he does not decide, but he confines. It is a faceless authority, more difficult to identify, and often more insidious.

This refusal of explicit authority is frequently accompanied by a rejection of all hierarchy. One invokes equality, respect, horizontality, which in society remains a somewhat illusory “ideal”. Yet this horizontality can become a screen: by refusing any asymmetry, one also avoids the challenge of judgment, criticism, evaluation, and constraint. In this way, they protect their own discourse or status from any form of questioning or challenge, an attitude which reveals a competitive vision or human relations.
Another case is that of the “mistrustful” individual, who maintains an ambivalent relationship to authority, neither one of simple submission nor of pure opposition. Authority is both sought as a necessary point of support and questioned as a source of uncertainty. It is followed, but conditionally, constantly interrogated, tested, and sometimes challenged, as if one could not rely on it without permanently probing its solidity, a rather anxious attitude.

The issue, therefore, is not whether one should accept or reject authority, a phenomenon that is, to some extent, inevitable in society. It is whether one is capable of thinking it through, of working with it, with a certain flexibility. For an assumed authority is neither domination nor submission, it is a function, linked to competence, responsibility, and situation. It can be exercised without violence, and challenged without fear. Thus, to reject authority on principle is as naive as to submit to it blindly. In both cases, one avoids the most difficult task: understanding what grounds the legitimacy of authoritative speech, and accepting to confront it in a rational manner. The one who does not fear authority has no need to flee from it, nor to reproduce it blindly. They can exercise it when necessary, and submit to it when it makes sense. They no longer undergo it, they move through it.
True autonomy does not consist in living without authority, but in no longer being disturbed or obsessed by it, and in understanding its function and its usefulness. Which already means coming to terms with one's own authority.

441- Refusing the Rules

Some people do not like to play by the rules. This refusal is often presented by their author as a sign of independence, even of courage. Yet such a gesture deserves a closer examination, for the rejection of rules rarely occurs in a neutral way, as it reveals a specific relationship to constraint, to others and to oneself. And we are all confronted to a fundamental paradox: while we seek freedom, we also seek the safety and protection of structure. First of all, rules impose limits. They define what can and cannot be done, and in doing so, they restrict the field of possible action. For some, this restriction is experienced as an intolerable loss, as to follow a rule is to renounce a certain immediacy, to accept that one's impulses are not sovereign. Rejecting the rules then becomes a way of preserving the illusion of freedom. This refusal sometimes takes a more primitive form, which could be described as "infantile", not in the sense of mere immaturity, but as a refusal of mediation. The child does not yet recognize the legitimacy of the rule as an external structure, instead, they experience it as an arbitrary obstacle to their immediate desire. In the same way, some adults continue to perceive any constraint as an unjustified infringement on their freedom, unable to grasp that the rule is not merely a limitation, but the very condition for the game to take place, the structuring of reality. Then, rules create a space of evaluation, they introduce criteria by which actions can be judged, compared, and measured. To enter such a determined space is to accept the possibility of failure, of being found lacking. Those who refuse the rules avoid not just constraint itself, but the exposure that comes with it; outside the rules, one cannot actually lose, since one has never really entered the game, whether in life or in play, both literally and figuratively.

We also encounter the question of legitimacy, as not all rules are just, and some are indeed arbitrary, rigged or imposed in the interest of a few, probably of the game masters. In such cases, refusal takes the form of resistance. Yet even here, one must distinguish between a critical rejection

of unjust rules and a more diffuse tendency to evade any form of structure. The former engages with the rules in order to challenge them, the latter dismisses or ignores them altogether, often without examination, and in this sense they do not play the game, they cheat, or they rebel. Although we must concede that a thoughtful critical engagement is demanding and difficult, as it may require a level of discernment and patience that most people do not possess. And those who have experienced oppression under unfair rules, whether familial or social, often develop an instinctive resistance to rules as such. This reaction may be described as irrational, yet it still explains, at least in part, the prevalence of such resistance, even when it becomes indiscriminate and leads to a blanket rejection of any constraint. More deeply, rules demand consistency. They require one to act according to stable principles, something that does not bend to mood or circumstance. For those who live in a fluctuating relation to themselves or others, this continuity can be difficult to sustain. Refusing the rules allows one to remain undefined, to escape responsibility, to shift positions without having to account for them. And of course, besides limitations, rules often bring repetition, monotony, and a lack of novelty.

The paradox is that this refusal often preserves the individual rather than liberates them, since by avoiding rules, one avoids friction, but also transformation. There is no real confrontation, no genuine test, no occasion to discover one's limits. What is maintained is not freedom, but a form of intactness, self-protection. To play by the rules is not merely to obey, it is to accept a framework within which something can be at stake. To refuse them is sometimes an act of critique, but more often a way of avoiding the risk of being challenged and revealed.

442 – The Alibi of Typology

In dialogue, it sometimes happens that certain individuals take refuge in a description of themselves in order to avoid the trial of thinking. The enneagram, like other psychological typologies, then provides a ready-made language, a way of defining oneself quickly, for example, “I am a type 5”, “this is how I function”, “this is my character”, or even “this is my nature”. Such statements may seem illuminating, almost lucid, but they often play a more ambiguous role, for they do not merely serve to understand oneself, they also serve to protect oneself. Describing a pattern of functioning is not the same as examining it, as naming a tendency does not mean exploring its effects and mechanisms. On the contrary, typology can produce a form of closure, since what ought to be analyzed more deeply is already explained by a ready-made category, and what ought to be tested is already justified. Discourse about oneself then replaces work on oneself: we no longer seek to understand what we do or practice, we complacently affirm what we are.

For example, in the case of the enneagram’s type 5, this drift is particularly visible. In theory, the individual presents himself as observant, analytical, withdrawn; he values distance, understanding, intellectual mastery. But this posture can easily become a way of avoiding engagement. Thus, rather than involving themselves in the exchange, they quote, deflect, joke, or introduce external references that shift the discussion without ever confronting it. Dialogue is sidestepped without being explicitly refused. Typology then becomes an alibi: it allows one to turn a difficulty into a determined characteristic, an escape into an identity that is “fixed” in order to avoid the instability and the challenge that comes with the possibility of change. It becomes a tool of bad faith, since it reduces freedom to a "natural" state and denies the exercise of that freedom, so that one no longer has to account for one's actions. What could be criticised as an inability to sustain the exchange is reformulated as a legitimate way of being.

Another example is when I asked a friend why she had not contacted us, even though she knew we were visiting her city. Her answer was telling: “Because I am an I-type. That is just how I-types are, we do not take the initiative to reach out.”, referring to the popular Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI). Once more, the typology does not illuminate a behaviour, it justifies it. What could have been examined as a choice becomes presented as a fixed trait. The question “why did you not act?” is replaced by “this is how I am”, which effectively closes the inquiry. Thus, the problem disappears behind a category, the label replaces the need for explanation, and the individual no longer confronts what they do, they merely state what they are. Yet thinking does not consist in defining oneself, but in putting oneself to the test, even in transforming oneself. In dialogue, the point is not to conform to a type, but to engage in the confrontation of ideas. Thought is not measured by the relevance of a self-description, but by the capacity to examine a proposition, to recognise its limits, to expose oneself to contradiction. Any other strategy, even a “refined” one, amounts to avoiding this requirement.

Yet a more general confusion is at work in such a framework. One believes that knowing oneself consists in identifying oneself, whereas it consists first and foremost in questioning oneself. A typology may be useful as a tool for orientation, but it becomes problematic as soon as it fixes the individual in an image of himself and spares him the ordeal of challenging himself. It turns a dynamic into an essence, a tendency into a nature. From that point on, any questioning or criticism appears as a betrayal of what one is. The constant use of irony or empty joking belongs to the same mechanism, as it gives the illusion of critical distance, whereas this “strategy” rather serves to avoid responding to the unpredictable. One shifts the exchange onto a terrain where nothing can truly be grasped, where ideas are neither developed nor examined. Humour becomes a screen, not a tool, it defuses without illuminating anything. Thus, what presents itself as lucidity may be nothing more than a subtle form of resistance or opacity. The individual may think about himself, perhaps, but does not put himself into play. He observes but does not respond, he describes but does not analyse, he gives the appearance of thought without assuming its demands.

To claim “I am a type 5 or type I” does not exempt one from thinking, from answering others, or from exposing oneself to what is said. On the contrary, if such a description has any meaning, it should precisely lead us to question what we tend to avoid. Otherwise, it merely reinforces what it pretends to illuminate. In dialogue, the question is never who one is, but what one does with what is stated. Any other response, however elegant, risks being nothing more than a detour, and some detours, once repeatedly taken, end up becoming dead ends.