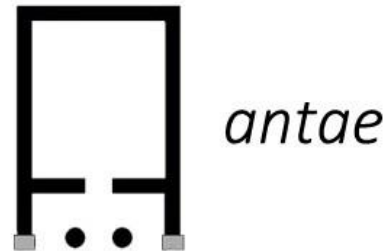


Cosmological Creativity: an Aesthetic World Perspective

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Cosmological Creativity: an Aesthetic World Perspective

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Introduction: symbolic Hermeneutics beyond philosophical dualism

Contemporary philosophical debate is often disrupted by a rigid and fruitless opposition between analytic philosophy, in which the empiricist and positivist tradition converge, and postmodern philosophy, characterised by a prevalent *pars destruens*, in which genealogical analysis and critical perspectives summarise the history of Western philosophy and annihilate its main truthful contents. The first paradigm, destined to fall into naturalism—as Edmund Husserl denounced in his studies—forgets the perspective of critique and the need for a deep questioning of the philosophical requirements of knowledge (the “gnoseological” path).¹ This theoretical paradigm is opposed to the second one, one linked to a relativistic and subjectivist view and which denies the objective pole of reality and the notion of truth itself, inevitably falling back into a solipsism that precludes any genuine and significant philosophical speculation (at least in the paradigmatic perspective that I shall be developing in this essay).

Because of this unsatisfying opposition, I would like to investigate an alternative to these currently dominant paradigms, a counter-philosophical perspective that is at the same time intrinsic to Western speculation, albeit sometimes completely forgotten in the mainstream debate. I am here referring to the mythical-symbolic Hermeneutics, which links the pre-philosophical interpretation of the world through symbolical structures through to 20th century Hermeneutics that still interprets reality as a rich book of letters, images, and symbols. This position has repeatedly emerged in our cultural history through different specific historical experiences; it is a mythical-symbolic thought based on an analogical interpretation of the world, the structure of which is considered as a stratification of truth levels that are complementary ontological degrees of reality. This tradition, in fact, sees reality as a specific kind of totality (*Ganzheit*) that allows human perception to gnoseologically take place through the structures of myth and symbols. These structures are considered at the same time as specific stratifications of reality (ontologically) and as gnoseological shapes of the matrix that allows us to perceive and organise the world of phenomena.

The research of the Italian philosopher Giampiero Moretti is fundamental in order to understand the theoretical approach hereby assumed, and this by recognising his modern genesis into the so called “Romanticism of Heidelberg” (the Romantic paradigm developed by the likes of Görres, Creuzer, the Grimm brothers, and Bachofen).²

Although it is a minor philosophical tendency, and not a more widespread paradigm, I can refer to many authors that recognised the authentic meaning of the notion of “image”, reconnecting themselves to this long and authoritative *fil rouge*: it is the cultural paradigm rooted in the mythical-

¹ See Edmund Husserl, *Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy: Philosophy as Rigorous Science and Philosophy and the Crisis of European Man*, trans. by Quentin Lauer (New York: Harper Collins, 1965).

² See Giampiero Moretti, *Heidelberg romantica. Romanticismo tedesco e nichilismo europeo* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2013).

symbolic tradition that, starting from the religious and esoteric pre-philosophical meditations, crosses the various Neoplatonisms, passes through medieval mysticism and alchemy, reappears in Heidelberg Romanticism, and is revealed in the 20th century by the reflections of the “thinkers of Tradition” (represented, among others, by René Guénon, Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, Attilio Mordini, Elémire Zolla, Henry Corbin and Frithjof Schuon), as well as many other independent researchers and scholars, such as Martin Heidegger, Ernst Jünger, and Mircea Eliade above all.³ This analogical and mythical-symbolic Hermeneutics allows for a positive rethinking of the nature of images, creativity—and therefore the entire cosmological dimension. In fact, the intrinsic role of mediation (gnoseological and ontological) played by images establishes a worldview in which what is at issue is not only the subjective side of reality (the *res cogitans*, men), but also the objective pole (the *res extensa*, the world); a new perspective on images and creativity defines a new and global perspective on the relations that occur within the entire world (the Greek *kosmos*).

Applying this theoretical and cultural premise to the field of Aesthetics, the topic of creativity can be considered an emblematic case. Creativity is in fact a productive act through which subject and object, external and internal, active and passive are strictly put in relation. Philosophically considered, every act of creation is a generative process that should be analysed within the relation between the two main poles of creativity itself: the creator and the created. The perspective through which the aesthetic analysis of the concept of creativity is conducted always reveals the intellectual *Weltanschauung* (the philosophical “worldview”) and it is therefore a useful litmus test in order to deeply and properly understand each philosophical position.

I will thus compare two different main paradigms on the topic of “creativity” in order to show, on one hand, the relevance of this concept in the field of Aesthetics, and on the other the enlightening function of this notion as a theoretical guide into divergent philosophical schools. In particular, I will make a comparison between a well-known aesthetic tradition, that has at its core the figure of Genius (and thus a strong subjectivist perspective) to another one, linked to the mythical-symbolic Hermeneutics I have just described in this introductory section, and which I shall hereon define as “cosmological creativity”.

The *via media* of Neoplatonism

As an original example of the mythical-symbolic Hermeneutics I refer to, one may think of the Neoplatonic paradigm. The short space of this essay does not allow for an analysis of the deep differences that can be philologically recognised between the authors that belong to this broad school of thought. In the frail relation between philological analysis and theoretical (hermeneutical) synthesis, our focus will be pushed on the latter perspective, in order to offer a brief but clear image of what the two main paradigms I am trying to describe mean in the context of philosophical debate. Thus, our theoretical attempt can be considered under the methodology of Hermeneutics, thanks to the attention devoted to the interpretative circles always acting in the cultural proceeding,

³ This expression—“thinkers of Tradition”—is used to connote the authors linked to the Traditional school (also referred as *Sophia Perennis*) that elaborated a particularly fruitful philosophical speculation and has been developed by Giovanni Sessa in his book *Itinerari nel pensiero di Tradizione. L'Origine o il sempre possibile* (Chieti: Solfanelli, 2015).

and into the context of the History of Ideas, due to our focus on theoretical “families” (rather than on a single specific issue).⁴

Neoplatonism can thus be recognised outside a specific author or period as a clear and coherent direction into the history of Western philosophy. Within the field of Aesthetics, Neoplatonism can be understood as one of the most important matrices of the mythical-symbolic Hermeneutics that I have defined in the introduction: a *via media* between both the radical subjectivist views and the pure objectivist positions.

Douglas Hedley has studied this current on broader terms, with an interesting aesthetic and metaphysical perspective, underlying the opportunity of understanding Neoplatonism as a philosophy of imagination that goes across more than two thousand of years of philosophical tradition. Hedley in particular analyses the hidden Neoplatonic tradition within English Romanticism, recognising a fascinating *file rouge* that has been enlivening an important component of European culture. Within this philosophical paradigm Hedley associates Plato, Plotinus, Nicholas of Cusa, Shakespeare, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Jung, Corbin,⁵ and Tolkien as expressions of the same Neoplatonic and Romantic fascination. Under this legacy, the ‘apocalyptic dimension of Christianity and the mythical/eschatological aspect of the Platonic tradition’ are reunited.⁶

According to all the authors already noted, in fact, imagination is a special force of mediation that can grasp the authentic relation between subject and object, matter and spirit, immanent world and transcendent dimension. ‘Traditionally, the Platonic leaven in much Christian theology has produced a repeated oscillation between radical apophaticism and ultra-rationalism, between Pseudo-Denys and Anselm, Bonaventure and Leibniz, de Maistre and Hegel’.⁷ However, this contradiction can be seen as a fruitful *complexio oppositorum*: it is the philosophical dynamic dimension that connects an awareness of the impossibility of a complete comprehension of reality and nature but, at the same time, the search for functional paradigms, analogies, and conceptual structures in order to describe and structure reality by organising its image in hierarchical and multipolar ways. The Neoplatonism I refer to is an attempt to positively enrich this contradiction in a creative overcoming of all the dualistic perspectives, and which explicitly ‘avoids this uncomfortable pair of alternatives. With its basis in the experiential apprehension of the divine presence in the world, it envisages the world as a sacrament of the transcendent Godhead, and history as the mysterious theatre of divine action’.⁸

The concept of creativity, as considered in this essay, appears in this analogical and symbolical Neoplatonism as the power of imagination. It is an archetypal dimension that allows human subjects to conjoin their historical and sensitive experiences to metaphysical and divine principles. Aesthetic creativity can be understood, under this perspective, as a force that discovers forms through the

⁴ With the phrase “History of Ideas”, I refer especially to the approach developed by Arthur Lovejoy in his 1936 masterpiece, *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History on an Idea* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2010).

⁵ As Corbin writes: ‘The *imago* is the form in which both the *one* and the *other* integrally manifest themselves. This privileged imaginal form can also be called *tautegorical*’. Henry Corbin, ‘The Imago Templi in Confrontation with Secular Norms’, in *Temple and Contemplation* (London: KPI, 1986), pp. 263-390 (p. 308).

⁶ Douglas Hedley, *Living Forms of the Imagination* (New York: T&T Clark International, 2008), p. 277.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

subtraction of the veils of reality and the recognition of the cosmic archetypes in the shapes of nature and history. Here, again, intervenes the complex Platonic dynamic. In fact:

one of the major tenets of Platonism is the conviction that there is a surplus of ultimate meaning that transcends any attempt to express it: the Good is “beyond being”. There is an *experiential* if not definitional knowledge. This is a genuinely Platonic component. Notwithstanding Plato’s insistence upon the importance of close reasoning and argument, all reasoning presupposes those truths which the soul intuitively grasps immediately.⁹

The concept of *mimesis* itself, which interpreters of Plato usually consider as his main theoretical instrument to criticise art as a pure ‘copy of copy’ (*mimesis mimeseos*), has been evaluated in the Platonic and Neoplatonic tradition in a more complex way.¹⁰ The “bridging” nature of images is underlined and translated into the structure of “idea” itself, a bond between the metaphysical unity and the world of phenomena, a tie that is made possible thanks to the notion of *methexis* (participation, communication) and *parousia* (presence), through which Plato tried to overcome in the last dialogues his original radical dualism (as, for example, in *The Parmenides*).¹¹ The images of reality, in order to exist, must be not just forms of *mimesis*, but they have also to stay in communication with the ideas, a sort of sensible presence of these suprasensible ideas. Through this perspective, ‘images can point to an unseen reality as icons of an eternal and immutable world: not as sterile abstractions but as living forms of the imagination which furnish a chariot for the soul to ascend to God’.¹²

This approach, based on a metaphysical mediation that saves the relation between immanence and transcendence through the power of imagination (the Romantic *Einbildungskraft*), and which is more open to the domain of symbols, has been deepened and spread via Neoplatonic thought. In this view, the cosmic dimension is just an archetypal mirror of phenomenal reality and vice versa. ‘The material universe’, as Coleridge explains, ‘is but one vast complex MYTHOS (i.e. symbolical representation): and mythology the apex and complement of all genuine physiology’.¹³

Neoplatonism thus establishes an aesthetic path into the golden chain of life. Its imaginative, poetical, and symbolical approach is a consistent defence against all the subjectivist, relativist, and willing paradigms that in the contemporary age are gradually acquiring more relevance in theoretical debates. As such, ‘imagination is the basis of the distinctive amphibious capacity of human beings to be both part of a natural environment and to transcend the same environment’.¹⁴

⁹ Hedley, p. 15.

¹⁰ See Plato, *The Republic*, trans. by B. Jowett (Minneapolis: First Avenue, 2015), especially Book 10, pp. 353-90. On the role of Plato in the History of Aesthetics as ‘first *hostis imaginis*’, see also Luca Siniscalco, ‘All images are political’, in *Politics and Image*, ed. by Constantino Pereira Martins and Pedro T. Magalhães (Coimbra: Coimbra University Press, 2019), pp. 47-62.

¹¹ See Plato, *The Parmenides and Plato’s Late Philosophy*, ed. by R. Turnbull (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998).

¹² Hedley, p. 278.

¹³ S.T. Coleridge, *The Friend*, vol. I (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 524.

¹⁴ Hedley, p. 37.

Genius: subjective *creatio ex nihilo*

If the Neoplatonic tradition can be considered a clear example of the symbolic Hermeneutics described in the introduction, the subjectivist modern perspective can be clearly expressed through the modern aesthetic paradigms in which creativity as the attribute of Genius is at the core of this philosophical statement.

In the field of Aesthetics, the concept of Genius has deeply been influenced by the tradition that goes from Kant through to *Sturm und Drang*,¹⁵ and is a significant component of German Romanticism, especially that of Jena (that is, Schlegel, and partially Novalis).¹⁶ Among this tradition, the idea of Genius has often assumed a strong subjectivist perspective, reproducing a kind of pre-idealistic representation of the individual effectiveness on the gnoseological and metaphysical process that lets men create the world itself.

This theoretical framework has its own root in Kantian philosophy. Here, however, the subjectivist perspective is mitigated by an interesting theoretical counterpart. A clear evidence of this *chiaroscuro* position may be found into the following Kantian considerations:

Genius is the talent (or natural gift) which gives the rule to Art. Since talent, as the innate productive faculty of the artist, belongs itself to Nature, we may express the matter thus: *Genius* is the innate mental disposition (*ingenium*) through which Nature gives the rule to Art. [...]. [S]ince at the same time a product can never be called Art without some precedent rule, Nature in the subject must (by the harmony of its faculties) give the rule to Art; *i.e.* beautiful Art is only possible as a product of Genius.¹⁷

In this famous definition of Genius by Kant, although the perspective on the act of creation is already subjective (in fact the Genius ‘gives the rule to art’; his formal power creates art shapes and configurations), a strict connection between nature and art is still preserved: the Genius is natural in itself, he ‘belongs to nature’ and therefore reproduces through his act of creation (thanks to the ‘productive faculty’) the original and objective power of nature. The genius is thus still a sort of inspired medium.¹⁸ However, the critical perspective of Kant and his distinction between *noumena* and *phenomena* leads him not to define this insight in spiritual or metaphysical terms but rather through its philosophical foundations in human anthropology: Genius is a concrete man that through his personal qualities connects his creations to nature by giving his personal rules. This focus on the subjective function of Genius could be understood as the first step towards a broader and more radical subjective idea of creativity. Indeed, Kant states that ‘the highest possibility of human creative achievement is grounded in an innate capacity of the human mind, yet still subject to regulation and cultivation by rational intellect’.¹⁹

¹⁵ *Sturm und Drang* (Storm and Stress) is the name of a piece written by Friedrich Klinger, then assumed by August W. Schlegel as philosophical definition.

¹⁶ Among the best studies on this topic, see Giampiero Moretti, *Il genio. Origine, storia, destino* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2011).

¹⁷ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgment*, trans. by John H. Bernard (New York: Cosimo, 2007), pp. 112-13.

¹⁸ The image of artist as medium has a long story into the Western tradition. It could be interesting, for example, to compare Kantian perspectives with the insights expressed by Plato in the famous dialogue *Ion*.

¹⁹ As quoted in Eric J. Schwab, ‘Genie’, in *Encyclopedia of German Literature*, ed. by Matthias Konzett (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2000), p. 324.

The polarity between aesthetic ideas and ideas of reason can also be highlighted in order to better understand the considered philosophical frame. Aesthetic ideas are the ones expressed by the Genius: insights or representations for which no concept is completely adequate in order to completely define them. In their functioning, imagination plays a fundamental role: it is a creative force and extremely powerful. This origin can be situated between the subject aesthetically involved in judgment and the world of nature; what could be considered the “Neoplatonic heritage” is still preserved in Kantian philosophy.

One may therefore conclude that the philosopher of Königsberg stands right in the middle of a radical historical change. While, formerly, Aesthetics was largely directed to take its primary examples of beauty and sublimity from nature, the focus is, after Kant, placed on works of art (as human subjective creation). The philosophical and literary interest switches from the natural dimension to the artificial one—and this because of the awareness of the necessary involvement of men and their artificial unique power into developing the notion of beauty.

The issue, however, remains complex. We have in fact to remember that, in Kant, works of fine art seem to derive their beauty or sublimity from nature and its objective laws. Fine art is therefore a secondary concept in this perspective. On the other hand, of course, in being judged aesthetically, nature is seen “as if” designed, or produced, by an external intelligence. And so, in this case at least, the notion of “nature” itself can be seen as secondary with respect to the notions of design or production.

The relation between nature and art is thus much more complex than it seems at first. It is clear from a number of comments that Kant makes about Genius that he is not a radical subjective thinker of creativity. It even seems that his perspective is an attempt at re-establishing the relation between aesthetics and truth, against the empiricist and 17th century sceptic position. But the place of the recognition of this relation remains, in *The Critique of Judgement*, the aesthetic subject: the first step of the historical emergence of nihilistic subjectivity. Hans Georg Gadamer has clearly recognised and well expressed this element in his *Truth and Method*: ‘In his critique of aesthetic judgment what Kant sought to and did legitimate was the subjective universality of aesthetic taste’ one in which ‘there is no longer any knowledge of the object, and in the area of the “fine arts” the superiority of genius to any aesthetics based on rules’.²⁰

What I can certainly state is that, according to Gadamer Hermeneutics, the *Wirkungsgeschichte* (history of effects) of the Kantian position was the driving force of modern subjectivist Aesthetics. From a historical and genealogical point of view, Kant’s position broadly contributed to the escalation of this image in the early 19th Century.

Basing aesthetic judgment on the a priori of subjectivity was to acquire a quite new significance when the import of transcendental philosophical reflection changed with Kant’s successors. If the metaphysical background which is the basis of the primacy of natural beauty in Kant, and which ties the concept of genius back to nature, no longer exists, the problem of art arises in a new way.²¹

²⁰ Hans Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. by J. Weinsheimer and D.G. Marshall (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 36.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

The idea of creativity as the free and subjective creation from nothing (a sort of aesthetic acquisition of the theological thesis on *creatio ex nihilo*) will be fundamental in the *Sturm und Drang* movement as well in Romanticism itself. In the history of ideas, this complex and rich cultural period has been mainly defined as *Geniezeit*, but it would be incorrect to define the whole *Geniezeit* as an expression of a subjectivist aesthetic. In many cases—in Goethe for instance, at least in his last reflections, and partially in Novalis, who stands in between the two positions—Genius is seen as a mediatory character between immanence and transcendence, nature and culture, matter and spirit: and this Aesthetics of mediation, often based on myths and symbols, belongs to the cosmological concept of creativity that I shall consider later on.²² In the same period, it is possible to recognise a radical tendency that interprets the Genius as a subjective and willing, desiring force, that through his free creativity gives the real structures of reality, founding reality itself. This is a perspective that engendered several criticisms, leading, for instance, F.W. Stokoe to state: ‘The *Geniezeit*, in spite of its name, was not fertile in genius; it appears in retrospect as chiefly an exacerbation of self-consciousness in revolt against the limitations that circumstances imposed upon its need of display’.²³ This kind of Genius also embodies the German tradition of *Witz* (“wit”) and exercises his intelligence and talent as an arbitrary function.²⁴

Hereby the idea of Genius is strictly defined as a subjective issue: the aesthetic creativity of the Genius allows him to transform the world surrounding him—or even to create it. He can develop creative possibilities that, without his intervention, would have remained just vain and lacking in truth. According to Friedrich Schlegel, for example, the Genius is a creator between the finite and infinite; he is the creative power that communicates transcendental meaning in a historical world. Humans are different from animals because of their very ability to create: thus genius stands, in this reflection, for ‘the capability of producing a world within a world’.²⁵

These principles, philosophically developed in the context of a wider theoretical paradigm, will be at core the whole of Idealism. Fichte and Hegel, despite their different positions, will base their theoretical assumptions on these premises. According to this kind of Romanticism, Genius is no more the man that ‘gives the rule’ to nature, but the extraordinary subject that can reach, through his power of creation, the deepest truths.

The idea of Genius as a powerful subject that can change the world according to his creativity and intuitions comes through in a simplifying interpretation of Nietzsche—and his notions of

²² ‘Genius is the synthesizing principle; the genius makes the impossible, possible—the possible, impossible—the unknown, known—the known, unknown, etc. In short, it is the moral—the transsubstantive principle’. *Novalis Schriften: Die Werke von Friedrich von Hardenberg*, ed. by Richard Samuel H.J. Mähl, P. Kluckhorn, and G. Schulz (Stuttgart: W. Kolhammer, 1960-1988), p. 168. But also: ‘To experiment belongs *natural genius*, that is, that wondrous ability to discover the sense of nature—and to act in her spirit’. *Novalis Schriften*, p. 179. Hamann, Jacobi, and Herder are other examples of authors that tried not to forget the objective (natural or spiritual) dimension according to Genius as a mediatory function.

²³ F.W. Stokoe, *German Influence in the English Romantic Period 1788-1818* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 5.

²⁴ See Paolo D’Angelo, ‘Il «Witz» e il frammento’, in *L’estetica del romanticismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino 2011), pp. 106-14.

²⁵ Kurt Müller-Vollmer, ‘Transcendentalist Writings: Transfers, Inscriptions, Transformations’, in *The Internationality of National Literature in Either America: Transfer and Transformation*, ed. by A. Paul Frank and Kurt Mueller-Vollmer (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2000), pp. 295-319 (p. 317).

Übermensch and Dionysian—within pop culture.^{26, 27} It is the “idealistic hubris” (Adorno) of believing that artworks might be somehow absolute, “original” creations rather than the products of a specific time, context and person.²⁸ Adorno’s critique astutely defines the problem: the dimension of power, authenticity, and normativity that is typical of Genius can be dangerous for a complete philosophical comprehension of reality, reducing it to a pure production of the subject (or, sometimes, as a production of his unconsciousness). This perspective, however, is the reflection into the field of Aesthetics of a more complex and pervasive process: the strengthening of the subject—understood as *ego*—in all the domains of Western culture. The extreme radicalisation of this perspective will theoretically lead the 20th century into postmodernism and relativism.

Cosmological creativity: the symbolic fundamental-ontology of Fourfold

It is interesting to note how Martin Heidegger’s critique of the Western philosophical tradition recognises radical subjectivism as a fundamental step towards the modern crisis. This element is connected to the dualism that can be found in René Descartes through the opposition of *cogito* and nature. This idea was already considered, although in a different perspective, by Heidegger’s master Husserl: authentic existence is, in our modernity (or postmodernity), under attack. The modern image of the world is in fact based on a scientific—and therefore, according to Heidegger, completely subjective—paradigm. Before modernity, there was no global “representation” of the world, because the world was considered as a dynamic relation to be preserved and not as an object to be depicted: ‘Here to represent (*vorstellen*) means to bring what is present at hand (*das Vorhanden*) before oneself as something standing over against, to relate it oneself, to the one representing it, and to force it back into the relationship to oneself as the normative realm’.²⁹ What this means is that ‘the fundamental event of the modern age is the conquest of the world as picture’, and, furthermore, ‘that the world becomes picture is one and the same event with the event of man’s becoming *subiectum* [subject] in the midst of that which is’.³⁰ The idea itself of the existence of humanity’s “worldview” expresses the Enlightenment’s humanistic and restrictive concept as one that tends to consider the world as the creation of a productive subject and no more as a self-giving process. Dividing the notion of subject from its natural embodiment, the subject becomes an abstract concept that is no more able to relate itself to the outside world through the basic and essential gnoseological (and ontological) structure of symbol and analogical thinking.

Against this perspective, I would consider the relation between subject and object as a dynamic and metamorphic process in which the two poles of reality exist in an eternal and transformative relation. This correspondence between subject and object, history and meta-history, immanence and transcendence, organic and inorganic, is the other side of Romanticism—the Heidelberg one, according to Moretti—that is based on the mythical-symbolic conception previously described.

²⁶ See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra. A Book for Everyone and Nobody*, trans. by Graham Parkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), especially p. 73: ‘God is a supposition; but I would that your supposing might not reach farther than your creative will. Could you *create* a God?—Then do not speak to me of any Gods! But you could surely create the Overhuman’.

²⁷ See Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. by Graham Parkes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

²⁸ Schwab, p. 326.

²⁹ Martin Heidegger, ‘The Age of the World Picture’, in *The Question Concerning Technology and other Essays*, trans. by William Lovitt (New York and London: Garland, 1977), pp. 115-36, p. 132.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 134, 132.

Through this perspective, that proceeds in the Western culture as a *fil rouge* going from traditional culture and esoteric knowledge to modern authors such as Martin Heidegger, Hans Georg Gadamer, and Ernst Jünger, creativity can be conceived as a cosmological process where subject and object are no longer considered static ontological structures, but rather active poles of an eternal dynamic pattern developing in energetic and proactive constructions. Creativity is no more the pure subjective and idealistic creation of something only created through the power of the individual, but the process of cosmological generation that connects all the branches of reality.

Many authors could be considered as fundamental steps along this cultural and philosophical path. In this essay I would like to take as an example Heidegger's great attempt to overcome Western Aesthetics thanks to his brilliant ontology of art. I propose an aesthetic interpretation of his theory of "Fourfold" (*das Geviert*) in order to enrich and complete the explanation of his ontology of art, as long it is commonly based only on the analysis of his famous *On the Origin of the Work of Art*.³¹ Thus recalling Heidegger's notion of Fourfold, I want to show how creativity can be understood as an ontological and cosmological process in which the artist can be considered no longer as the only willing subject of the aesthetic process, but as a mediatory figure in the eternal exchange between Earth, Sky, Mortal, and Divinities.

With this position I am taking some distance from the already quoted Hedley. According to him, in fact, Heidegger position does not belong to the path of imaginative Aesthetics, but rather has to be considered as one of the main sources of iconoclastic modern paradigms. It is true that 'Heidegger's strictures on metaphysics as idolatry become fused with Levinas's Hebraic iconoclasm in which Hellenic ontology is idolatry, and in Derrida there is subsequently an interesting fusion of elements of radical Protestantism and Hebraic iconoclasm'.³² Nevertheless this cultural process is not the authentic core of Heideggerian speculation, but can be judged as the heterogenesis of intents. The philosophy of event (*Ereignis*) that his Hermeneutics prepares is linked to a systematic ontology of art in which the importance of art itself and aesthetic creativity, as mediation and anti-nihilistic force, cannot be denied.³³

The Fourfold image appears for the first time in Heidegger's work in the late 1930s, in lecture and book notes for a cycle related to the subjects *Seynsgeschichte* and *Ereignis: Beiträge zur Philosophie (vom Ereignis)*.³⁴ It was later developed in the *Bremen Lectures* and in other works

³¹ See Martin Heidegger, 'On the Origin of the Work of Art', in *Basic Writing*, ed. by David Farrell Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 2008), pp. 143-87.

³² Hedley, p. 12.

³³ See Luca Siniscalco, 'Heidegger contra Nihilismus: una soluzione estetica?', *In Circolo. Rivista di filosofia e culture*, 4 (2017). <<http://www.incolorivistafilosofica.it/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Heidegger-contra-Nihilismus-Siniscalco.pdf>> [accessed 1 December, 2019]. Hedley also links the confused Heideggerian overlap of the concept of allegory and symbol—which is true and broadly reprehensible—to the following theoretical consequences: 'Allegory is thus linked to rejection of mimesis and exaltation of subjective existence—as powerfully expressed by contemporaries such as Proust, Joyce, Breton and even Heidegger's *Analytik des Daseins* which, despite all his protestations to the contrary, revolves around *Dasein* as *Existenz-Sorge*, time, death' (Hedley, p. 137). This essay will try to show how Heideggerian reflections on Fourfold can show a different side of his philosophy in continuity with the mythical-symbolic perspective. His anti-humanism is here precisely interpreted not as a subjectivist and iconoclastic philosophy but as an attempt to overcome the limits of a rational and reductionist conception of the human being in order to express a vertical and relational anthropology. In the field of religious studies, Heideggerian positions can be considered alongside the root of the Romantic *Neue Mythologie* (New Mythology) and as the opposite of Bultmann's attempt to realise the *Entmythologisierung* (Demythologisation), a different strand than Hedley's interpretation (Hedley, p. 125).

³⁴ See Martin Heidegger, *Contributions to Philosophy (of the event)*, trans. by Richard Rojcewicz and Daniela Vallega-Neu (Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2012).

belonging to his last philosophical productions, especially related to the topics of poetry and language.³⁵

In German, *Geviert* signifies 'quaternion', 'four', 'quaternity'. *Geviert* can be represented both as two intersecting lines resembling St Andrew's cross or through two vertical lines crossed at a 90 degree angle (Figure 1).³⁶ It is used by Heidegger as a theoretical structure in order to describe the whole of reality, the *kosmos* or *physis* (in Greek sense). In this ontological relation the four are one (Fourfold) and the one (Fourfold) is four. A kind of *coincidentia oppositorum* energetically acts in this form. Earth, sky, gods, and mortals are united 'in the single fold of the unifying fourfold'.³⁷ As Heidegger writes:

We name the appropriating mirror-play of the single fold of the earth and sky, divinities and mortals, the world. The world essences and that it worlds. This says: The worlding of world is explicable neither by nor grounded upon anything other than itself.³⁸

The Fourfold thus establishes a symbolic ontology if we conceive the symbol not as an abstract structure or as a sign but as the basic pattern of reality itself, founded in itself.

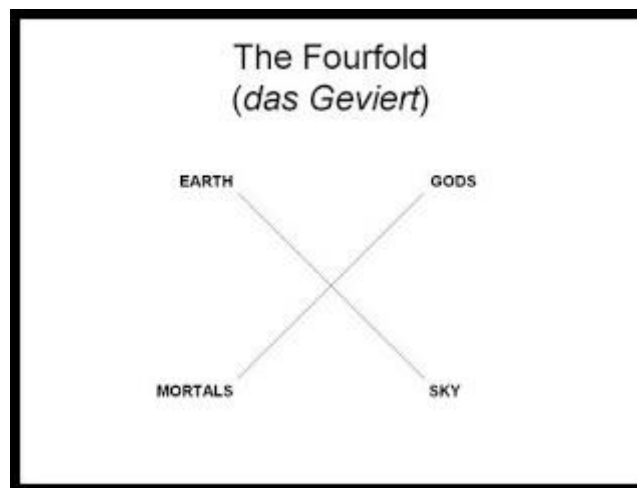


Figure 1

Therefore, according to Aleksandr Dugin, 'Heidegger introduces *Geviert* in order to replace Hegel's Trinitarian dialectic. If Hegel spoke of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, then Heidegger stated, "not three, but four". Moreover, he speaks of all four simultaneously'.³⁹ In this way Heidegger tries to push European thinking outside 'representational thinking' (*vorstellenden Denken*), the subject-object relation, by including the hermeneutical power of Beyond.

Geviert is a double *ieros gamos* ('sacred marriage'): of earth and sky, gods and mortals. But also between earth and mortals, sky and gods—and all the possible relations that can be established

³⁵ See Martin Heidegger, *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*, trans. by Andrew J. Mitchell (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2012).

³⁶ Claudio Kulesko, 'Hai detto Desein o Design?', *Antithesis*, 3 February 2016.

<<http://antithesis2.blogspot.com/2016/02/hai-detto-dasein-o-design.html>> [accessed 1 December 2019].

³⁷ Martin Heidegger, 'The Thing', in *Bremen and Freiburg Lectures*, pp. 5-22, p. 17.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

³⁹ Aleksandr Dugin, *Martin Heidegger: The Philosophy of Another Beginning* (Arlington: Radix, 2014), pp. 193-94.

between the fourths within their mutual dynamic pattern. By adopting this traditional image, Heidegger tries to conceive the festive atmosphere that characterises the eternal affiliation of the fourths.⁴⁰

Geviert is opposed to *Gestell*, the “Framework” or “Enframing”, that characterises the essence of modern technology. According to modern *techne*, in fact, ‘all beings begin to be thought of as a certain analogy to technical production, and the demiurge is considered the supreme *being*—the master who creates things and objects’.⁴¹ Heidegger describes *Gestell* with the following words:

Enframing means the gathering together of that setting-upon which sets upon man, i.e., challenges him forth, to reveal the real, in the mode of ordering, as standing-reserve. Enframing means that way of revealing which holds sway in the essence of modern technology and which is itself nothing technological.⁴²

If *Gestell* divides and reifies, by relating to reality just as an energetic tank, *Geviert* is the clear insight of the centrality of relation in the definition of the human itself.⁴³

On this note, I can say, with Gary E. Aylesworth, that ‘the early Heidegger’s “ontological difference” is superseded by the Fourfold, where the difference between Being and beings is released into the medium of the world and the not-yet-being of things’; as such ‘the difference between positionality and granting would itself be “slight”—a difference in a modality of relating that addresses us as only as a hint and a trace’.^{44, 45} In the experience of the escaping of the gods into Beyond, humanity can still experiment the authenticity that eludes the modern machination (*die Machenschaft*).

Images—correctly understood as symbols, acquire therefore a “bridging” power: they connect the different levels of reality. Creativity becomes the possible decision to switch from one level to another. The artist plays with the world, and the world plays with the artist. The correspondence between artist and creation, subject and object is therefore described not as a rational adequateness

⁴⁰ Cf. Saša Horvat, ‘Beyond in Heidegger’s Fourfold’, *Disputatio philosophica: International Journal on Philosophy and Religion*, 17(1) (2015), 27-41 (p. 35): ‘Heidegger’s fourfold is often dismissed as an esoteric and poetic reflection of his later thinking, which as such carries no philosophical weight. On the other hand, some understand the fourfold as “the counter paradigm for ontotheology”, “as the antidote to modern technological rationality”, “a primordial concept of world”, or as “a retrieval of the Greek cosmos in an attempt to heal our fragmented world”. In this paper, we hold and will try to show that the fourfold is a fundamental concept, and not an accidental and fleeting inspiration’.

⁴¹ Dugin, p. 245.

⁴² Heidegger, ‘The Question Concerning Technology’, in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, pp. 3-35, p. 20.

⁴³ The cruciality of the relation between the thing and the world in Heidegger’s philosophy is also stressed by Klaus Held, who claims that ‘after the *Kehre*, Heidegger’s thinking becomes phenomenologically concrete again, it finally gets to grips with the real “subject matter of phenomenology”: the world as a referential totality and with it the embedding of the individual thing in this totality’. Klaus Held, ‘Heidegger and the principle of phenomenology’, in *Martin Heidegger: Critical Assessments, vol. II: History of Philosophy*, ed. by Christopher Macann (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 303-25 (p. 316).

⁴⁴ Gary E. Aylesworth, ‘The Fourfold: Reading the Late Heidegger’, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*. <<https://ndpr.nd.edu/news/the-fourfold-reading-the-late-heidegger/>> [accessed 1 December 2019].

⁴⁵ ‘The Being of entities “is” not itself an entity’ [*Das Sein des Seiendes “ist” nicht selbst ein Seiendes*]. Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (Blackwell: Oxford, 1962), p. 26. This is the most synthetical and effective definition of ‘ontological difference’.

between two static elements, but as a constantly dynamic process in which the link between microcosm and macrocosm is based on the rhythm of Being. It is always a 'serious game'.⁴⁶

Creativity could thus be seen as the human connection to this rhythm. To let it be this dynamic process within the Fourfold is an act of a defence of reality: 'Saving does not only snatch something from a danger. To save really means to set something free into its own presencing [*etwas in sein eigenes Wesen freilassen*]'.⁴⁷ The notion 'to set something free', or *freilassen*, is very important for Heidegger's later period—he will even claim that the deepest sense of Being is 'to let beings be'.⁴⁸ This "letting go" of beings is the essence of freedom and possibility to preserve beings as they are, and so conceived creativity is thus not a subjectivist act of a creative will, but the free recognition of the spontaneous hermeneutical process of the world itself.

Apart from Heidegger, whom I have chosen as an emblematic case of the perspective here considered, there are many authors that could be referred to in order to complete, integrate, or justify the cosmological Hermeneutics discussed here. Ernst Jünger, for example, explicitly highlights the "bridging" role of images when stating that: 'All visible images are sacrifices, a liturgical service offered in the ambulatory that leads to an invisible image'⁴⁹. Therefore, all created and imagined images—as well as ones forgotten or merely dreamt—are still part of the same, huge plot that links together all men and world phenomena.

This essay was precisely not devoted to the analysis of any specific image in order to foreground this fruitful network or plurality of pictures that characterises every relation between the inner and external world. In the cosmological Hermeneutics that I have discussed throughout, creativity can be understood as the core of a new philosophical perspective, one nonetheless rooted in a long Western tradition. Cosmological creativity is a hermeneutical paradigm that can be developed—this is at least the thesis expressed in my research—in different directions as an interpretative scheme through which one may analyse many authors along the entire aesthetic path of our cultural tradition.

This is still an open process that can be deepened in future research: the Heideggerian Fourfold—as all the other aspects previously discussed—are just single examples and applications of a more general perspective that I have tried to summarise and introduce here. The connections between the forms of reality still requires significant research effort to be properly understood, and mythical-symbolic Hermeneutics will be a useful theoretical and aesthetic instrument in this invigorating process.

⁴⁶ This image, coined by Marsilio Ficino, has been fruitfully developed by Ioan Petru Culianu in his book *Iocari serio. Scienza e arte nel pensiero del Rinascimento* (Torino: Lindau, 2017).

⁴⁷ Martin Heidegger, 'Building Dwelling Thinking', in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. by Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1971), pp. 141-59 (p. 148).

⁴⁸ 'Es kommt hierbei darauf an, zu verstehen, daß der tiefste Sinn von Sein das Lassen ist. Das Seiende sein-lassen'. Martin Heidegger, 'Seminar in Le Thor', in *Seminare*, 2nd ed., GA 15 (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 2005), pp. 326-71 (p. 363).

⁴⁹ Ernst Jünger, 'Das spanische Mondhorn', *Antaios*, 4 (1963), 209-237 (p. 227). Now available in Ernst Jünger, *Sämtliche Werke*, Band 15, Essays VII: Fassungen II (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta 2015).

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