

On Communicative Being in Postmodern Times

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Abstract The urgency of the anthropological question of communication stimulates the attempt to pose again the metaphysical issue and to repeat the endeavor to “save the phenomena”, now that the philosophy of being of tradition seems to be at its last stage and unable to convey the transition toward the broadening of the horizon of meaning, which the new unknown mental, affective and practical experiences of Postmodernity, and even the new entities and procedures of the technological artificial-being urge. From the phenomenology of life of Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka significant steps have been already achieved toward the realization of a graft of a new subjectivizing metaphysics on the old objectivizing metaphysics.

Keywords Being • Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka • Communication • Postmodernity • Habermas

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The question on the communicative virtues of being's conception, that the ancient and modern traditions left us, arises spontaneously as we realize that the anthropological question on communication is intrinsic to the current condition of thought, defined by J. Habermas as post-metaphysical (Habermas 1998). In fact, since the traditional horizon of being – both in ancient substance metaphysics and in modern subject metaphysics – has been considered as a mere datum of fixed habits, a dead inheritance, stiffened and not related to the present life, it became even more unable to receive and give a sense to the new forms of experience arising in the contemporary age, consequently even communication among men, nations, generations, disciplinary sectors, and life habits, became even more disturbed and jammed (Tymieniecka 2009, p. xxv).

It is becoming increasingly necessary to restore, at the basis of every movement of our humanity impoverished by the objectifying technological rationalism, the awareness and the attention for the mysterious but also effective inter-subjective “mutual understanding” (*Verständigung*), the Habermas one, which has an almost-transcendental-performative value, and which by now has showed itself as prior and preliminary to each accomplishment of communicative intentionality (Habermas 1990, pp. 82–98). Actually it designates the proto-being of man, his constitutive being-in-communication-of-sense with his fellow creatures, which brought to every phylogenetic advancement of homination (Tomasello 2000, p. 4) and which is strongly linked to the progress of human civilization for present society of communication too.

But is the being ($=\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\nu\alpha\iota$) (Parmenides of Elea 1985, Fr. 6) – such ultra-linguistic and ultra-symbolic formation, through which the theoretical integral horizon of wholeness was defined for the first time by Parmenides from Elea, and in which every phenomenon can find its place, and therefore can be preserved from dispersion – is the being of Parmenides able, in the multiple variations that the pluri-millennial philosophical tradition presents, from Parmenides' full sphere to Heraclitus' fire/becoming, from the supreme substance to the perfect being, to the unconditioned being, finally such a being that the tradition brought to us, is it able to convey the transition which is currently requested, the transition of the communicative being?

The question has a sense if we realize that both ontology or *metaphysica generalis* as the knowledge of being as such and *metaphysicae speciales* as the knowledge of things beyond the physical dimension, (Suarez 1998) have established and developed until now, taking for granted that the anthropological experience of being was pervasive and persistent, and therefore it was possible to structure on its basis the theoretical reckoning, supported by the saying of Parmenides: “For it is the same thing that can be thought and that can be” (Parmenides of Elea 1985, Fr. 3).

On the contrary, today the ontological dis-communicability affects the immediate experience (Baumann 2005), which not only has become extremely fragmentary and rambling, also causing mental pathologies which were less common in the past, but moreover it is even more unmindful and inattentive toward the communicating being, although every experience still develops on this basis. For this new disconnection of consciousness from the horizon of meaning, the ontological theorization appears as an application to a phenomenon, that is being, which became

antiquated and obsolete; in addition, there is no awareness that in the issue of the communicating being, not only the survival of philosophy comes into play, but also the possibility for the human being to control his productions and to use them to increase his being and the being of all the world.

But post-metaphysical concern cannot be satisfied by any positivistic attitude toward the abandonment of metaphysics, nor by the intention to consider it as an outdated stage of knowledge which has been supplanted by the positive scientific one (Tymieniecka 2009, p. xxiv). On the contrary, the metaphysical question is emerging again, and it is needed urgently to resume its endeavor to “save the phenomena”, now that the traditional philosophy of being – of the Ancient, Christian, Modern, Enlightenment, and Romantic tradition – seems to be at its last stage, and unable to convey the transition toward the extension of the horizon of meaning, which is solicited by the new mental, affective, and practical experiences of the post-modern age, and by the new entities and procedures of the artificial technological being. Nevertheless, we must operate to avoid the risk to lose the new emerging germination of transcendence: while we complain about the end of metaphysics and get exhausted for giving an appearance of vitality to its simulacra, we run the risk of depriving the new theoretical germination of the cures it requires to become stronger and to provide us with the new communicative horizon of meaning which we are looking for.

In this context, we follow the way of the anthropological-philosophical reflection (M. Horkheimer, J. Habermas, M. Scheler), but also the cultural and anthropological-evolutionistic reflection (L. Bolk, A. Portmann, M. Tomasello), which pointed out that it is the specie-specific quality of man that of knowing/having to institute the mediation through his own common horizon of being for everything that occurs at the stage of impulse-reaction dynamics, with which both plants and animals respond, adequately and typically, to the environment’s stimulations, (Scheler 1960, p. 228). According to Nietzsche, already our primitive ancestors referred to this anthropological property, when they named themselves with the word “man”, which means “the measurer” (Nietzsche 1997, § 21).

After all, it is precisely in a communicative perspective that, during the age of crisis and the present post-modern age, the new philosophical instance is defined: it is critical in an eminently constructive sense, since it does not intend to wish the decline of traditional metaphysics and ontology. The interest of the current love-for-knowledge is instead to achieve the re-opening of the traditional, objectifying ontological systematization in order to promote its integration with a metaphysics of the act or a meta-anthropological metaphysics (Scheler 1975). The latter is the conveyor of the subjectivation factors, according to which being is not only contemplated, but also its unexpressed potentialities are highlighted and conducted to realization: by the specific condition of being-of-transcendence peculiar to the human subjectivity, which develops according to the *logos* that holds everything together – “in logos omnia” – an ontological communication and an inter-personal and cosmic synergy can be established for “a new Enlightenment” (Tymieniecka 2009, pp. xxiv–xxvi).

From the phenomenology of life of Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka significant steps have been achieved already toward the realization of a graft of a new living/subjectivizing metaphysics on the old objectivizing metaphysics. This effect is achieved by the

innovative vision about the being and the man, introduced during the last forties by the phenomenology of life, which Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka elaborated after the results obtained by the “intuitive resowing” (Verducci 2010, p. 33) of the experience which the classical phenomenologists started from. Focusing her attention on the breaking point of intentionality and re-contextualizing the universe of human existence within the unity-of-everything-there-is-alive, Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka discovered that the acts of the living human individual express a specific type of constructivism, which is not merely comparable to a process-according-to-nature (Tymieniecka 1988, p. 4). In order to direct his virtualities toward a positive realization, in fact, the human individual, unlike the other living beings, needs both to find the reasons of his beingness and to avail himself of the principle of being, through which he can confer on his creations, that indispensable feature of humanly appropriate “objective” form, which makes them graspable and usable.

Of crucial importance at this point is that being so spontaneously put into play, does not limit itself to maintain the significance of “indispensable essential factor of all beingness”, in the sense of classical metaphysics, inasmuch as it “concerns beingness in its finished, formed, established or stabilized state”. Rather, in the measure in which it appears in the acts of the human living being, being manifests itself as “the intrinsic factor of the constructive process of individual becoming”. This means that, since “becoming is a process in its own advance, in qualification”, and since “the individual remains always in the process of becoming”, that is, he is continually proceeding toward what is not yet, being, engaged in the creative acts from which becoming proceeds, acts as the intrinsic stabilizing forerunner of the acquisition and transformation of form, that characterizes the natural evolution of individual life (Tymieniecka 1998, pp. 4–5).

Therefore, when life attains the level of the human creative condition, it no longer stops in reproducing itself, but in the acts of the living man it always interprets itself in existence, giving rise to forms of life that are not only new and previously unimaginable, but also congruent and adequate to the becoming being of life, of which only man possesses the cipher (Tymieniecka 2004, pp. xiii–xxx). Now the human being is not only who is able—at a specific ontogenetic stage—to operate as a meaning-bestowing-agent and producer of his-world-of-life, as Husserl proposed. On the contrary, man “creates according to being” (=ontopoiesis) (Kronegger and Tymieniecka 1996, p. 15) from the initial stage of his existence: he is born as an original ontological factor, since “his very life in itself is the effect of his self-individualization in existence through inventive self-interpretation of his most intimate moves of life” (Tymieniecka 1998, pp. 3–5). In the creative human acts, more than in the “cognitive processes of the human mind”, there is a manifestation of the “inward givenness of the life progress common to all living beings as such”, and it emerges also the logics at its basis: an expansive and evolutionary logics, of self-individualization of life, which reproduces in an autopoietic way in the pre-human constructivism, while it creatively-produces-being in the ontopoiesis at its human level.

Now that phenomenology asserted itself as a “universal praxeology of knowledge” (Cecilia 2002, p. 694a), the ontological frame turns out to be deeply reanimated and

the *Erlebnis* can become again a resource of the prime philosophy: again the being manifests itself as a unitary logos, more precisely, the being now appears such as a unique logoic force that from the inside of all the entities acts, animates and continuously enriches of connections the Parmenidean sphere and the Hegelian absolute Spirit. Since the self-individualizing onto-poietic logos is able to produce a communicational net among the phenomena, from the inorganic level of being to the organic and human one, it also weaves a “meta-onto-poietic” net made of innumerable metamorphical stages of transcendence, according to the perspective of *philosophia perennis*. This was already outlined by G. W. Leibniz: in order to rationally understand the truth of the prepositions-of-fact, he introduced the principle of sufficient reason, which, while establishing a foundational dynamic tending toward the infinite, made it possible to construct a solid ladder of truth in order to always better rise to the fullness of the logos.

Translated by Serena Rossi

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