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FORMATION AND EROS¹

FORMAÇÃO E EROS

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Abstract: This paper aims to present the concept of alterity and its implications both in Gadamer's perspective, especially, regarding the concept of formation and in Han's thought bearing in mind the concept of Eros and the dichotomy between positivity/negativity, a central theme in *The Agony of Eros*. Based on the analysis of the concepts of alterity, it will be possible to recognize how and to what extent they are convergent and complementary, but also distinct, thoughts. That's the reason why this article will be divided into two parts. The first one will focus on showing the context in which alterity appears in *Truth and Method* (TM), related to the concept of formation, memory, and sciences of the spirit. The second part presents alterity as the pole of negativity, of the difference, of the pain inherent to our human experience. According to Han, alterity as one of the manifestations of negativity has been slyly annihilated by the massive use of new communication technologies. After going through the two parts, it will be possible for us to see the relations between the approaches of the two authors, who share as a common horizon Heidegger's and Hegel's thought.

Key-words: Alterity. Byung-Chul Han. Eros. Formation (*Bildung*). Gadamer.

Resumo: Este artigo tem como objetivo apresentar o conceito de alteridade e as suas implicações tanto na perspectiva de Gadamer, especialmente no que diz respeito ao conceito de formação, como no pensamento de Han, tendo em mente o conceito de Eros e a dicotomia entre positividade/negatividade, tema central em *A Agonia de Eros*. Com base na análise dos conceitos de alteridade, será possível reconhecer como e em que medida ambas as acepções são convergentes e complementares, mas também que fazem parte de abordagens filosóficas distintas. Esta é a razão pela qual este artigo será dividido em duas partes. A primeira mostrará o contexto em que a alteridade aparece em *Verdade e Método* (VM), relacionada com o conceito de formação, memória, e ciências do espírito. A segunda parte apresenta a alteridade como o polo da negatividade, da diferença, da dor inerente à nossa experiência humana. De acordo com Han, a alteridade, como uma manifestação da negatividade, tem sido sub-repticiamente aniquilada pelo uso massivo das novas tecnologias de comunicação. Após as duas exposições sobre o conceito de alteridade, nos será possível enxergar as relações entre as abordagens dos dois autores, que partilham como horizonte comum especialmente o pensamento de Heidegger e de Hegel.

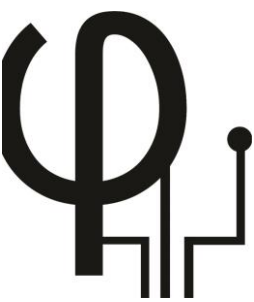
Palavras-chave: Alteridade. Byung-Chul Han. Eros. Formação (*Bildung*). Gadamer.

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INTRODUCTION

Alterity is a concept whose potency is a double-edged sword. If we can find it worn out, due to its almost futile use in several themes and areas, on the other hand, alterity continues to conceal a possibility of renewal. It has a potenciality whose epistemological value still opens up space for the exercise of Western thought, which we call philosophy. The alterity epitomized in the idea of negativity can show itself in various ways and relates to various concepts, such as the idea of difference and identity. Looking for the role of alterity is looking for the role of ethics in one's philosophy.

The approach to alterity - and therefore its ethical approach - in Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, especially, in *Truth and Method* is not so evident. The book is divided in three major sections, which deal respectively with the experience of truth in art; the legitimacy of the truth claimed by the sciences of the spirit and, finally, the ontological character of hermeneutics and language. Even so, Gadamer begins the first section by making a true ode to the idea of alterity.

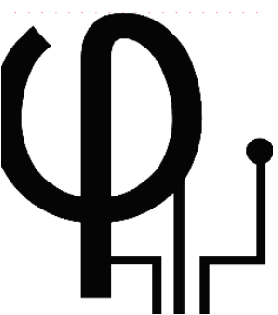
Alterity is presented as a part of the analysis of the concept of formation. It is an aspect of a movement of self-abstraction, which is intimately related to the meaning of hermeneutics as a process of leaving and returning to oneself. Based on this passage, that mainly covers pages 9 to 25 (*Wahrheit und Methode*), I will present the concept of alterity in Gadamer, who has made an appropriation of the Hegelian idea of formation. The awareness of the presence and the importance of the ethics and alterity in Gadamerian hermeneutics has allowed me to recognize relations with many aspects of Byung-Chul Han's thought. In his many books, there are pulsating and fragmentary ideas about the human condition constituted in the contemporary world, permeated by the *medium* established by digital communication. He refers here to those forms of communication that emerged after the widespread establishment of the internet. It is important to note that alterity is a present figure – if not in all – in most of Byung-Chul Han's works. For the purposes of this article, I will rely especially on the book *The Agony of Eros* (2019a)³, but also on *In the Swarm: Perspectives from the Digital* (2019c)⁴, without disregarding relevant passages and references in other texts, for example *Hyperculturality* (2019b)⁵ and *Society of Transparency* (2019d)⁶.

³ Agonia do Eros (2019a).

⁴ No enxame: perspectivas do digital (2019c).

⁵ Hiperculturalidade (2019b).

⁶ Sociedade da transparência (2019d).



Finally, I emphasize that the convergence and complementarity of both stem not only from their belonging to the phenomenological tradition and German thought, but also from a certain understanding of the human condition and its particular relationship with technology. If Byung-Chul Han has not the slightest inhibition in denouncing the effects of the contemporary capitalist mode of production in our life mediated by digital technique and the decay of the quality of our dealing with alterity, the Gadamerian perspective is more restrained, even though suspicion towards technique exists and as well as other political themes, in sparse works (for example, *Reason in the Age of Science*, *Europe's Legacy*, etc.). I would also like to draw attention to a text of Gadamer's called *On the Inability for Dialogue* (1972). This text casts suspicion on how technique (in this case, the telephone) can conform a certain form of relation with alterity:

The question of the inability to dialogue refers more to the possibility of opening up to the other person and finding in him an opening so that the thread of conversation can flow freely. [...] On the telephone, it is almost impossible to hear the other person's openness to dialogue [...] (GADAMER, 2011, p. 245, free translation)⁷.

For both Gadamer and Han it is clear that the use of technology transforms the relationship with alterity and, more broadly, with the negative aspect present in all philosophical dichotomies, like unity/multiplicity, universal/singular, potency/act, etc. What Gadamer above presents as a complementary text to his *magnum opus*, Byung-Chul Han transforms into his main task: how technique and technology (de)form ourselves by deforming our potency of relation with alterity, that is, our relation with negativity. Ultimately, both authors are pointing out the process of dehumanization and they are assuming that the human condition is about being in a relationship, being connected with one another, with a community. “Being human is, therefore, being in a relationship” (HAN, 2019b, p. 98, free translation). For Gadamer, language as a *medium* presupposes a type of hermeneutic relationship with otherness, that is, the one that truly allows dialogue. Language lives in the midst of social exchanges, that is, in the midst of relations. In other words, for both authors, the way we relate to alterity shapes our possibility to acquire and to develop humanity.

In addition, Han proposes to analyze the most different themes pertinent to digital communication and how it configures a way of life that harmfully inflates the identical, the *self*, that is, the positive polarity of human experiences at the same time it obliterates the

⁷ The translations presented here are of own authorship and full responsibility of the author.

relationship and the confrontation with the negative polarity, that is, alterity. In summary, aiming to show the theme of alterity in the mentioned authors, the article will be divided into two sections: the first about Gadamer's thought; the second about Byung-Chul Han's perspective, in order to articulate it with the first one.

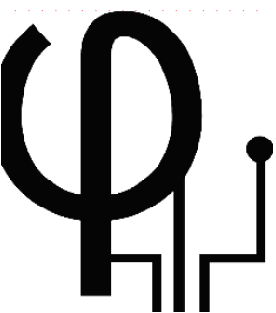
1 ALTERITY AND FORMATION: HERMENEUTICS AS OPENNESS, DETACHMENT AND RETURNING TO ONESELF

The investigation contained in *Truth and Method* begins with the question of the method of the sciences of the spirit and the Gadamerian critique of the attempts to subsume them into the logic of the sciences of nature. “The logical self-reflection of the sciences of the spirit, which accompanies their effective development in the nineteenth century, is completely dominated by the model of the sciences of nature” (GADAMER, 2014, p. 37, free translation).

The question of the method of the sciences of the spirit is the question of its essence. Looking for its main characteristics, he begins to weave his reflection on the relationship between the sciences of the spirit, humanism, and the concept of formation. According to Gadamer, what philosophical thought has not realized about the question of the legitimacy of the sciences of the spirit is the fact that formation is the concept that characterizes the element in which the sciences of the spirit live and in which they develop (GADAMER, 2014, p. 44).

Although we can think of two major meanings of formation, the first, the oldest one, linked to the concept of nature (*physis*), and the second one linked to culture, for Gadamer, the last one has prevailed. Formation as *Bildung* (*paideia*) means, in general, the development and the acquisition of talents and skills. Explicitly or not, this new and cultural meaning of formation was present in Hegel, Kant and Humboldt, the latter being the one responsible for verbalizing formation as a personal improvement of talents and skills. Taken in this sense, formation is understood more as the result than the process of becoming what one is. However, what Gadamer wants to point out is formation as a disinterested process. The aspect of being a process is what Gadamer finds interesting here. The idea of process and movement reveals the recognition of its historicity, of its subjection to temporality, which is the key to understanding the sciences of the spirit.

Note that Gadamer subtly moves away from the meaning of formation as the development of capacities and talents, insofar as he points out that formation is not related to a prior end, a utilitarian end. The pragmatism approach that is usually linked to the idea



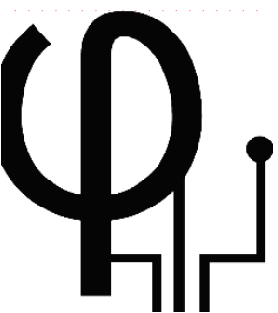
of formation conceals the ongoing and temporal aspect of the idea of being formed. In this specific aspect of Gadamer's understanding of formation, there is a subtle similarity to the idea of formation as *physis* than it is to formation as the development of talents and skills (the cultural meaning): they embrace temporality and the absence of a pragmatical scope. I also emphasize the following aspect, which deals with the being of formation as a disinterested process: how does formation form something or someone, at the same time as it forms itself?

Here enters the theme of memory in a broad sense, understood as retention, forgetfulness and remembrance. All of these aspects relate to the conservation and transformation of what comes to be. Formation, and the sciences of the spirit are related to the play of memory, remembering, and forgetting, whose movement generates transformation, each time.

In fact, we will not be able to correctly apprehend the essence of memory itself if we see in it only a disposition or a generic capacity. Remembering, forgetting, and re-memorizing belong to the historical constitution of man, and are part of his history and formation. Whoever exercises his memory as a mere capacity - and every memory technique is such an exercise - still does not possess what is most proper to memory. Memory needs to be formed, because memory is not memory in general and for everything. [...] It is about time to free the phenomenon of memory from the capacitative leveling that psychology has imposed on it, and to recognize it as an essential feature of man's historical and limited being. (GADAMER, 2014, p. 52, free translation)

“Memory needs to be formed”: the relationship between memory and formation is ambiguous, or rather co-relational. At the same time that the work of memory, forgetting, and remembering (in the broad sense of memory) presents itself as the structure of formation, memory is also formed in the process. In this sense, formation seems to be just another way of understanding memory that is still conceptually a prisoner of psychology, which reduces it to the faculty of “storage”, to the faculty of mere retention. Memory and formation come together: memory is the working part of the process of formation. In other words, it is through memory's work of retention, forgetting, and recollection that we shape our predisposition to otherness, insofar as the work of memory is a narrative and thus a meaningful work. We are in constant signifying movement of our self-understanding, which is challenged with each experience and each encounter with otherness.

Formation as the development of one's humanity without any pragmatical scope, through memory (in the broad sense) is also related to the concepts of tradition and fusion of horizons, themes present especially in the second part of *Truth and Method*. The play of memory that unfolds in retention and forgetfulness is a dynamic that makes room for a first form of fusion of horizons to occur in the spirit. Retention is ambiguous because in



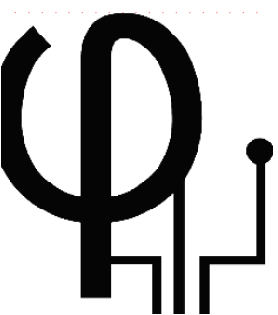
it there is a constant work of re-signification, for each new broadening of horizons. Each true experience shows us something of the reality that we did not know in someone else's experience of the world. This means that in a more fundamental sense, the fusion of horizons is part of the characterization of memory's way of being and, thus, of the process of formation (GADAMER, 2014, pp. 404-405).

From these considerations, we can better understand how the concepts of formation and memory relate to the way of being of the sciences of the spirit. For Gadamer, while the natural sciences aim at the discovery and elaboration of general laws and models, for the subsumption of the particular to general rules, the sciences of spirit aim at understanding the process of constitution of how something came to become to be something. The sciences of the spirit thus aim to reflect on the processes of formation and memory. What is at stake here is the recognition of the procedural, historical, continuous, and open character of the being of the sciences of the spirit (GADAMER, 2014, p. 39).

The recognition of the characterization of the human sciences as an investigation of the work of memory and formation comes close to the Gadamerian meaning of hermeneutics. To a lesser or greater extent, both hermeneutics and the sciences of the spirit, refer to the dialectical relationship between projects of meaning over time, which is embodied in the notion of historical process. Hermeneutics is thus constituted as a *metaspeech*, *metadiscourse*, of the process of constitution of the sciences of the spirit, the discourse of how we understand the way we understand historically. In other words, how comprehension is formed and how it shapes our understanding over time.

Synthetically, it is important to retain the idea that formation is the concept that characterizes the vital element of the sciences of the spirit. In other words, formation is the element, the environment in which and throughout which the being of oneself could constitutes itself (GADAMER, 2014, p. 52). In light of the above, we now move on to the relation between formation and alterity, starting with the analysis of the Gadamerian appropriation of Hegel's concepts of practical and theoretical formation.

According to Hegel, the humanity of the human is affected by the immediate response, by our instinctive reaction that reassures our animality, in other words, with the natural aspect of the human constitution. Hegel recognizes in formation a form of ascension to the universal, mediated by culture. By being in formation we are allowed to transcend our natural state of animality, violence, selfishness and rage. That is how we can get rid of being subject to the inconstancy of the affections. The humanity of the human being is the result of the



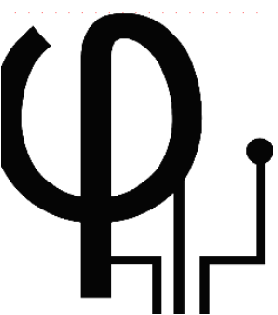
process of formation, by the development of the faculty of abstraction. Being capable of abstraction means to be able of distancing oneself from the immediacy of natural reaction.

In fact, it was Hegel who elaborated in the clearest way what formation is, *and we follow his definition*. He also saw that philosophy has its condition of "existence" in formation, and we add: with it, also *the sciences of the spirit, because the being of the spirit is essentially linked to the idea of formation*. Man is characterized by the rupture with the immediate and the natural, a vocation given to him by the rational and spiritual aspect of his nature". (GADAMER, 2014, p. 47, free translation and *my emphasis*).

Drawing on Hegelian thought, Gadamer analyzes the idea of practical and theoretical formation in order to underline not a fundamental difference between them, but, above all, their common basis: the detachment from oneself, that is, a distancing, and a returning to oneself. The capacity for abstraction is the ability to break through the immediacy of affections: to distance oneself from our most basic and natural tendencies. Abstraction is a faculty that needs to be formed in culture, therefore it is the condition of possibility of the passage from animality to humanity (GADAMER, 2014, p. 48). Ultimately, the formation and capacity of abstraction reveal noble moral values in shaping our humanity. It is about the process of acquiring humanity, that is, the process of constantly demanding for a universal meaning, to the detriment of the concrete, selfish and singular demands.

Practical formation refers not only to a distancing from oneself, but also to the giving attention to something strange, to something outside oneself (GADAMER, 2014, p. 49). Alterity manifests itself in many ways and, in the case of practical formation, alterity is about experiencing and understanding a craft. It is an acquired know-how allied to the professional experiences through which we are trained, while forming a corpus of practical knowledge. Formation is a process that depends on openness to a kind of relation with alterity, so that it is possible to recognize the fundamental determination of the historical spirit, that of reconciling with oneself and recognizing itself in being-other (GADAMER, 2014, p. 49). The analysis of theoretical formation makes this character of movement even more evident: it is about a process of abstraction toward the recognition of the other. It is about letting oneself be transformed without losing one's identity, which is in constant re-signification. It is about letting oneself go and return (GADAMER, 2014, p. 49). It is about dying and arising.

This concept of formation has two sides. The first one relates to the idea of formation, as an action we made. The second one relates to the idea of formation as something we suffer: letting oneself be formed and transformed by dealing with otherness. At the end, it



is an exchange. Acquiring humanity is about social trading ourselves, as described in the idea of practical and theoretical formation and, even more accurately, in the description of the faculty of abstraction and detachment. Now we can see a more complete sense of abstraction: it is the fundamental vocation of the historical spirit to be able detach itself from itself, to be open to otherness, self-recognize in the otherness, and self-reconciliate.

Recognizing yourself in the stranger, to become familiar with it, this is the fundamental movement of the spirit, whose being is only itself from being-other. [...] Thus, each individual is always on the way to the formation and overcoming of his naturalness, insofar as the world in which he is growing up is humanly formed in language and customs. [...] This makes it clear that the essence of formation is not alienation as such, but the return to the self, which naturally presupposes alienation. The detachment from the self and from the immediate that requires the development of the faculty of abstraction is what allows the transcendence from animality to humanity” (GADAMER, 2014, 47, free translation).

This is the most important passage for understanding the role of alterity in the comprehension of the concept of formation. For example, it is the process underlying the *Anthropophagic Manifest* by Oswald de Andrade and the work *Abaporu* [Tupi expression: “abaporu - aba-poru: pt. *homem-comer* (man who eats people, anthropophagic)]’ by Tarsila do Amaral, which reminds us of a *symbolic cannibalism*, in the sense of absorbing, eating otherness and being transformed by it to become another of oneself.

Figure 1 – Abaporu



Source: AMARAL, Tarsila do. *Abaporu*, 1928, oil on canvas, 85x72cm.
Available on: <https://www.artsy.net/artwork/tarsila-do-amaral-abaporu>

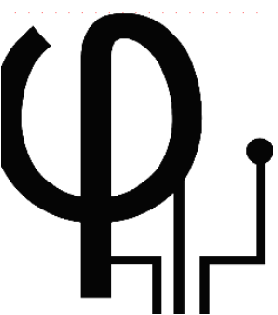
Manifest of Anthropophagy [Manifesto Antropófago]

[...]. Anthropophagy. Absorption of the sacred enemy. To transform it into a totem. The human adventure. [...]. (ANDRADE, 1976, p. 6, free translation).

I call attention to the holiness of alterity (“sacred enemy”) that must be absorbed in order to transform ourselves for good, that is, for being more human. Oswald de Andrade emphasizes the divinity of alterity as it is transformed in a totem, a sacred symbol of a social group. The two Brazilian intellectuals, Tarsila and Oswald, were part of the *Week of Modern Art*, in 1922, which proposed to experience and absorb otherness in order to recognize the national identity of Brazilian popular art and culture. To let oneself be influenced by European culture, to absorb it in order to accommodate it in our own culture, in our own way. It is about being in a continuous process of death and rebirth. That is an example of the idea of formation: the movement of recognizing the role of the difference in shaping a fluid idea of identity, always in the process of being formed, without letting identity fall apart.

The negative aspect of death is the space of freedom to host otherness in the self. In Gadamerian terms, it is the space generated by the recognition and abandonment of pernicious prejudices, the rectification of projects of meaning, and the opening for this to occur again. The fusion of horizons could be seen as the being aware of the transformation suffered, that is, the recognition of a new layer of formation. In catholic terms, it is the Christian process of communion and purification in Christ by the consumption of the host and the wine, which symbolize the flesh and blood of Jesus. Eating the host and drinking the wine, symbolically transfigured, transforms us in a way that shapes us and lifts us beyond our humanity (PAULO II, 2003, § 1). It is another expression of symbolic and sacred cannibalism. In mythical terms, it is the process of Ulysses who recognized the essence of the Greek man as a wine drinker and bread eater after his long journey of encounters with different kinds of alterity, as well as the return to Ithaca, that is, to himself. Ulysses is a great myth to illustrate the process of hermeneutics as openness to alterity, transformation through alterity and reconciliation with oneself, from which an experience of truth ensues. After this process of knowing, he could come up with the meaning of being a Greek man.

Formation, thus, understood as a process and as a provisional result, is one of the aspects of the relation with alterity. Formation is the movement in which the play with alterity and the self occurs. In Byung-Chul Han's terms, formation is a play between the positivity of identity and the negativity of alterity, of otherness. Importantly, formation even encompasses a return to identity and an opening to new play. In relation to alterity,



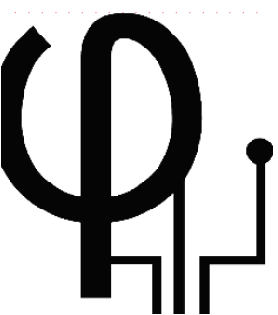
ultimately the human sciences investigate our history of relation to otherness, whether that alterity manifests itself as history, as dialogue, as politics, as art. It is about the search for how we become what we are by our relation at every turn to a distinct kind of otherness. Humanity should be seen as a social and collective project. Being human is a process of being cultivated by alterity. Through the eyes of hermeneutics, the understanding of our understanding underlines the ethical character from the play with alterity.

In this case, formation must not only be understood as the process that realizes the historical elevation of the spirit to the universal, but it is also the element in which the one who is formed moves. What is this element? (GADAMER, 2014, p. 50, free translation).

What is this element? According to Gadamer, the process of formation, of memory, and of dealing with otherness occurs in language understood as a *medium*, an element, which constitutes us each time we constitute it, or rather, which constitutes us while we use it. But what is language as an element? Gadamer presents a summary of his thought in the following elucidative passage, present in the text *The heritage of Hegel*:

Language is not an instrumental setup, a tool, that we apply, but the element in which we live and which we can never objectify to the extent that it ceases to surround us. This element that surrounds us, nevertheless, is nothing like an enclosure from which we could ever strive to escape. The element of language is not a mere empty medium in which one thing or another can be found. It is the quintessence of all that can encounter us at all. What surrounds us is language as what has been spoken, the universe of discourse [...]. To dwell in language means to be moved in speaking about something and in speaking to someone. (GADAMER, 1982, p. 50)

From this excerpt we can draw some characteristics of what language as *medium* and, subsequently, how it relates to the ideas of formation, memory and alterity. The first characteristic is that language cannot be understood as an instrument. Taking language as an instrument is reducing it to natural language, that I, to a code. Language as a medium is the formed by the daily use of a linguistic community, its language taken from its vitality. Language lives in dialogue and social exchanges. Acquiring language is the first step for being formed as human, since the process of formation and of memory are discursive processes. For Gadamer, to live in language means to be moved by speech, which says something about something, to someone. If the concept of truth and knowledge emerges when we say something, the concept of ethics and alterity emerges when our saying has an addressee, a recipient, that is, an otherness.



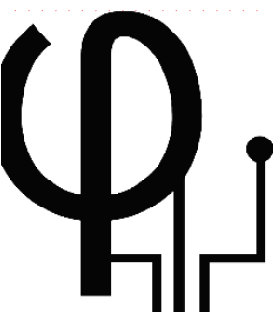
The act of thinking understood as a dialogue of the soul with itself, presupposes the play of two kinds of the same self. If dialogue is the moment of play in which language flourishes as a *medium*, the kind of experience of truth that a dialogical relation engenders depends on the form in which otherness can manifest itself: as another of oneself (thought), as art, as nature, as a person, etc. Finally, what I would like to highlight here is the hermeneutical function of alterity that allows us to always challenge identity, positivity, our historical consciousness, our prejudices, in order to transform ourselves. Having presented the relation between the concepts of formation and alterity, according to Gadamer's thought, it is time to move on to the exposition of alterity for Byung-Chul Han.

2 ALTERITY AND IDENTITY UNDER THE DOMAIN OF POSITIVITY: THE AGONY OF EROS

In order to present Byung-Chul Han's critique of the relation between alterity and Eros, it is necessary to present, first, the context in which his thought emerges, and to which it is related. Thus, initially, I will present a brief characterization of the conformation of alterity in contemporary life from the perspective of digital communication, according to the work *In the swarm: perspectives of the digital* (2019c). Subsequently, I will present the most immediate effects on the question of otherness arising from the digital communication and configuration of life. Finally, having presented the context from which the critiques in relation to alterity emerge, it will present the arguments contained in *The Agony of Eros* (2019a) with respect to alterity.

2.1 Digital communication: characteristics of digital configuration of life from the perspective of alterity

When we think of digital communication, through the Internet, the absence of physical presence is a striking lack. There could be the image, the audio, and the synchrony, but there is no body or tactility [*Taktilität*]. One of the most important characteristics of digital communication is the absence of the body, of corporeality, of tactility between the interlocutors, that is, the experience of being able to touch and be touched, in addition to all the various biological effects when in the presence of a person. Furthermore, it is essential to note that human communication takes place much more through non-linguistic aspects than

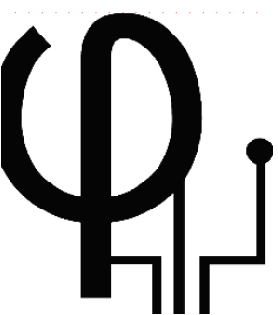


through linguistic ones. Verbal communication is only one component of live human communication, which also includes non-verbal elements such as gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice, smell perceptions, and body language. Digital communication “robs communication of tactility and corporeality” (HAN, 2019c, p. 44, free translation). It is always prudent to remember the materiality of the digital, insofar as the digital environment exists from a whole physical complex that supports and enables the functioning of the internet: devices, electrical energy, connection cables, etc.

Moreover, if digital communication allows us to interact in a communicative environment without the full experience of human communication, it also makes it easier to lose the face and identity of the recipients and our interlocutors (HAN, 2019c, p. 44). Beyond the loss of corporeality, we can also point out the use of numbers and avatars to identify people or the choice of being anonymous in digital space. As we will see later, this aspect corroborates the loss of recognition of the holiness of alterity.

If touching and tasting are obliterated, on the other hand, the vision is overstimulated. This is the fundament of a second characteristic of digital communication, which the author calls “totalization of the imaginary”. It does not mean a hypertrophy of the faculty of imagination, on the contrary. The totalization of the imagination is about exhaustion, regarding the consumption of images and videos, so that the active exercise of the imagination becomes dispensable, hence its atrophy. This leads to the being detached from the material world of presence. What you see as being a faithful digital representation of the real is not what we find out with our own eyes and senses. The imagination is exhausted by consuming images, in a passive and fragmentary work (HAN, 2019c, p. 45). Digital communication fosters the induction into belief of an “imagetic” reality that does not correspond to the visual experience of non-digital reality. The author calls “iconic inversion” the fact that digital images appear to be more vivid, more beautiful, and better than the reality deficiently perceived by our senses (HAN, 2019c, p. 53).

This is why the author equates digital photography with painting: in both, there is a separation of what was recorded in the photograph and the object of the record: “[...] In it [digital photography] is no longer contained any reference to the real. Thus, digital photography approaches painting again” (HAN, 2019c, p. 111, free translation). The major difference between painting and digital photography, beyond the scope of the underlying technique, is the fact that painting allows itself to be recognized as painting, even if ultra-realistic. Digital photography, on the other hand, intends to be recognized as a faithful copy of reality. And despite knowing all the possible manipulations that can be done in digital photographs,



we still find it difficult to feel them as paintings; we consume them as if they were reality as the one we can perceive with our eyes.

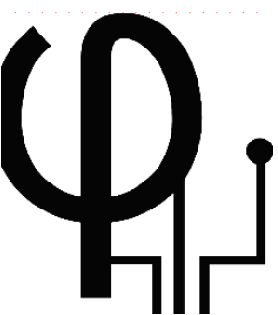
The exhaustion of our capacity to absorb and consume images has been challenged by the quantity and variety of images - and, in general, of information, since everything has become publishable and consumable. If the television images of the Vietnam War were responsible for shocking and mobilizing American civil society, today we are subjected to images that are just as shocking or more so, without the same social engagement effect, according to the author. The constant exposure to images has caused us to lose sensitivity, in a certain degree. “Images today provoke no astonishment [...]. Even repulsive images must entertain us” (HAN, 2019c, p. 103, free translation).

In other words, our barbarity threshold has become higher. It takes more barbarism to mobilize us pragmatically. That is, we have lost a certain holiness and a certain respect of presence since it became an image, a vague idea. Potentially, everything can become an image or a piece of information. Therefore, everything can be published and commercially exploited. The immense amount of information and images, now that we are all consumers and producers, mentally exhausts us (HAN, 2019c, p. 104). This phenomenon has been already investigated by the health sciences: they called it “IFS – Information Fatigue Syndrome”, which is nothing more than the fatigue – at a pathological level - arising from the consumption of information in excess. “Those afflicted complain of increasing stupor of analytical skills, attention deficits, generalized restlessness, or an inability to take responsibility” (HAN, 2019c, p. 104, free translation).

In other words, engagement (attention spent on digital communication) (LANIER, 2018, p. 6) and the over-availability and over-consumption of information impairs the functioning of analytical, reflective, and judgmental skills, which is ultimately the “ability to distinguish the essential from the non-essential.” (HAN, 2019c, p. 105, free translation). Now the following excerpt from Han’s own foreword to the book becomes clearer:

We drag ourselves behind the digital media, which, beyond conscious decision, decisively transforms our behavior, our perception, our sensation, our thinking, our life together. We get drunk on digital media today, without being able to fully assess the consequences of this drunkenness. This blindness and stupidity constitute the current crisis. (HAN, 2019c, p. 10, free translation)

The damage to our faculty of judgment; the depletion and atrophy of the imagination not only entails the loss of knowledge about non-digital reality, but also fosters the loss of minimum common horizons shared among people. The scope of a



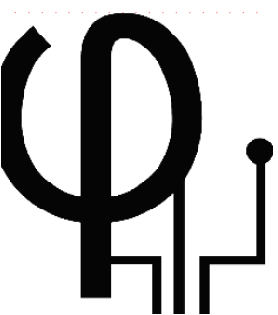
minimum common horizon, which is a requirement for the existence of a community, is becoming more and more restricted and fragmented. We have small groups and bubbles that share minimal common horizons. The loss of consensual horizons makes communication difficult, which distances us even more, beyond the fact of the lack of corporeality and, therefore, the experience of communication in all its potentiality. What we are left with as a living body is just ourselves: we are isolated and anxious.

Smartphones, spaces of practicing narcissism, are used as a tool for distorted exercise of what remains of the imagination, which is dedicated to fostering and inflating the self-image, since we have been drawn to this culture where the self desperately seeks social validation, in the digital *medium*. Physically isolated from each other, we create room for the development of an imaginary world detached from actual reality, of which we unhealthily want to be a part, with unreachable parameters. Social isolation constantly puts our identity, our positivity, in check, since we are always feeling threatened by facing this imaginary world in which we don't fully communicate. We are continually vulnerable in digital life; we are continually seeking validation in each post/publication. A misspoken word or sentence can lead to eternal self-exile and can be the victim of *cancel culture*, which is nothing more than the old ostracism penalty.

In short, the feeling of experiencing vulnerability constantly entails the counterpart of always being in search of signs of validation of our identity. Of course, the big corporations of the new communication technologies offer us the possibility of *heterovalidation*, as a form of engagement, such as *likes* or, in ironically behaviorist terms, *cookies*. Someone who has published a catchy post is craving for social approbation: *cookies*, just like the mice craving to its reward, after a behaviorist experiment (LANIER, 2018, p. 3).

Moreover, for the reinforcement of the positive, the author also refers to the processes of filtering and recommendation of images, videos, information that validate the user's identity, in view of the performance of algorithms capable of continuously learning and adapting, through the information available from social networks, historical accesses, for example. Note that identity reinforcement can occur positively, that is, by recommending identity reinforcing elements, but it can also occur negatively, through the evocation of the feeling of rivalry, threat and fear in the presentation of the negative. One way or another, the experience in the digital realm “stifles all forms of negativity” (HAN, 2019c, p. 45, free translation), to the extent that it harasses alterity, the negativity, while reinforcing identity and positivity.

In other words, there are no favorable conditions of possibility for the formation process to occur in digital communication, as the one described in the Gadamerian perspective, since alterity and negativity are prone to be shut down. *Without formation*

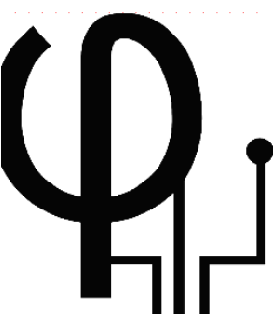


there is no healthy relationship with alterity and, therefore, to ourselves. Without formation there is no humanity, there is neither the necessary detachment, nor the abstraction capable of rupturing our condition of animality, of leaving the realm of the immediate reactions and feelings. Humanity needs to be conquered, acquired, formed. It takes time and social exchanges. In short, the digital realm promotes a space of positivity and identity, at the same time that it does not allow a healthy opening to negativity.

The possibility of transformation, of re-signification is undermined, since we are always adrift in relation to positivity, to identity. Although the digital environment can potentially be used for discovery, knowledge, and to integrate the most different points of view, in practical terms this is not usually the case. The algorithms used are true filters, which select what kind of information will be made available or will be in evidence, in view of the user's engagement. The sad point is that negative feelings and the reinforcement of the familiar, the identical, are the most efficient in this task. The engagement promoted by digital communication benefits itself precisely by the lack of a complete communicative experience. It is in this lack of the other aspects of communication that the insecurity, the yearning, and, of course, the need to be always in the process of confirmation arise. The constant need for validation of the positive tends to inhibit openness to alterity, and thus to undermine the possibility of transformation and the fusion of horizons. What is there to be transformed if there is no certainty of identity?

In addition, there is always the incentive to remain the same, which we crave to reach in each *F5* (keyboard update button). In short, in digital communication there is a tendency of losing the possibility of the exercise of being formed, by leaving oneself and returning transformed. All the richness and potentiality of the experience with alterity and negativity is at least harmed (HAN, 2019c, p. 48). It is as if Ulysses never left his ship. What would the Odyssey be without the loss and the finding of Greek self through alterity on the way home? Of course, he didn't aim that, he just wanted to go home – that reinforces the Gadamerian approach: formation does not have a previously goal. He was formed little by little, with each new experience with otherness.

Digital communication provides us with a possibility of an instantaneous discharge of affections. Formation is the required process to achieve humanity and its ability of distancing ourselves of immediate reaction, characteristic of our animality. We are deprived to a greater or lesser extent of that capacity for abstraction, of distancing, which is pertinent to the exercise of reason and the gradual acquisition of humanity that Hegel spoke of, according to Gadamer. This derives not only from the digital architecture, but above all from the exhaustion of our faculties of judgment and imagination in living and communicating



thought this kind of media. In addition, there is also the fact of the absence of the physical presence of people in this type of communication: distancing, loss of tactility and corporeality, and insecurity about one's own identity, as already presented.

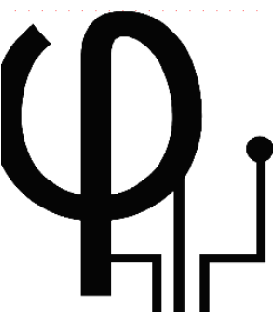
Whoever indulges in particularity is uneducated (*ungebildet*), it is the case of the one who gives in to a blind rage without measure or posture. Hegel shows that, at bottom, such a person lacks the power of abstraction: he cannot abstract from himself and have in view a universal meaning, by which to guide his particularity with measure and posture. (GADAMER, 2014, p. 48, free translation)

There is no time to reflect, to calm down, to digest the experiencing of life and of time. Digital communication provides us with another sort of time experience, in which there isn't room for experiencing time in a lasting and continuous process. The continuity, the cadence of time is interrupted with each update that bursts us into present time. And there is no silence either. Silence and space are necessary conditions for thought, creation, and judgment.

The *new media* are worthy of admiration, but they cause a hell of a noise. The *medium* of the spirit is silence. Clearly, digital communication destroys silence. The additive, which produces the communicative noise, is not the spirit's way of being today. (HAN, 2019c, p. 42, free translation).

It has become a powerful illusion of time control and a tool for the outflow of anxiety and our immediately reactions. “Digital media is, from this point of view, a media of affects” (HAN, 2019c, p. 15, free translation). The immediacy of reactions relates not only to a tendency of *deformation* since there is the opposite movement of abstraction, but also with the idea of respect [*Zurückblicken*]. For Han, its etymology reveals that “respect” refers to controlling our sight [*Hinsehen*], so that we keep our distance from the intimate sphere of others. This distance presupposes the separation between what is called the public sphere and the private sphere. The distance required for respecting is an effect of formation, as Gadamerian thought has shown us. The absence of distancing and the lack of developing a proper formation also corroborates the tendency to make our public and private lives transparent. The dichotomy between the public and private spheres dissolve from each other and become one (HAN, 2019c, p. 12). Another interesting aspect about respect is its relationship to name, to authorship, to trust, and to promises. “Digital media, which separates the message from the messenger, the message from the sender, annihilates the name”. (HAN, 2019c, p. 15, free translation).

If we become products and display ourselves in digital showcases, the name no longer has a function; it becomes a brand that will be subjected to the public validation.

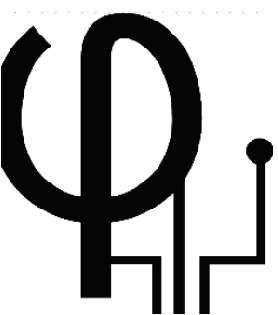


The name, which signifies recognition of a historical individuality, is the source of trust, as an act of faith. “Trust makes possible relationships with others without precise knowledge about them” (HAN, 2019c, p. 121, free translation). Trust is an attitude that embraces the negative, otherness, that takes risks in the face of the unknown. For the transparency society, trust is a childish belief, useless and harmful to business since it carries a certain risk in itself, which can be almost entirely eliminated by tracking and analyzing data and probabilities. After the spread of disponibility of the amount of data and digital public judgment, it is not efficient and productive to base business relationships on trust. The certainty of what is offered by positivity, of the controllable, is more comfortable and more profitable and safer. Trust is to become obsolete: today we have access to the data, the historical accesses, the personal and public life of any person or company, so we know in advance with whom what to expect. Probability has become the source of this new kind of comfortable, assisted trusting.

Every click I make is saved. Every step I take is traceable. We leave digital traces everywhere. Our digital lives are formed precisely on the net. The possibility of a total record of life replaces trust entirely with control. In place of Big Brother comes Big Data. The complete and unbroken record of life is the consummation of the society of transparency. (HAN, 2019c, p. 122).

Trust has been replaced by the control of data and information, at the personal, commercial and, above all, institutional and state levels. In this kind of society, where people are driven to establish any kind of relation through digital communication and in which there is no need for trusting, for name, and for faith, transparency, control, and surveillance sustain social relations. Han calls “Digital Panopticon” this new political-social configuration in which surveillance is carried out by all and in relation to all, from traceable information made available by the users themselves, who operate for transparency of the digital by connecting with each other in such an intense way (“hypercommunication”) (HAN, 2019c, p. 123).

The sophistication brought by digital communication consists in the self-perception that users have of themselves: they are not prisoners; rather, they believe themselves to be free and more: they want to be watched. Being watched has become profitable. To be seen and to promote engagement has become profitable. Information is provided freely and willingly on various platforms – not to mention the various terms of prior consent that we have to accept in order to access services. “They supply the digital panopticon with information that they voluntarily issue and expose. Self-exposure is more efficient than exposure through another” (HAN, 2019c, p. 123, free translation). Considering the main characteristics of



digital communication related to the theme of alterity, we now move on to understand alterity, in the view of the pair negativity/positivity, and its relation to Eros.

2.2 The Agony of Eros: the annihilation of negativity and otherness

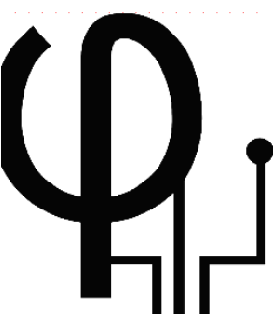
Given what we have seen in the previous section, it is now possible to understand more attentively how the play between negativity and positivity is established and how it can be manifested by the pair of alterity and identity. Digital communication has transformed the way we live and, especially, the way we relate to negativity, a concept that encompasses the semantic field of pain, in its various manifestations: death, finitude, disease, otherness, risk, mystery, and concealment, among others.

Negativity is the expression of human vulnerability and limitation, and its potentiality at the same time. On the other hand, there is the concept of positivity, which embraces the semantic field of human achievements: culture, science, knowledge, technique, technology, identity, efficiency, production. Negativity and positivity are poles of a tension from which human life in community unfolds itself. Negativity and positivity are in a constant exchange and dialectical play. The dichotomies can be thought of from this reading key: light (positivity) and shadow (negativity), being (positivity) and Being (negativity), language as instrument (positivity) and language as *medium* (negativity). What is important here is to underline that negativity has an infinite, veiled potency that ultimately allows positivity to posit, to postulate itself, each time. It is also significant to note that being in contact with negativity is a condition of possibility for the maintenance of positivity. The agony of Eros, a mythic symbol of negativity, is a euphemism for contemporary human agony: we all know how the myth of Narcissus ends – death by drowning.

The overpowering development of positivity denounced by Han's thought, in truth, is a warning not of the undoing of negativity, but of how and when our addiction to positivity will make us pay its price, regarding our refusal of the vitality offered by negativity. Each of us, to a greater or lesser extent, is already paying this bill: depression and other mental illnesses have proved to be the indelible mark of contemporaneity, accordantly to Han.

We are all Prometheus in pain.

Digital communications and the configuration of life they promote are admirable for several reasons. The aim here is not to demonize digital technology, but to try to understand ourselves in relation to this new configuration of life. One of its ambiguous advantages is the fact that everything can be transformed in data and information and,



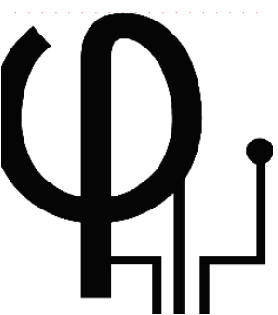
finally, control. The immense databases give support to something more reliable than trusting: probability. Perhaps more interesting than the idea of transparency that comes with controlled information and probability is the idea of clarity. The fire stolen from the gods has been amplified and configured into clarity: we can see too much, but we forget that clarity also blinds. This is why Oedipus and many other mythical figures burn their eyes out, precisely to see better. Clarity is a form of positivity, whose violence can be described as saturating and exhausting (HAN, 2019e, p. 20).

The violence of clarity saturates and exhausts our cognitive capacities and ultimately our discernment, which is the ability to judge the essential from the non-essential. Clarity has left us blind, yet with a sense of freedom and choice. At the same time, it imprisons us in an endless need for the simple fact that we cannot see the other, that we cannot access the vitality present in the relationship with negativity. The vitality of the positive resides in the possibility of the negative to actualize itself: “The strength of negativity consists in the fact that things are vivified precisely by their opposite. Mere positivity lacks this [aspect]” (HAN, 2019a, p. 28, free translation).

Positive love is comfortable. It is optimized. It is risk-free, and it is painless. All its negativity erased. Therefore, Han does not even consider this form of relationship as love: “[...] love would be disappearing because of the infinite freedom of choice, the multiplicity of options, and the coercion of optimization” (HAN, 2019a, p. 7, free translation). The love that disappears is the one that gives room to positive love. Regarding the aspect of pain and its relation to love, why deal with any kind of pain and risk if we have at our disposal an infinity of options at the reach of a finger?

On the contrary, in the course of a positivation of all areas of life, it [love] is domesticated into a formula of consumption devoid of risk and daring, without excess and delirium. Any and all negativity, any negative feeling is avoided. Suffering and passion are replaced by pleasant feelings and excitements without major consequences. In the age of the “quickie”, of opportunistic sex and of relaxing sex, sexuality also loses all negativity. The total absence of negativity today transforms love into an object of consumption and reduces it to a hedonistic calculation. The cupidity of the other gives way to the comfort of the equal. What is sought is the comfortable, ultimately, the thick immanence of the equal. Today's love lacks any transcendence and transgression. (HAN, 2019a, p. 40, free translation)

The physical distancing promoted by digital communications has made people disposable. If the alterity is disposable, so it is identity, because its validity comes from the acceptance by the otherness. This disdain of alterity is a disdain of identity. It leads to



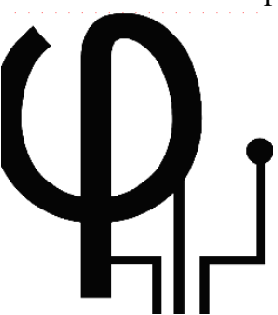
anguish and anxiety due to the constant need for validation by the imagined otherness. If the positivity is constantly threatened, narcissism seems to be the easiest path to which we are thrown. Hence “erosion of the otherness” is how Han names the dramatic and sneaky process that promotes “narcissification of the self” and thus the “hell of the equal” by diminishing our healthy relation with negativity (HAN, 2019a, p. 8, free translation).

Narcissism is a symptom of this social configuration in which each identity cannot get outside itself. “Hell is other people”, announced Sartre. This phrase by which his existentialist philosophy became known represents well the toxic relationship between positivity and negativity that Han denounces. For Gadamer and Han, one could say that paradise is the others. All possibility of surrender resides in the openness to the other and in the understanding that the relationship with identity must be one of detachment and *transformation*.

The Gadamerian idea of formation as a process and result of being in constant relation to the negative is harmed in its real concretization. The Gadamerian approach is the opposite of narcissism. It must be recalled here that identity can only recognize itself after contrasting itself with the negative, with alterity. Ulysses can only recognize the essence of Greek man when he saw the way of life of all creatures during his return home. Immersed in himself, “The narcissistic subject on the contrary cannot clearly establish his boundaries. Thus, the limits between him and the other disappear. The world appears to him as a projected shadow of himself” (HAN, 2019a, p. 10, free translation). Another trait of contemporary life that often accompanies the narcissist is depression, according to Han. Note that doesn’t mean that depression and narcissism did not exist before the emergence of digital communication, but rather that these traits were accentuated by this type of communication.

Depression is a narcissistic illness. What leads to depression is an overly burdened relationship with oneself, based on an exaggerated and unhealthy control. The depressive-narcissistic subject is exhausted and tired of himself. He has no world and is abandoned by the other. Eros and depression are mutually opposed to each other. Eros pulls the subject out of himself and directs him toward the other. Depression, on the contrary, dives into itself. (HAN, 2019a, p. 10, free translation).

Formation is an erotic process, since it allows us to be open to alterity, each time. Depression is an expression of the bored and paralyzed identity in its own positive self. Depression is an excess of stagnant and closed positivity. The theme of Eros finally emerged, and we can understand it as the negative aspect of love. The negativity of love is desire, which is founded on the ideas of impossibility, of uncertainty, of risk because it is simply



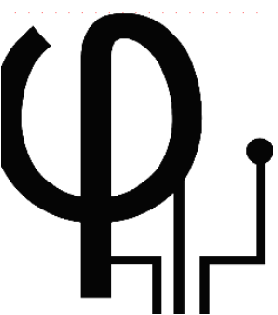
an offering to alterity. Desire is a kind of openness, of offer to alterity. It is beyond the control of identity and positivity. It is like a question made.

Eros, on the contrary, enables an experience of the other in his otherness, which rescues him from the narcissistic hell. It gives rise to a spontaneous denial of the self, a voluntary emptying of the self. A subject of love is seized by a weak becoming all its own, which is accompanied at the same time by a feeling of fortitude. But this feeling is not the performance of the self, but the gift of the other. (HAN, 2019a, p. 11, free translation).

If hermeneutics can be understood as the comprehension of the process of formation of oneself, and if by formation we mean the process of getting out, of transforming and of returning to the self, to identity, we can conclude that hermeneutics and Eros are part of the same phenomenon. What makes the formation process possible, what truly moves the positivity towards an exit from the self-centered subject is love, embodied in the figure of Eros. In this sense, *Eros and Hermes seem to be closer than expected.* Curious to note that although it is more accepted that Eros is the son of Aphrodite and Ares, there is also a mythological version in which Eros would be the son of Aphrodite and Hermes, what we know as the figure of Cupid (BRANDÃO, 1988, p. 250).

Cupid's arrow is what allows the mobilization of a state to come out of oneself toward otherness, toward negativity. Cupid's arrow makes love happen and removes fear. Narcissus is finally able to see beyond his reflection in the mirror. This is why: “Eros conquers depression” (HAN, 2019a, p. 12, free translation). Eros, understood as the negativity aspect of love, promotes an experience of alterity, from the point of view of otherness, which is not extinguished after being in the relationship. We cannot capture otherness in its totality; the positive cannot annul, neutralize the negativity. It is not a zero-sum game. The negativity is what remains. Meanwhile, positivity is ephemeral; it lasts until it's replaced. “[...] If it were possible to possess, apprehend, and recognize the other, the other would not be other. Possessing, recognizing, and learning are synonymous with being able” (HAN, 2019a, p. 26, free translation). If Byung-Chul Han presents the point of view of the otherness that is neither absorbed, nor possessed, nor apprehended, Gadamer presents the aspect of this relation in which there is some transformation in the identity of each of the othernesses: a fusion of horizons.

Despite the impossibility of two othernesses to be subsumed into each other, relations between them can happen: this is why one can think of the possibility of communication, resignification and transformation. The permanence of negativity does not prevent



communication, and communication does not make negativity less negative. The communication is a way to come out of oneself and to maintain the vitality of positivity.

Another aspect that I would like to draw attention to is the theme of temporality, especially from the concept of memory, which Han also addresses. Eros and negativity have a proper relation with time. Let's see:

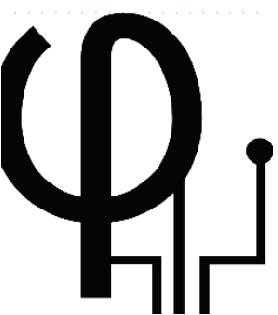
[...] Memory is not a mere organ of mere recomposition, with which the past is presentified. In memory, the past is constantly changing. It is a progressive, living, narrative process. In this it differs from data storage. In this technical mechanism, the past is deprived of any vivacity. It is devoid of time. (HAN, 2019a, p. 32, free translation).

As already seen, memory has a central character in the concept of formation in the philosophical hermeneutics of Gadamer. The incessant work of memory, understood in a broad sense, that is, as retention, forgetting and remembering, is the mode of being of formation, understood as a process of the relationship of coming out of oneself and returning to oneself, after playing with otherness.

For Han, memory should also not be restricted to the mere faculty of retention. Memory (in the broad sense) is the source of the spirit's vivacity, for both authors, because in it resides the capacity to deal with the negative temporality called future. If the past is made of narratives and a present instant that always vanishes into the past as aspects of the positivity of our temporality, the future presents itself as negative, uncertain, as a possibility of renewal, of re-signification. The narrative, the discourse are always negative because we always have the possibility of re-signification through time. The negativity of language is its ability of opening, that rips the tissue of language, in order to create space for new meanings.

The fact that 'meaning' clarifies something does not make it positive; for a thing that is said, all the rest remains unspoken. The hermeneutic task is about an incessant approach to the unspoken, to the silence, to what awaits to be said. Coming up with a meaning is a negative movement of the spirit, that releases an apparent and ephemeral meaning. Language as a medium is negative since it is a potentiality. A written text is an object in positivity. Reading and understanding this text is negative action. The evident meaning that emerges is positive, the unsaid is the counterpart of its negativity. Hermeneutics and language are always in the movement of negativity insofar as they never allow themselves to be fully apprehended. The

discursiveness of memory, its relation to the future, and, ironically, the ever-forgotten aspect of memory as forgetting are aspects of negativity that digital communications attempt to avoid.



From data tracking to personal profiles: digital communications allow neither the exercise of forgetting nor that of selection about what one wants to keep in memory. Human memory is the discourse of our inner word. It is limited and aging, unlike the memory capacity of digital devices. The transfer of records to these instruments does not make us more capable of processing, that is, of working with memory. We only exhaust it. There is no more room for forgetting, and the narrative of the past becomes concealed; the process of re-signification, so necessary for formation, is paralyzed. This is why Han says that digital communications promote a time of actuality that is “merely additive” (HAN, 2019a, p. 33, free translation). He denounces a loss of the significative cadence of our experience of time. It is also a loss of the ability of playing. The temporality of human experience needs space, needs silence, and needs forgetting in order to happen and be a source of formation, storytelling, speech, understanding, and knowledge. Digital communication encapsulates the experience of human temporality in memory as retention and in the current - *actualizable* - present.

3 CONCLUSION

The coincidence and complementarity between the perspective on alterity of Gadamer and Byung-Chul Han caught my attention especially from four points:

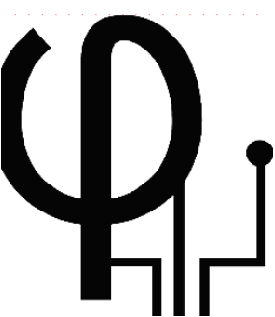
1) Eros and formation – The first one consists in the Gadamerian concept of formation as a movement of distancing, returning and abstraction that places identity in relation to otherness and the complementary counterpoint in Han of the figure of Eros and Narcissus; 2) Memory – the concept of memory for both authors, to whom memory should be understood as narrative process played by the spirit between these three moments retention, forgetfulness and remembrance. 3) Humanity – the formation as acquisition of humanity and how this has been put in check in the isolation promoted by digital communication; 4) Media of affects – the coincidence between the loss of a tendency to formation and the characterization of digital communication as a media of affects; 5) the adequacy of the dichotomy of positivity and negativity, as an explanatory perspective of alterity in Gadamer.

All these aspects reveal that the authors, by starting from common perspectives, especially from Hegel and Heidegger, complement each other in their analyses. The positivity/negativity key is very powerful, but in fact, it is actually another manifestation of the dichotomy between Parmenides and Heraclitus, that is, between unity and multiplicity. Heraclitian thought certainly inhabits the field of negativity and the

potentiality of becoming, of being transformed. It contrasts with our daily experiencing that is related to the primacy of Parmenides' thought: positivity and what it is given.

If negativity presupposes an idea of movement and transformation, positivity is static. If the negative allows the play between present, past and future, the positive stubbornly resists in an eternal present. Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics, especially from the point of view of formation as a process, as a movement, a dialectical play between identity and alterity, which promotes not only the return to identity, but also the acquisition of humanity. Humanity can thus be understood as our formation in relating to negativity and otherness and our return to ourselves. Humanity is closer to Heraclitus than to Parmenides.

The suffocation of the negative is a suffocation of positivity itself, ultimately. In short, the movement out of oneself, the play with otherness and the return to oneself, in a transformed way translates into a new signification of identity, in the experience of its historicity. It is through the work of re-signifying memory (in a broad sense) that formation occurs as an open process of continuous appropriation and relationship with otherness. Appropriation does not mean here an active action, but rather allowing oneself to be transformed, that is, being open to renouncing to a part of oneself, being open to suffering, to risk, to uncertainty, to a kind of death. Negativity inhabits the time of myth: “the time of myth is when you still have no anguish of certainty” (KRENAK, year not disponible, free translation). The hermeneutical position of openness to otherness and negativity means allowing oneself to die and be reborn each time. This ever-continuous process Gadamer calls formation. Han calls it Eros.



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