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PHILOSOPHY

METAPHYSICAL REPRESENTATIONS AND EVERYDAY LIFE

ŞTEFAN AFLOROAEI [1]

[1] *"Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iaşi*
Corresponding author: stefan_afloroaei@yahoo.com

The question I intend to answer is whether one can speak of a tacit metaphysics, not expressed conceptually, but nevertheless common. If the answer is positive and, providing that it is specific to day-to-day life, such metaphysics may be called everyday metaphysics. To this end, I review the meaning of everyday life and its ambivalent character. Next, I present several milestones in the debate on the subject, from authors who have focused on a kind of usual, common or 'natural' metaphysics. Lastly, I formulate the idea under consideration, namely that everyday life implies or underlies a certain metaphysics. I note that it is an implicit metaphysics – not expressed formally – and rather free. Embraced in experience with a certain degree of freedom, it is recognisable by means of certain representations active in our minds, by the manner of speaking or of understanding and by the common forms of expression. Its vibrant, concrete and relaxed character make it highly evocative of the mental life of an era. It ensures a truly essential difference in our everyday mode of being.

Keywords: everyday life, metaphysical representations and beliefs, implicit or tacit metaphysics.

1. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS[1]

I would like to draw attention to a few relatively simple issues, starting from certain recurrent questions in our debates, such as: Can one speak of a tacit metaphysics, not expressed conceptually, yet customary, usual? Can it be viewed as habitual or everyday metaphysics? Which authors might encourage such a perspective on metaphysics and what arguments might they invoke to this end? How could such usual metaphysics be justified within what we designate as the everyday life-world?

[1] I want to mention that the text was first published, in a more extensive and relatively different form, in Balkan Journal of Philosophy, V, no 1, 2013, under the initial title "Everyday Condition of Metaphysics".

I would not dwell on these questions were it not for the frequent occurrence of the term 'metaphysics' in debates which do not concern any of the doctrines about this concept which have evolved over time. One may find the term in discussions about the prevailing worldview in a particular period (for instance, when referring to "the metaphysics of the modern man"). Or in reflections about a meaningful attitude towards one's own existence (such as "natural attitude" and the metaphysics it entails). At other times, the attention is focused on the perspectives opened up by allegorical narratives (for example, the underlying metaphysics in José Saramago's novel All the Names). The term is also used to refer to certain convictions assumed by a dominant experience, such as the technological one. Indeed, it has been asserted that current technique is a culmination of the modern metaphysics (Martin Heidegger). They both express the same kind of will and the same beliefs or presuppositions. Nevertheless, I would note that the term 'metaphysics' is especially used to designate the power of a language to generate concepts, images or representations. We know, for that matter, a very debated claim in recent times asserts that any language brings with itself certain metaphysics (Friedrich Nietzsche). It is an idea espoused by many analysts of language, and certain writers, concerned with the link between language and underlying beliefs[2]. Research on natural language and equally on common or everyday language has also rediscovered this idea.

Moreover, others have claimed that the modern man, despite what he might think about himself, cannot completely escape the sphere of the historical logos and its underlying metaphysics (Jacques Derrida). This entails that the metaphysical attitude can be traced as a sublayer in diverse activities and pursuits, from the scholarly to the mundane (Richard Rorty). It will not appear necessarily as a well-structured vision, but rather as presuppositions, beliefs and representations.

Yet none of the situations evoked above fall under the scholarly or academic meaning of metaphysics. They are not related to a theory conceptually developed or to an erudite pursuit of metaphysics. Rather, most often they concern a particular behaviour of the mind, a way of understanding the state of the self and of the world it is a part of. In other words, the focus is on a concrete manner of understanding, as experienced by someone among us or by a community as a whole. Metaphysics, under this guise, represents a forma mentis, therefore it may not appear in the form of elaborate theories and concepts.

It is not hard to notice that, in essence, the modern man's attitude towards metaphysics is profoundly ambivalent. On the one hand, one may witness an explicit rejection of metaphysics, especially when it is the doctrine of an author or of an entire school of thought. On the other hand, however, metaphysics may be

[2] This is a possible interpretation of Charles Péguy's statement, in *Notre jeunesse* (1910), that every person has their own metaphysics, manifest or latent, otherwise they would not exist as man/ human. This proposition was borrowed – and, to an extent, assumed – by Maurice Merleau-Ponty (Merleau-Ponty 1948: 53; the idea then emerges in Merleau-Ponty 1964: 138).

invoked rather naturally as an obvious level of comprehension[3]. In the latter case, there is a fair degree of freedom in the use of the term and in the acknowledgment of metaphysical representations or perspectives.

Ultimately, it is not necessary to think like Aristotle or Schopenhauer – or even to think what they thought in their own time – to speak of metaphysics. It suffices, say, to use certain representations of the self and of the other, the life-world, temporality and space, appearance and reality. Indeed, whose mind is detached from such representations, ideas or beliefs? When such representations blend into a vision and transgress the empirical knowledge (or 'physical', in the ancient sense of the term), they can be called metaphysical. This is also true when their role is that of "first instance" or "ultimate instance", as preliminary elements in the pursuit of knowledge. In such situations they emerge as boundary data or edges of the horizon beyond which the mind cannot go (Afloroaei 2008: 21–24).

2. ON THE AMBIVALENCE OF EVERYDAY LIFE

I believe I should state what I understand "everyday life" to be. I do not have a definition for the phrase, yet I am not necessarily looking for one either. The synonymy brought into play by certain dictionaries is not particularly useful to this end. For example, the understanding of everyday life as habitual life, or as regular or publicly exposed life, does not sufficiently clarify this issue. Each of these phrases requires an explanation and, occasionally, may further obscure the meaning of everyday life.

We could say though, to start with, that everyday life is the habitual life, the generic place of habitual behaviours and gestures. I use the word 'habitual' in the sense expressed by the past participle of the "to habituate". One leads a habitual life when one is habituated with certain behaviours or acts, on the one hand, and with certain regular situations, on the other hand. Yet how does a habitual behaviour become an everyday behaviour?

A habitual behaviour, whether it is thinking, expressing or doing, is regularly an acquired behaviour, that is one which has reached a familiar form, as a habit accepted naturally. It is a behaviour learned over time, yet in a fairly contingent and free manner. Becoming habituated with something means learning a particular behaviour[4]. Behaviour is in this state a reflexive act: you become habituated with

[3] Highly illustrative in this respect is Emil Cioran's attitude towards metaphysics (Cioran 1990), knowing that he did not accept himself as philosopher, less so as metaphysician.

[4] Peter L. Berger & Thomas Luckmann (1966 II, 1 b-d) describe the constitution of everyday reality in relation to the data of common sense and ordinary knowledge, founded on common sense. The meaning of ordinary life can be delimited in a more general manner, as Charles Taylor did (Taylor 1989, chap. III, 13. 1), when referring to aspects of human life related to work, producing the necessities of life, and life as sexual beings, including here marriage and family. This is what Aristotle considered when he stated that the purposes of political association are "life itself and the good life". In other words, ordinary life spans everything necessary to achieve in order to sustain and restore our life.

travelling the same road daily or with the basic use of certain tools. To acquire something, to adopt it as natural and wholly expected, to become familiar with it, all of these pertain to our everyday life. That which is acquired is learned one way or another, depending on one's own manner of relating with others and the surrounding world. It eventually becomes a familiar fact, accepted as such by almost everyone, sometimes as an instinct of everyday life.

We are all aware of such behaviours and follow them in our own way. Let us consider, almost at random, habits such as reading the paper in the morning, using a means of transportation, taking a stroll in the park in the evening, drinking coffee, going to work every day, making daily notes, using an umbrella or walking stick, meeting friends, wearing a wristwatch, talking about the weather or the death of acquaintances, casually looking outside the window, searching for a quiet place to rest, employing certain tools and machinery, talking on the phone with loved ones, etc. Everyday life consists of such behaviours and gestures. Some appear disarmingly simple, yet others seem to contradict the common notion of everyday life.

To be a part of everyday life, habits take the form of stable and relatively free dispositions. For example, the habit of taking down all sorts of data, names and events in a diary is not governed by strictly determined conditions. It is actualised only when one receives an explicit exterior motivation, as when one deems the action to be absolutely useful. It does not require any special preparation. It is dependant rather on elementary and concrete experience. The act does not necessarily involve a certain regularity to become habitual or any particular deliberate repetition.

The free acquisition of certain attitudes or gestures indicates the elementary form of the human experience. I do not believe that there is any other form of experience that precedes it essentially and exceeds it in scope. We might say that this is in reality a preliminary experience, whether it aids or thwarts other experiences. Its scope is ultimately that of life proper, even when man ends up battling it and opposing it by what he does or thinks. Yet, compared with other experiences, it occurs most often by itself. It is usually relaxed and tranquil without any severe exigencies. One cannot properly speak of a technique of modern life or of finely tuned mechanics of its articulations. When harsh exigency or elaborate technique come into play, everyday life breaks down and makes way for a different experience.

What could we observe in fact in such situations of ordinary life? Ultimately, there is a kind of alchemy of habit, capable of transforming a specific fact into a common one, an uncanny phenomenon into a familiar one, difference into the unremarkable and the beauty of the moment into something prosaic. That is to say, there exists a genuine athanor of everyday life. In this athanor, the data of life can change their meaning decisively. Yet – and this is paramount to my comments further on – the change in a behaviour does not mean it is restricted to a univocal sense. When a specific fact becomes common, it does not completely lose its specific character. Similarly, when the uncanny event becomes familiar to us, it

does not entail the complete loss of its uncanniness[5]. It will never disappear completely; rather it will undergo a process of concealment or withdrawal.

Each term that casually describes everyday life – as we have seen, the common character, familiarity, indifference or prosaic character – does not mean anything by itself. In their singularity, they signal only one facet of this phenomenon. As soon as we hear such terms, we must think of the term which has been excluded or left on the side. Their correlation is important, as their meaning is brought to light in conjunction, through contrasts or divergences.

My point is that everyday life is not by definition univocal: strictly common or strictly ordinary. On the contrary, it invites the elementary co-presence of contrary terms: common and specific, familiar and uncanny, ordinary and extraordinary, etc. It is not characterised by a single attitude, 'natural' or 'naïve', as once it would have been called. Rather, in its scope, such an attitude meets the 'critical' attitude, and they affect each other constantly. Everyday life is the space of their encounter, of their natural and preliminary 'collusion'. It does not separate the 'opposites', but makes possible their emergence and maintains it in a fundamental, elementary correlation. The differences manifested, for instance, between the banal and the significant, do not become separations. When they do take the form of separations, accentuating the oppositions they conceal, consciousness passes from its everyday mode to a different one. Consciousness is then able to deal with a distinct, highly elaborate condition, such as the theoretical and the speculative condition. Ultimately, each human experience can elaborate a different form from the everyday one, more severe or more formal. Yet it never withdraws from the sphere of everyday life. This sphere, elementary or preliminary, retains it to a certain extent and determines its relations with the others.

3. THE VULGAR UNDERSTANDING OF TIME (MARTIN HEIDEGGER)

I will first return to a few pages from The Basic Problems of Phenomenology (II, 19, b), where Martin Heidegger discusses "the common understanding of time (vulgäres Zeitverständnis)". I believe that such understanding of time, beyond its problematic aspects, illustrates the workings of metaphysics in our daily life. Simply put, the common or vulgar understanding of time can indicate the presence of a common or vulgar metaphysics. I would prefer to call it everyday metaphysics, or metaphysics for everyday use.

We know that Heidegger often deals with the multiple manners of signification of the being. He discusses both the pre-ontological signification and

[5] It would be useful here, I believe, to recall Sigmund Freud's assertion in the essay *Das Unheimliche*, 1920, precisely on the actualisation of the dual meaning of the term uncanny, *unheimlich*. He observes in advance that the sense of uncanniness is generated either by "outdated" beliefs, or by suppressing certain complexes.

the ontological, or ultimately, metaphysical signification. He states at a certain point that "we live in an understanding of Being" even though the meaning of Being is sometimes veiled in darkness (Being and Time, § 1). In other words, the Dasein "is ontological", not in the sense that inquires theoretically about the Being of entities, but "being in such a way that one has an understanding of Being" (§ 4). As regards man, there is a "predilection for metaphysics" (as he notes in a phenomenological study on the Critique of Pure Reason). The idea brings to mind the notion of natural disposition (Naturanlage) for metaphysics once asserted by Kant (Critique of Pure Reason, Introduction, VI). Yet such remarks do not focus on the metaphysics viewed in the Aristotelian tradition, as examination of the being in general. They also do not deal with metaphysics viewed as a mode of understanding the being in opposition with time (hence, either as 'Platonism', as Nietzsche preferred to say, or as 'ontologism', a thematisation in relationship with "what truly exists"). And they focus even less so on metaphysics understood as an era of forgetting the Being (Haeffner 1981). In light of these three great meanings of metaphysics, to be found especially in certain reference doctrines, Heidegger refers to a type of metaphysics where "every time we live already". We live, that is, to the extent that we live in "an understanding of the Being". In other words, this is about experienced metaphysics, assumed through the senses and already presupposed by what we do or think in our everyday lives.

At the outset, Heidegger remarks that, in the Aristotelian tradition, time is viewed primarily as a "sequence of nows" where it should be noted that "the nows" are not parts from which time is pieced together into a whole" (Heidegger 1997: 362–374). This is actually the "common, pre-scientific understanding of time". He refers to the common understanding of time (vulgäres Zeitverständnis), common time (vulgäre Zeit) and common conception of time (vulgärer Begriff der Zeit), each of these relating to the meaning of original time (ursprüngliche Zeit). If the phrase vulgäres Zeitverständnis were translated as "vulgar understanding of time", the term 'vulgar' should be taken in its neutral sense, considering its Latin etymon (vulgaris, meaning 'common' or 'ordinary', 'public', "valid for many").

How exactly does this representation of time become obvious? This meaning is at stake every time we measure time. For example, when we use a clock, "we measure time whenever we need it" (as when "we take time or let it pass"). We use easy to a fore-understanding of time ("When we look at a clock, since time itself does not lie in the clock, we assign time to the clock. In looking at the clock, we say 'now'"). What does this fore-understanding of time consist of? First of all, the time determined reading a clock is a usual time, which serves a purpose. As Heidegger states, "the time I am trying to determine is always 'time to', time in order to do this or that, time that I need for, time that I can permit myself in order to accomplish this or that, time that I must take for carrying through this or that". We are thus already taking time into account and reckoning with it whenever we measure it.

Therefore, we orient ourselves in advance based on a 'now', without reflecting on it ("In looking at the clock we say 'now'"). This 'now' we are directed to is not a naked, pure now, but "that wherefore and whereto there is still time now". It expresses my distinct relationship towards things or towards other people. Their unity is not elucidated in the common understanding of time. To be elucidated they ought to be placed in a relationship with an "original time", by way of which the different moments of time could be understood, even in their possibility. Yet such unity is at this point greatly obscured.

As we have already noted, ordinary consciousness understands time "as a sequence of nows from the not-yet-now to the no-longer-now". This sequence represents an "intrinsic direction from the future to the past". That is precisely why we usually "say that time passes, elapses". This sequence is "directed uniformly", in accordance with an irreversible movement. Moreover, about the sequence of now, we tend to designate it "as infinite". Therefore, the common understanding of time is that of the sequence of nows, in a single irreversible and infinite direction.

This common time is viewed as "already given to us". Being "already given to us", we can take time, let it pass, measure it and use it in various other ways. The 'given' of time does not raise any doubts or questions (such as for instance, by whom exactly is it given? And to whom? Is it given naturally or in some other way?). We take time for granted, as we are already accustomed to this relationship with time and do not question how it was actually constituted.

In the common understanding, time appears as appropriate and inappropriate time for something specific. "All time we read from the clock is time to …, 'time to do this or that', appropriate or inappropriate time /.../. We designated by the term 'significance' this totality of relations of the 'in-order-to', 'for-the-sake-of', 'for-that-purpose', 'to-that-end'". In light of this character of significance, time understood as appropriate and inappropriate time is a "world-time /Weltzeit/". Yet the common understanding of time is "little aware of /…/ significance" and cannot thematise it. We ordinarily believe that we live in a natural time, yet this does not exist. This statement, shocking at first, reflects the specific results of existential analysis. "/…/ This does not mean that the time we read from the clock is something present-at-hand, as inner-worldly things. We know, of course, that the world is not something present-an-hand /Vorhandenes/, not nature, but that which first makes possible the discoveredness of nature. It is therefore inappropriate, as it frequently happens, to call this time nature-time or natural time. There is no nature-time, since all time belongs essentially to the Dasein. But there is indeed a world-time /Weltzeit/".

This public character of time entails something paradoxical. "Although each one of us utters his own 'now', it is nevertheless the 'now' for everyone. The accessibility of the 'now' for everyone, without prejudice to the diverse datings, characterizes time as public". What can we infer from this? The existential structure called Miteinandersein does not cancel the solitude of each individual man. Ultimately, every single person is alone and yet with others. Everyone is

alone as they give a distinct understanding of their temporal 'now', dating it according to their own needs and demands of their various preoccupations. However, everyone is able to understand the 'now' uttered by others, to the best of their abilities. The other's 'now' is accessible to each; this is how "the 'now' is for all" must be understood.

Likewise, the fact of being-with-the-other makes us equal rather in terms of what we do not have or do not possess. The publicness of time declares that ultimately, to a certain extent, time does not belong to anyone. Like death, as a matter of fact. Yet this deprivation is compensated in a certain manner. "On account of this character of time a peculiar objectivity is assigned to it. The 'now' belongs neither to me nor to anyone else, but it is somehow there. There is time, time is given, it is present-at-hand, without our being able to say how and where". All that is common – the common conception of something or its public character – does not therefore belong to anyone. In other words, we should not claim that a "common representation" or a "common meaning" exists in someone's mind. Such common meaning is not constituted as such in one's mind, but exists providing that each one, in their solitude, is being-with-one-another.

Common time seems to be given to us only in a univocal expression (such as "there is time" or "there is no time", "we have time" or "we don't have time"). Yet, as Heidegger notes, each characteristic of time reflects both what we feel in a particular way and its opposite. Hence, he speaks of a specific fact in the common understanding of time, namely losing time. "We also lose time, just as immediately as we constantly take time for ourselves. We leave time for ourselves with something, and in fact in such a way that while we do so the time is not there. As we lose time, we give it away." Perhaps in the vulgar understanding of time, we turn it into a thing, an object, which, consequently, might be had or lost. We ignore the fact that certain intentional attitudes play a role ("as we lose time, we give it away"). Likewise, we disregard the fact that time is not there, is not given and at-hand.

At this point, Heidegger discerns another aspect – in admirable fashion. It is the fact that prior to losing time we take time or reckon with time for our preoccupations. Consequently, losing time emerges as a way in which we leave time for ourselves: "But losing time is a particularly carefree leaving time for oneself, one way in which we have time in the oblivious passing of our lives. Thus, losing time is explained by a kind of indifference in how we make use of time, an indifference which is, in its turn, an everyday form of oblivion.

Yet what kind of oblivion is there in the everyday way of life? Oblivion to what? If we take into account that everyday time must be placed in relationship with an "original time" and how it shapes the overall understanding of the being, then oblivion relates precisely to this "original time". It also concerns the distinct understanding that this relationship makes possible. Indeed, the first to lose its condition of possibility is one's realisation of the meaning of being.

Heidegger assimilates, up to a certain point, "the traditional understanding of time", inspired by Aristotle, with the vulgar understanding of time. His objections refer to both conceptions. For example, in both cases, the distance between concept and something understood is considerable. This is debatable however. Furthermore, I do not know whether for common consciousness the nows are "free-floating, relationless". Why would they be seen as floating freely and without relation to each other? In this case, how could one account for the idea – typical of the common consciousness – that there is an ineluctable order of time? How could we refer to dramatic situations, such as the "burden of time" or the "terror of history"? We do know that in each cultural or ethnographic space there have been many explorations on the "popular representations of time". Should we then distinguish clearly between the popular understanding of time and the common one? Or does the common understanding involve several levels, ranging from the one described by ethnography to the one specific to a scientist or indeed to a philosopher, provided that the latter do not question certain concepts or representations? It is possible that Heidegger, like Husserl before him, focuses on the latter variant of common understanding.

4. COMMON REPRESENTATIONS AND BELIEFS (ROBIN G. COLLINGWOOD)

Robin G. Collingwood examined at length the topic of common thought and understanding. He argued that the thinking operations always occur against the background of common beliefs and representations, which he termed presuppositions. The act of thought does not involve only mere statement, however subtle it may appear at a given point. In addition to specific statement, the act of thought presupposes a question that it may provide an answer to, and the common belief by reference to which a question is usually formulated. Thus, three elements converge to describe the act of thought: the statement itself, the question that may correspond to the statement and the presuppositions of a mental space.

Examples of such presuppositions are well-known, especially as many are particularly resilient, such as those relating to existence, the self, time and space, reality and appearance. To a certain extent, they engage our deepest convictions, although they vary from one era to another and from one mental space to another. For instance, the representation of time as circular, which was the foundation for the development of natural sciences in ancient Greece. One is only rarely aware of their presence and significance. They underlie the questions of an era and how people ask those questions and what questions they are ready to answer. They include the belief in a natural order of the world or in the causal relation, interpreted differently from one era to another (Collingwood 1998: 49–55). One cannot argue that such beliefs are true or false, but rather active or inactive.

Some of them can be considered truly metaphysical, for at least two reasons. Firstly, because they refer to the nature and being of extant things. Secondly,

because they do not derive from other beliefs and consequently appear to us as 'absolute' (Collingwood 1988, chap. VII). For example, the belief in a natural order of the world can be viewed as metaphysical only when it does not derive from another belief.

I would like to focus on a rather peculiar aspect of presuppositions of a metaphysical kind. We are only rarely aware of their presence or significance. We rarely acknowledge them as "final instance" data. Considering their condition, they cannot appear to us as true or false. They are never mere propositions, because they do not constitute answers to definite questions. They often emerge as a priori data, in which case they may be considered as "absolute presuppositions", as designated by Collingwood. They are not the same with our presuppositions or subjective, reflecting what one might believe. They are not derived experience; on the contrary, they guide human experience[6]. They are accepted in advance and implicitly, sometimes, for an entire era.

Let us dwell for a while on this latter aspect. The presuppositions that we may call metaphysical have their own distinct history. They will emerge vigorously at a given moment and dominate an entire era in the life of humanity. Over time, they fade away, become eclipsed or less active. They are then substituted by others, without disappearing however. Their history seems to trace certain boundaries for the unfolding of real history. Over time they are subject to the effects of the passing of time, and their erosion means that one historical era must make way for a new one. This happened when the Greek-Roman tradition encountered the New-Testament tradition. As Collingwood states, "the pagan world died because of its own failure to keep alive its own fundamental convictions". Therefore, when metaphysical convictions fade away, a form of civilisation becomes extinct. This happens in the first instance, in the everyday life of people.

Metaphysics is therefore viewed in its two meanings. First, as an implicit mode of comprehension, specific to an entire community. This refers above all to those "absolute presuppositions" active in people's minds. Yet metaphysics also means the profound reflection on these presuppositions of the mind. Collingwood terms it simply "metaphysical analysis". He is actually aware of his personal affiliation with both forms of metaphysics. As a regular person, living in a particular community in Western Europe, he shares many beliefs and images specific to his community related variously to history, the world, time or the everyday relation with another. As a philosopher, he is driven to an analytical examination of these presuppositions, especially those which pertain to the nature of extant things, their being and the boundaries of their existence.

[6] Commenting on Collingwood's idea, Stephen Toulmin (Toulmin 1988) does not overlook what Thomas Kuhn would claim later, namely the presence of paradigms of the cognitive and research practice. He also quotes Alasdair MacIntyre, who would describe, in *Short History of Ethics*, those conceptual configurations whose changes profoundly shaped Western moral thought. Important books on the topic would then write Hans-Georg Gadamer (Gadamer 1990: part II, § 3), directly referencing Collingwood, or Patrick Suppes (Suppes 1984), who placed metaphysical presuppositions in relation with the language we speak and whose grammar code we take for granted.

As for the exploration of presuppositions, it has taken various forms, thanks in particular to epistemologists or historians of ideas (Holton 1978). Their own metaphysical analysis, as conducted by Collingwood and, later, by Strawson, Suppes, Searle and others, differs in numerous ways, as we will show below.

Similar to other philosophers, Peter F. Strawson argues that the object of metaphysics is not nature as such (the nature of real things, possible principles, kinds of objects etc.). Rather, it describes the actual structure of our thought about the world, meaning the concepts and categories on which we use in order to think and to represent our world (Strawson 1959). Is it the same for all people, every time and everywhere? Do they explain the nature of man – his rationality, for instance – in terms of its characterizing universals? Or, on the contrary, does it entail considerable distinctions from one era to another and among different communities? Strawson's notion of shared conceptual schemes is particularly important. The shared conceptual scheme is composed of concepts operated in everyday life. They interconnect to create a sort of tissue or web, which describes shared thought, and provide the basic elements for a mode of understanding the world, under variable temporal and spatial conditions. They represent the forms we use to demarcate and imagine reality itself and our own situation within it. Yet there never is a single conceptual structure active on its own. Consequently, such structures are bound to be competitive or, in certain situations, operate in alternation. Strawson focuses in particular on the conceptual scheme active at a given moment. He argues that this is the object of metaphysical reflection, more precisely of descriptive metaphysics. He interprets the presuppositions of knowledge as conceptual schemes, considering both common or everyday knowledge, and elaborate knowledge. The concepts in use are revealed as we utter them. In fact, the language we use predisposes to a distinct metaphysics (as we exhibit category-preference, favouring for instance the category of relation or of process). The privilege claimed by a category modifies the meaning of a whole range of other categories.

We may retain at least two aspects for the purposes of our discussion of everyday life. First, the fact that the metaphysician has turned his attention ever more directly to the shared mode of thought. In this respect, what matters is not only the theoretical mode of thought but indeed the everyday or ordinary one. Also, each way of speaking – including the everyday one – activates certain metaphysical inclinations. Language – including everyday language – directs us to certain images of a metaphysical nature. It enables a vivid configuration of presupposition and thereby a metaphysics that we may call of common use. It is commonly and tacitly used. Commonly used, as the beliefs and concepts which express it sustain the concerns or expectations of an entire community. Tacitly used, because it is not articulated as such logically or formally. In their daily life, people do not necessarily seek to explain conceptually such beliefs or images. On the contrary, people effortlessly use them as references, rely on them for their statements or activities, because they take them for granted.

5. IMPLICIT AND SYMBOLICAL METAPHYSICS (MIRCEA ELIADE)

Let us recall what Mircea Eliade states in the last pages of Images and Symbols (especially in the section Remarks upon Method). He focuses on a condition in which one may recognise the "metaphysical attitude" of people in traditional societies. He remarks, firstly, that certain modern scholars such as Edward Burnett Tylor or James George Frazer, considered that the spiritual life in exotic lands was dominated by superstitions ("the product of ancestral fears or of 'primitive' stupidity", as he concludes). They referred in particular to their religious life, difficult to separate from their aesthetic or technological experience. Eliade explains this view by the fact that these scholars were educated in an era that imposes a positivist perspective on human acts. Their statements about certain ancient beliefs ignore both the practical meaning of such beliefs and their elevated, symbolic character.

In light of these perspectives, Eliade observes that archaic humanity reveals an "existential consciousness" concerning the Cosmos and, equally, oneself. Moreover, it sheds light on a distinct metaphysical attitude. "Where a Frazer could see nothing but 'superstition', a metaphysic was already implicit, though it was expressed by a pattern of symbols rather than by the interplay of concepts: a metaphysic – that is, a whole and coherent conception of Reality, not a series of instinctive gestures ruled by the same fundamental 'reaction of the human animal in the confrontation with Nature'" (Eliade 1952: 187). Such metaphysics deals with the elementary distinction between appearance and reality (in fact between what "appears to be real" and the "true reality"). Such a distinction relies on the belief that "true reality" of the world does not emerge in the first stage of experience. It is not linked to the immediate state of things, rather it is archetypal in relation with them. Such consciousness seems to indicate, according to Eliade, certain metaphysics, that is a vision of what may be considered real in the life-world. This vision is however implicit, not explicit. It is expressed mainly by symbolic images and representations, not by highly elaborate concepts. The world it describes appears as an open and interconnected world ("everything is held together by a compact system of correspondences and likenesses"). The symbolic images at play are proof of the awareness of "limit-situations" and of the situation of man in an open world. Similar ideas were developed by Carl-Gustav Jung and Ernst Cassirer, and later on by Gilbert Durand, Jean-Jacques Wunenburger and others.

Eliade's idea is important, as it highlights that there is always a metaphysics at play, even in the quoted case of an implicit metaphysics, expressed mainly by symbolic images or representations. Eliade's claim does not refer directly to the common behaviour of man. More precisely, it does not refer to everyday behaviour as being merely ordinary, without discontinuities and singular moments. As we know, it concerns a series of symbolic representations related to the mythical and religious behaviour or to the practice of magic. Such behaviours dislocate and –

eventually – suspend the ordinary sequence of time and open up paths to other possible interpretations. Yet these behaviours too are a part of everyday life, making up its uncommon or out of the ordinary side.

In his dialogues with Claude-Henri Rocquet, Mircea Eliade enumerates such situations where ordinary life conceals something out of the ordinary (1977: XI, § 1–2). For example, the occurrence of an event which, although it might not announce anything initially, suspends unexpectedly the ordinary succession of time and makes way for a different temporal flow. The simple deviation from a known route, encountering a stranger, the vivid and persistent memory of a dream, such occurrences can affect the rhythm and quality of experienced time. In other situations, however, the obsessive yearning for change may interfere. Or perhaps the desire to surpass the human limits, which are experienced profoundly every day. This involves the motif of the double (for example, "the attempt to love two women at the same time, with equal sincerity"), the desire to transgress certain social rules (such as the one imposing monogamy) or the need to change the mental state (as in the case of use of narcotics). This also refers to the daily yearning to gain access to a different reality, such as the virtual one – by reading science fiction stories, watching films or art performances or the free interplay of images. In such situations, everyday life unfolds on two separate levels. It involves a double mode (the waking and oneiric states, according to Eliade), so that the empirically verified reality makes way easily for utopias and phantasms as well as for myths and certain forms viewed as ideal.

Consequently, we ought to speak of a double or equivocal structure of everyday life. How could we then properly understand this?

In temporal terms, it consists of distinct flows, which sometimes appear dissimilar to one another. They differ not only in terms of rhythm, but they may also be found at different levels, such as the pragmatic and oneiric, as we have noted above. Each of them possesses a distinct and irreducible quality. Nevertheless, they tend to intersect unpredictably, which may lead to some odd or shocking or at times violent events. This may concern a double underlying tendency of mental life. To borrow Eliade's own terms, it appears as both diurnal and nocturnal. In the nocturnal mode of mind, it may be under the influence of ancient images or archetypes (an issue explored comprehensively by Carl-Gustav Jung). Everyday life is also known to be prone to unpredictable, hardly detectable transformations, in the form of happenings. An act becomes possible by always allowing for freer, looser relationships.

The researcher invoked above invites us to recall Van Gogh's famous canvas Vincent's Chair with his pipe. The chair painted there is plain and empty. The pipe itself, rather randomly positioned on the chair, accentuates the fact that the chair is empty. An ordinary chair in a nondescript place, nothing more. Its reality and that of the space it occupies are rather ordinary, almost banal. The few elements that constitute such a reality belong to a certain extent to the painter's simple and

ordinary world: a door on one side, odd items in a chest, a pipe left on a chair and a plain wall. Yet even in this ordinary space, there is something that gives pause. It is that empty, solitary chair itself. Should you dwell too much on it, your mind will be taken elsewhere to something absent or concealed. This absence is ultimately the single genuinely significant aspect in this painting. It is a dense, persistent absence that grabs hold of your gaze and focuses it where you cannot actually see anything. However, you can sense something there, either the shadow of someone who left somewhere, either another, foreign gaze, of the painter himself, looking forlorn and wistful at the place of his absence. Yet it is not only this dense and persistent absence that troubles the gaze, but also the overwhelming loneliness of that space. It does not derive from the fact that Vincent's chair sits alone there, just as the other few surrounding items, *i.e.* a pipe, a wall. A single thing, even when you expect to find many more, does not generate by this fact alone the sense of loneliness. Such a feeling originates elsewhere, namely in the odd perspective on the items, which apparently lack any obvious relationship, as though any of them could be absent or be present in another place. It is a sort of total, absolute contingency, which causes things to be so foreign to one another that you are immediately stricken by the loneliness of the one who saw them through this perspective. Someone who is truly alone cannot find his own place. More precisely, there is no place for him in the world which he can nevertheless see in a certain manner. The lack of a place makes everything appear as an accident or void, his loneliness viewing things only in these terms. The empty chair in the painting expresses therefore the total loneliness of the gaze. All of these things can be said of a space that, at first glance, might seem completely ordinary.

Consequently, Eliade is right to repeat an idea that he obsesses about: "It is certain that this bleak reality [in Van Gogh's painting], this daily life camouflages something else. This is my profound conviction". To him, such a view entails multiple consequences. One such consequence concerns the need to grasp the double or complicated structure of everyday life. Another one refers to the way in which we represent our own life and seek to express ourselves, whether it is a simple account, or certain literary or research works. All novels can create a feeling of a certain camouflage of the uncanny in the life of the ordinary. This is not dependent on a certain type of writing – such as fantasy stories – or on a particular style. It does not depend on a particular form of creativity, such as literature. Rather it concerns any of our life spaces and any form of creation, from those viewed as minor to the truly elevated ones.

One of Eliade's confessions is remarkable in this respect: "In all my stories, the narrative unfolds across several planes, in order to reveal progressively the 'fantasy' hidden in everyday banality. Just as a new axiom reveals a certain design of reality, unknown until then – in other words, it establishes a new world – fantasy literature discloses – or rather creates – parallel universes. This is not about escapism, as philosophers of history would claim, but about creativeness – on all

levels and in all meanings of the term – as the hallmark of human condition." Indeed, our image about everyday life could change considerably if closer attention were paid to its emergence and to what is particular to man.

6. "THE METAPHYSICAL BURDEN OF SOCIAL REALITY" (JOHN R. SEARLE)

John R. Searle opened one of his later works, The Construction of Social Reality, with the rather startling subtitle "Metaphysical Burden of Social Reality". He explained it in the opening lines of the book, by describing a problem that had puzzled him for a long time: "there are portions of the real world; objective facts in the world; that are only facts by human agreement. In a sense there are things that exist only because we believe them to exist. I am thinking of things like money, property, governments, and marriages" (Searle 1995: chap. 1). Therefore, certain things, though they "exist because we believe them to exist", are nevertheless real. Although they are dependent on our mental or subjective life, they do possess a dense, resilient objectivity.

To use the author's example, this happens when you go to a café, sit in a chair at a table, call the waiter and order a coffee. The waiter brings what you ordered, you drink it, leave some money on the table and leave. "An innocent scene, but its metaphysical complexity is truly staggering, and its complexity would have taken Kant's breath away if he had ever bothered to think about such things." Why would such a scene leave Kant flabbergasted? Not necessarily because the German philosopher would have avoided entering a café, having a beer or a coffee and gazing outside the café window. But for another reason: if one attempted to describe what happens in this scene, one would not be able to capture the features of the description in the language of physics or mathematics. That is because the facts presented above become real on account of human beliefs and language. Considering the case of the person who goes to the café, he is served exactly what he ordered, finds that the price is exactly the price quoted on the menu and that he is left alone for some time. There is here, as Searle notes, "a vast, invisible ontology", which underlies everything that may happen to all of us, on an ordinary day.

Appropriately, Searle invites the reader to embark on a metaphysical analysis of these ordinary events, which originate in the conventions we observe and our manner of speaking.

He brings into play the notion of background, as "the set of non-intentional or pre-intentional capacities that allow mental states to function". He describes in great detail the functioning of the background, which enables linguistic and perceptive interpretations, gives an air of familiarity to conscious experiences and even a narrative or dramatic form. He also discusses the notion of background presupposition, arguing that there exists a realism external to the subjective life

(1995, chap. 6–8). It becomes particularly important in everyday life, because it is a condition for the intelligibility of any discourse. Absent such presuppositions, many statements would be unintelligible, and we would fail to follow a particular line of thought. It is, as Searle argues, a necessary presupposition for a large chunk of thought and language. It is not an empirical thesis, but rather it is construed as a necessary condition of intelligibility for certain types of theories. We can develop many theories of the existence of objects in space or of space itself, yet none of them will eliminate this condition of intelligibility ("were it proven that our notions of 'objects' and 'space' must be radically revised, as they have been since the development of the atomic theory or the relativity theory, external realism would not be affected"). This condition presupposed that there "is a way things are independent of how we, as observers, represent them". The idea does not "establish what things are like" or determine their existence one way or another. In other words, it does not concern such issues whose solutions are unfathomable or infinitely variable. Yet it achieves something of great importance, "it articulates a space of possibilities". The meaning of any statement (for instance, "there is some money in my wallet") becomes possible only on account of "the presupposition of the existence of money". In other words, the meaning of the statement "is articulated against a background of possibilities which includes the possibility of having money". The idea of the reality of external things articulates "a space of possibilities for a very large number of statements". It is connected with a background of presuppositions, each with a rather formal character, as horizons of possibilities.

I would like to recall that Ludwig Wittgenstein, John L. Austin, Patrick Strawson, Nelson Goodman and others are often quoted for their research on everyday language. As in the case of Collingwood's thesis, metaphysics, in this case, engages two levels in our lives. On the one hand, it refers to certain human conventions and some capacities which are manifest in such experiences that constitute social acts. In other words, they are indicative of the invisible web of social reality (the "vast, invisible ontology" as Searle terms it). On the other hand, it denotes the conceptual analysis one conducts with reference to the construction of social reality. The whole debate about non-intentional capacities, for instance, or the background of presuppositions and its functioning revolves around the metaphysical analysis of social reality.

7. SEVERAL CONCLUSIONS

I believe that the situations described above indicate that there is, indeed, a metaphysics specific to everyday life. It appears as present constantly and before everything else (zunächst und zumeist, as Martin Heidegger say). Ultimately, every human experience – in relationship with others, the effort to acquire knowledge or

things, in private life, in creative work and in religious life – underlies such metaphysics. Regardless of one's pursuits or level of education of the mind, it is present at least in an implicit manner.

Such metaphysics is not one and the same for all of us and at the same time. In the discussion so far I have recurrently used the singular form of a phrase, i.e. "an everyday metaphysics". Yet this is due to the need for simplicity in expression. Because such metaphysics is related to the mental life of people or communities (Robin G. Collingwood), it is always plural. We might say, therefore, that there are as many everyday metaphysics at work as the distinct mental spaces we can recognise. They may coexist in a single mental space or can be in competition, sometimes clashing openly. This should not come as a surprise. On the contrary, their vibrant co-presence helps explain certain typical phenomena in everyday life: fragmented forms of consciousness, deeply equivocal behaviours, duplications in relations with the others, impersonal modes of life, and attitudes of total indecision or indifference.

We might call it, in certain cases, usual metaphysics, for at least two reasons: 1) it is a set of representations and meanings already active, that is, in use; 2) such representations or images become familiar and spent semantically, at least in certain situations.

As far as I can observe, the presence of this everyday metaphysics is acknowledged most often indirectly. There are references to implicit metaphysics, such as it is assumed on account of particular modes of thought (Robin G. Collingwood), or symbolic practices (Mircea Eliade). A latent or underlying metaphysics has also been invoked (Williard Van Orman Quine), especially with reference to statements of existence and modality (related to the possible, necessary or contingent character of certain relations). This is practically unavoidable in the case of de re formulations, especially descriptive ones, about the states of things or events. It also concerns the deontic or moral modalities, as they are matched by ontological assumptions.

Taking into account the way of thinking of some of those who reflect on the issue of metaphysics, Jacques Derrida argues that in their case there is a concealed, camouflaged metaphysics, of which they are most often unaware; or even a residual metaphysics because, while they provide arguments against old ideas ('principle', "reality taken for granted", etc.), they allow unwittingly similar representations in their own discourse. Richard Rorty often makes references to the presence of an underlying metaphysics, recognisable by in-depth language analysis. Beliefs commonly in use and the common way of speaking constantly actualise a common metaphysics (John R. Searle). Highly relevant in this respect are the shared beliefs against which the reality of everyday and social order is articulated. Moreover, such situations do not engage only the one who relies on common language, but also the speaker who may possess a certain theoretical training.

Ultimately, this type of metaphysics can be viewed as trivial, as Vincent Descombes terms it, commenting on Quine (Descombes 2000: 13). This

designation plays on the ancient meaning of the word (the Latin trivium used to define the place where three roads meet, an easily accessible crossroad, where a weekly fair would be held). In other words, such metaphysics is specific to the life of a fair or market – precisely why it applies to everyday life. It becomes clear now that it is articulated, to a certain extent, through the regular and negotiated use of certain images or ideas.

As we can notice, ordinary or common metaphysics has been discussed frequently. It is viewed either as latent, or hidden, camouflaged. In certain respects, it involves residual elements. To the extent that it is common, it will sometimes be called vulgar or even trivial, as has been shown above. Through each of these terms will come to light its everyday character, the fact that it is active in people's everyday lives.

We know that in the past there were also discussions about metaphysica naturalis, considered to be real in that there is an inevitable inclination of the human mind to formulate certain ideas or questions which go beyond any sensorial experience (for example, ideas of the possibility of free action, of the nature of the human soul or of the existence of God). Such metaphysics must be re-assessed in critical terms, as Kant argued, for instance. We could accept, in the case of everyday life, the prevalence of "natural attitude", yet what the phrase expresses should not be viewed as something deficient. Its 'natural' condition does not exclude it from the scope of reflection proper, however simple it may appear to us at a given moment. It should not however be confused with "popular metaphysics", unsystematic, which modern authors often quote, for instance Hegel, in his lectures on the history of philosophy.

Metaphysics, therefore, may be encountered in an everyday form, as a tacit or underlying metaphysics of our understanding in our day-to-day life. I would note that precisely this usual or everyday hypostasis of metaphysics has been increasingly under scrutiny, especially since Nietzsche. Consequently, like our everyday life or, considering its sources, the life of our collective unconscious, it calls for ever more extensive and varied interpretations. I would place the interest in such metaphysics in an analogous situation with the focus on common, natural language or with the research on the mental life of communities. We know that this interest has grown enormously over the past century, especially after the Second World War, which profoundly changed our everyday and cultural history.

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