
TOWARDS A RELATIONAL AXIOLOGY

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Perhaps there is no other branch of philosophy besides axiology that would ask for a closer relation of its principles, concepts, judgements and inferences to the specific subjects of other branches of philosophy or to those of some extraphilosophical disciplines and spiritual concepts. Generally this state of affairs has not been observed or, if it was observed, it did not receive the attention it deserved. This situation is related to the constant efforts of axiologists to circumscribe a thematic and ideatic field, characteristic to their discipline. The theoretical process of autonomisation is peculiar to almost all modern sciences (consider the haughtiness with which linguistics tries to extract itself from philosophy, especially in the philosophy of language...) and it would be absurd to reproach axiology with it. However, the attempt to find a distinct ideatic nucleus, to define or at least describe its own concepts, to identify the type of utterances used, etc. presupposes, in the case of axiology much more than in other cases, a constant system of "exterior" references. The final aim of our discipline is, beyond doubt, to understand what is value as such or to define value as value, but can we really reach this aim if we do not take into consideration first the world of specified values to which we have spontaneous reference - the world of religious, moral, scientific, aesthetic, etc. values ? However, this external relation represents only one of the foundations of axiological thought. The system of "extraphilosophical" references must be completed with the complex formed by many fields of philosophy. This would include those forms of speculative reflection which raise values embodied in certain human activities to the level of the "suprasensible" and transform them into representative abstract symbols around which the criteria of validity of diverse philosophical theories organise themselves. The philosophy of religion áwhich considers the idea of the "sacred" , (the philosophy of morals áwhich considers the idea of the "good"), the philosophy of science (which considers the idea of science and, mainly, the idea of the scientific truth) etc. will be the new points of reference. Certain fields of thought should then be added to these: those which belong to the deepest and most intimate layer of philosophy, so to speak, that is, to its claim to argue in favour of the objectivity of the

world we live in (ontology) or to describe the pertinent means by which we can get adequate knowledge about the universe we live in (gnoseology, that is a gnoseology assisted by the philosophy of language and the philosophy of the conscience). Combining the different perspectives and making them a kind of basis of axiological thought proper we would hope to throw light on the irreducible conceptual nucleus of the discipline in question .

Therefore, our experiences and the expressions of everyday language should be the starting point. We say , "this (information) is true", "he is a good man", "he is a believer", "this (thing) is beautiful", etc. All these expressions as well as others that could have been mentioned, are appreciative or evaluative utterances. They consider something as worth taking into account; they consider that it would be desirable to be repeated in similar circumstances. It is ascertained, of course, that something is "true", but it is also claimed in the subtext that it should be always so; it is ascertained, beyond doubt, that a man is "good", but the subtext suggests that everybody should be such; it is ascertained that somebody is a "believer", but the subtext of the utterance contains the wish that everybody be always such; it is ascertained that something is "beautiful", but the hidden desire of the soul that every thing should present itself as such shines through the subtext. Therefore, every appreciative utterance ascertains and recommends, or, better said, ascertains in order to recommend.

The question arises at this point: what is the very essence of the descriptive content of evaluative utterances in everyday language ? When we declare that "information is true" we want to say that there is a correspondence between what we assert and the existential reality we refer to; when we declare that a man is "good", we want to say that his whole behaviour corresponds to the moral criteria we adhere to; when we declare that somebody is a "believer", we want to say that such an individual thinks that his life as well as life in general, depends on a "supreme" being, which makes them possible; when we declare that something is "beautiful", we want to say that it conforms to a standard of beauty that we share with other people. The common denominator of all these utterances resides in identifying a correspondence between the linguistic formulation and the thing or state of things it refers to. It is therefore an adequate representation of the specific qualities of some individual beings or the characteristics of certain situations and events that certain aspects of the evaluative utterances of our everyday speech aim at. But, as we have already stated, they do not limit themselves to this exploration of the intrinsic nucleus of some reality and to rendering it evident; in addition they propose (implicitly or explicitly) the transformation of this totality of determinations already ascertained and described into a norm or a

criterion which we should observe in all circumstances similar to that which had previously allowed us to identify such positive qualities or characteristics.

However, no supporter of axiology would be satisfied with references to the expressions collected from our everyday speech; no partisan of axiology will limit the field of reflection by referring solely to the appreciative utterances about what is true or good in certain situational contexts, about the "sacredness" of a human being or about the beauty of some thing. The axiologist will refer to the great words-concepts of the pre-eminently reflective language of philosophy, to truth, good, beauty, sacred, etc. Almost all philosophers consider these by the use of superlatives and transform them into "ideals" which the spiritual elite of mankind, if not the whole of it, always wished to share. What is the reason for this "supraevaluation"? It is motivated of course, by the exemplariness and perfection of these ideas. In traditional gnoseology (which is based mainly on the assertions of the epistemology of science) the term "truth" designates the idea of correspondence between "things" and judgements¹; in traditional ethics the term "good" designates the idea of "measure"; in traditional aesthetics the term "beautiful" designates the idea of "harmony"; in traditional metaphysical theology the term "sacred" designates that which is superior to the profane world and completely different from it, that supreme being that makes possible and creates all individual beings. These ideas are completely sufficient for themselves, they are absolute limits, models or paradigms, forms of perfection. However, we should not consider as something similar to Platonic essences and therefore independent of our mind; we should rather conceive them in the spirit of Husserl's phenomenology and characterise them therefore as "ideal objects" or contents of conscience. These ideal objects exist in eternity: truth does not represent correspondence *hic et nunc* but correspondence as correspondence; good does not represent measure *hic et nunc*, but measure as measure; beauty does not represent harmony *hic et nunc*, but harmony as harmony; the sacred does not represent divine manifestation *hic et nunc*, but the divine being as the divine being, etc.

¹ I would like to note here that even some less "orthodox" theories maintain the idea of "correspondence-truth". But according to these, correspondence does not coincide with adequating the human intellect to a reality that is outside it, but with an agreement or a consensus between the members of a community. This community is either an "ideal" and universal one (as with Putnam or Habermas) or a local and historical one (as with Rorty, for example). See in this respect the following works especially: Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*, Cambridge UP, 1991; Hilary Putnam, *Why Reason Can't Be Naturalised*, in: Hilary Putnam, *Realism and Reason. Philosophical Papers*, vol. 3, Cambridge UP, 1983; Jürgen Habermas, *Nachmetaphysisches Denken. Philosophische Aufsätze*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt am Main, 1988].

Appreciative utterances (of the type "this information is true", or "the definition of truth in itself is the ultimate purpose of philosophical cognition") refer either to "real" objects or to "ideal" objects. It is exemplariness and perfection which these objects have in common. Of course, ideal objects are suprahistorical and universal, they are principles of model, models of models whereas real objects are historical and particular models, situational models, effectualised models, are models created in action. We could say that ideal objects represent aims or finalities taken from the first and for all in the completeness of their contents; they are "genetic programs" as such, types of genetic programs, whereas real objects are aims or finalities completed along a temporal line, finalised "genetic programs" or "organic" units "completed" in actu. Beyond the differences between the two types of objects we can find the same tendency of the human being (and perhaps of nature in general) of realising himself according to an immanent principle of unity, completeness and coherence.

This informational infrastructure, this permanent reference to the world of real and ideal objects, this totality of descriptive (constative) utterances represents the motivating element of value judgements. The recommending element or the prescriptive contents is indissolubly linked to it. To say that evaluative "assertions" reduce themselves to prescriptive utterances - as some thinkers (the "instrumentalists", especially) say - does not seem to me an adequate philosophical attitude. Such a conception is incapable of providing us with a satisfactory explanation of the way these purely prescriptive utterances can determine the transformation and readjustment of human behaviour, an aim they obstinately try to achieve. It is hard to believe that somebody could be influenced by a simple prescriptive utterance if this is not based (either explicitly or implicitly) on one or more "descriptive" assertions. Not even imperative sentences (the "toughest" forms of prescriptive expressions) can conform to the semantic isolation some philosophers suggest. When we address somebody using the expression "you must be good", "you must be honest", "you must give back the money you have borrowed" etc. we suppose that the person in question already knows the features of a "good" man and those of an "honest" person, the rules of financial relations between people as well as the consequences of breaking these rules, etc. All exigencies are formulated from the point of view of these tacit presuppositions. When we realise that the person addressed does not know the meaning of our sentences, we feel obliged to explain to him all the meanings of the terms used and to indicate thus the state of affairs they refer to; then we reiterate the same linguistic formulas. Anyway, it is unimaginable that an imperative sentence is understandable without a previous complex of information and "description". A value judgement, an evaluative utterance comes into being along

a line of thought which inexorably associates a descriptive (constative) utterance (even an implicit one) with a prescriptive utterance.

The informational content is, on account of the things it reveals, the determining factor of the effective manifestation and exteriorisation on a linguistic level of the tendency inherent in every human individual of "recommending" something (for others as well as for himself). Prescriptive conscience has in its turn a positive influence on the cognitive database; it extracts it from the anonymity towards which this generally tends and places it in the group of representative models. The structure of any evaluative utterance seems to imply the association of the descriptive and prescriptive aspect; these two sides of the utterance support and explain each other. The "judgement" intrinsic in appreciative utterances becomes complete in and by introducing the real and ideal objects referred to in the class of paradigms. Value in its essence does not represent anything else than the real or ideal object that is transformed into an exemplary model by appreciative predications. Value is the real or ideal object which is finally raised by human conscience on the range of a model prescriptible for the whole of mankind or for a part of it. What has been mentioned before results in that the features themselves of the object on which the valorising conscience focuses, are the starting points of valorisation. However, this self-constituting nucleus of the object - we must call it as such since it is not a "transcendental" construction of the subject - cannot be conceived as an absolute "in-itself", as an "in-itself" which would be imposed to our appreciative-prescriptive predisposition by the sheer passive force inherent in it, compelling it to recognize it as such; the "in-itself" offers itself to the reflexive self of conscience so that this should bring it to itself, internalise, "personalise", interpret it and offer it a superior place in the system of classification and hierarchy which it resorts to. The "in-itself" of the object does not selfificate "in-itself" in an evaluative utterance, but it selfificates for the self of conscience which takes it out from the obscurity of the "impersonal" and transfigures it, making it shine in the lively light of the model proposed as a desirable ideal. The structure of any appreciative utterance lies therefore in this inextricable connection between an "in-itself" and "for-itself", between an "in-itself" which offers itself and a "for-itself" which receives this in order to ennoble the "in-itself" by raising it to the rank of a model.

The result from our relational analysis (from its final part especially) is that the evaluative utterance presupposes the existence of three fields of "being" essential for its foundation: the subject (the intentional conscience), the real or

ideal object referred to and the medium of the logical-linguistic expression. In the following I will focus on this latter aspect of the evaluative utterances, linking nevertheless to the two other aspects of the type of utterance studied.

The point of view I would like to support is an anti-nominalist one: an appreciative utterance is not simply a combination of linguistic signs (symbols) whose meaning or significance results entirely from its subsequent use in "exterior" influencing, but a combination of linguistic signs (symbols) which "signifies" precisely in the moment of its forming by referring simultaneously to an individual content of conscience, to a world of real and ideal objects as well as to itself as the medium in and by which a consensus of interpersonal understanding is possible and the members of a community can be influenced. It is obvious that an appreciative utterance is an act of individual conscience. It originates in a personal intention of evaluation or, better said, in a heterogeneous "mixture" of descriptive (constative) and prescriptive intentions. It is the ego and not the other that expresses the utterance, not the ego as the other, not the ego that views itself from the exclusive perspective of the other, freeing thus its irreducible specificity from its immanence. What is valuable is valuable for me, and a certain object can be designated as desirable for others too, only because it has value for me. It is true that the evaluative utterance opens up for the virtual understanding of all others by way of communication, but this circumstance does not annul the unquestionable truth that it is not "uttered" in chorus but declared by a single person. Every appreciative utterance refers therefore to the specific acts of thinking of an individual conscience and its foundation is led by the interior voice of that which objectifies it by "expelling" it. No appreciative utterance and no type of utterance in general can be reduced to a simple combination of linguistic signs (symbols) formed on account of a sui-generis grammatical competence; their "creation" presupposes the existence of a native predisposition of the conscience towards performing operations of association, comparison, dissociation, abstraction, etc. according to the laws of logic. Any adequate combination of words (as well as their combination in sentences, complex sentences and discourses) is unimaginable without a supersensible "energy" and a regulative principle. We discover in every individual act of speech or written expression the presence of an "immaterial" function of relating and reuniting the components in a well-structured whole. This capacity of arranging and configuring (manifested always in an individual act of "telling" or uttering) is the basis of a possible universal understanding. But the specific systems of signs called languages stand in its way. The existence of elements of linguistic differentiation is, of course, a reality and it really tends towards obstructing such an

understanding. However, languages also have identical or related aspects and these aspects form a system of relations and functions which could favour an act of mediation and could nourish the ideal of universal understanding.

However, individual acts of speech or written expression as well as the specified linguistic structures shared by one or the other human community (acts and structures within which a circular relation is set up) always points towards something "exterior" to the linguistic medium proper, towards the world of real objects and ideal entities. They transcend themselves and thus they "signify". The most frequent form of the signifying relation is perhaps that in which the "object" referred to becomes the subject of a "predication" which aims at determining in an assertive way its essential content. It is, anyway, the foundation from which it starts in order to become a unitary configuration, an evaluative utterance. But how can predicative terms, that is, those to which we relate the subject in a value judgement, be defined as such? What do we intend to say when we assert for example that a certain state of affairs is true, that somebody or something is good, that somebody or something is beautiful, etc. ? It seems that we aim at designating an (essential) feature of a thing or of a state of affairs, or at least we aim at applying a descriptive (characterising) principle to the beings or the relations of beings in question, a principle which, although finally set up in and by our conscience, proves to be able to integrate them in a generic unity and to subdue them to an interpretive homogeneity which respects reality. There is no essential difference between (1) "true", "good", "beautiful", etc. as the intrinsic features of some things, beings and states or as the potentially determinable (intrinsic) features of these and (2) "truth", "goodness", "beauty" posited as the "in-itself" features of certain things, beings and states or as the "in-itself" features of these that could be designated as such. They are in fact identical because these as well as others appear as intrinsic or "in-itself" features of certain things, beings or states of affairs, the only difference between them resulting from their 'semantic colouring': the first terms seem to evoke a more direct "apprehension" of the essence of things, beings and states than those denoted by the other terms.

The idea forwarded before is certainly not shared by all philosophers. Representatives of contemporary neonominalism can by no means agree with it. According to Putnam and other philosophers (much influenced by Wittgenstein, otherwise) the true, the good and the beautiful or truth, goodness and beauty are only simple words whose meaning derives from their use in sentences and complex sentences and becomes definite by the intersubjective agreement according to which their use must be identical for all members of a given linguistic com-

munity. By no means are they, in their view, concepts in the sense of "mental objects", "general representations", introspective "schemes" generally used in the philosophical tradition. As stated by these philosophers they are, we repeat, simple words designed in intersubjective linguistic practice in order to make possible the fulfilment of certain collective existential aims. We all agree that the true, the good and the beautiful etc. or truth, goodness and beauty never appear as figurative representations or as "intuitions" somewhat more abstract and general than intuitions proper or sensible intuitions which are always individualising intuitions. On the other hand, we do not see why we should restrain the group of concepts to the group of concepts some logicians call "intuitive concepts". As we know there are also "pure" concepts, "pure" abstract concepts, that is, predicative units without any evident intuitive support. Putnam's essay bearing the significant title *Language and Philosophy* proves how difficult it is sometimes even for an influential neonominalist to remain consistent to the end. When Putnam refers to our "intricate capacity" of classifying the "objects" that words designate, as if it were the final explanatory principle of his theory, does he not shift willy-nilly towards an "internalist" and mentalist point of view? Because classifying is something else than trying to agree on what you intend to classify. Only the latter operation is really tributary to an intersubjective and "exterior" linguistic process.

Would it not be more adequate to interpret the true, the good, the beautiful, etc. or truth, goodness, beauty in the spirit of the neokantian Cassirer's theory on concept, as it is presented in the *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*?² Shall we say then that these "terms" are "pure" concepts, "signs" without any intuitive relation with empirical objects, symbols par excellence? Shall we assert then that terms of value are "propositional functions", "points of view" that relate and coordinate, "units of relation" through which a multiplicity is determined as homogeneous? Shall we claim then that they are symbols which, applied to objects, do not refer in any way to their ontological-metaphysical "in-itself": that they merely transform these into simple "representations" of the conscience or into simple significances that get their whole "objective" character from its interior resources? We must admit that such an interpretation is extremely attractive, especially when it takes into account not so much the practical and historical context in which we relate to ideals and forms of life such as true, good, beautiful or their equivalents, truth, goodness, beauty as the

² See especially vol. 3, part III, chapters *On the Theory of Concept, Concept and Object, Language and Science...*

aprioristic and transcendental absolute which conditions all these. A more thorough research of the circumstances in which these terms have been and are used compels us to temper our initial enthusiasm. The analysis of the original meaning of the evaluative terms mentioned above nourishes mostly our doubt. The primary meanings of the words true, good, beautiful, etc. as well as of some forms related to these point directly towards the field of intuitive experience as the different languages prove it.³ Greek and Latin are eloquent examples in this respect. The term *aléthēs*, *ē*, *ēs* (true) had initially the meaning "not hidden, not dissembling, sincere, honest" and "genuine, authentic, not counterfeited" whereas the related Latin term (*verus*, a, um) had initially the same meaning as the Greek term. *Agathós*, *ē*, *ōn* (good), another word in Greek had first the meaning "brave, courageous"⁴ and also that of "useful, advantageous". The Latin word *bonus*, a, um (good) probably had the same meanings first. The primary meanings of the Greek *kalós*, *ē*, *ón* (beautiful) referred to the complete health of some person, to his full vitality or to the feature of some beings of being agreeable from a physical point of view or of some things of being "pleasant" or of some events and situations being convenient or favourable. The initial meaning of the Latin *pulc(h)er*, c(h)ra, c(h)rum (beautiful) seems to be that of "strong", whereas the word *formōsus*, a, um (beautiful) initially meant "made after a pattern" and endowed therefore with a form.⁵ It has been proved that the primary meanings of the words true, good, beautiful or of some related forms (their meanings still kept, otherwise) are a consequence of a direct human relation with the world. Their more abstract and technical meanings appear only later on, together with the development of the generalising capacity of thinking and with the refinement of the linguistic means of expression. What the evaluative terms originally denote seems to belong therefore to a field of the "in-itself" of the object given somehow in its immediateness or, better

³ When we speak about the "related forms" of the words true, good, beautiful, etc. we relate them to their noun correspondents. It seems that noun forms appeared later. They are based on the adjective forms. Anyway, noun forms also point in the first phase to the "experienced" world, the world that is accessible to our sensitive experience and intuition. In the Homeric texts for example, the word *kállōs* (beautiful, beauty) refers exclusively to the "physical" aspect of beings and things.

⁴ Some linguists say that this is an old compound word which initially meant "endowed with a talent for fighting" or "battle-hardened" and that it was mainly used to characterise noblemen.

⁵ These linguistic considerations are based on the following works: M.A. Bailly, *Dictionnaire grec-français*, onzième édition revue, Paris, 1928; Émile Boisacq, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque*, seconde édition, Heidelberg, Paris, 1929; P. Chantraine, *La formation des noms en grec ancien*, Paris, 1933; A. Ernout et A. Meillet, *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine*, Paris, 1939; Félix Gaffiot, *Dictionnaire illustré latin-français*, Paris, 1934; *Thesaurus linguae latinae*...

said, to a field of the objectual "in-itself" phenomenologised for the conscience as though it would be the "in-itself" field of the object or as being at least to a certain extent precisely this field. The objectual "in-itself" "reflects" at least a part of its determinations if not all of them from its self towards the self of conscience, making it appear in a revealing light. However, the above formulation is perhaps not the most accurate one: not that the "in-itself" would not exist (utterances constantly referring to it are the main proof of its existence) but it is, however, an "in-itself" for me and therefore its representation, far from being reduced to a simple objective reproduction of its content, proves to be to a great extent a construction, an elaboration of my thinking, and my linguistic competence. While the Greek or Latin "good" was initially used to denote the courageousness of a human being, it did not coincide with a photocopy of the individual's courageousness; rather it appeared as the symbolic reduplication of this feature. The linguistic sign proper did not belong at that time or ... later on to the feature of being courageous. Any linguistic sign is the creation of human individuals linked by their ability of reaching an agreement on their preoccupation and their sphere of interest. But it could not have been created had it not been "suggested" and "permitted" to be created by something else than itself. The generic "in-itself" of the being, an unpronounced and unthematized "in-itself" asks human conscience to name him and introduce him in the group of general predicates - operations which really depend on our ability of thinking and symbolic representation. Evaluative terms refer therefore to the essentialising unity of the general, even in their original structuring within the world and the existential experience. During the evolution of the language this "embryonic" general reaches, at least in some cases, a higher degree of generality. The logical-linguistic operation of attributing discovers a more abstract and more schematic "in-itself" than the previously identified "in-itself" and becomes objectified in an expression that reveals its relations with the intuitive support for our experience less and less. Therefore, "measured, with measure" becomes the basic meaning of the word "good", "harmonious" becomes the basic meaning of "beautiful", "that which is characterised by the adequation of its content to intellectual knowledge" becomes the basic meaning of "true", etc. However, it is clear that the word "good" for example, meaning "measured, with measure" (the feature of a certain being that distinguishes itself by interior order and equilibrium) is related to a more "abstract" and more "schematic" state of being than the simple state of being courageous. It is related to a pattern or an ontic model which subsumes, integrates, makes possible and characterises the fact of being courageous in its general aspects (because this latter is subordinated to an

ordering and configuring principle), and also other modes of being. Similarly, it is clear that taking into account a 'common' set up by the "eyes of the mind" instead of one based on a series of sensitive perceptions and intuitions, the term "good" meaning "measured, with measure" will be charged in itself with a kind of abstract generality to which the term "good" meaning "the state of being courageous" has simply no access. We could make similar statements about the second term we mentioned above. 'Beautiful' meaning 'harmonious' refers undoubtedly to a more abstract and more schematic "in-itself" than 'beautiful' meaning the state of complete healthiness or 'beautiful' meaning the exterior form structured according to a 'visible' model. The formula of beautiful as the feature of something (somebody) being "harmonious" reaches a "supersensible" generality which cannot be contained by the formula of beautiful as the state of perfect health or as a form configured after a pattern. We can submit the term "true" to the same interpretive check. When we say that the word "true" expresses the adequation of the intellect to things or its correspondence with them, do we not refer to the ("ideal" or supersensible) identity of thinking and the world of beings? Do we not therefore refer to certain more abstract and schematic determinations than those which could be revealed to us by things and beings, would they leave their hidden state and present themselves as they "really" are, that is, in their true-revealed "state"?

There are plenty of other examples but we wish to draw some conclusions now. Evaluative terms (true, good, beautiful, etc.) are used at the beginning to designate the identic and the general obtained by associating, dissociating, comparing and "abbreviating" those determinations of the beings which offer themselves directly to our perception. The "in-itself" of individuals' prolific diversity appears to be disseminated in their practically endless series or, better, it is revealed on the grounds of their never-ending manifestations. The senses perceive it first as something common which is extremely vague and almost unnameable in its specific identity. Then the reflexive language extracts it from the sensible magma which contains it and raises it to a precisely determined symbolic generality without effacing, however, all the connections of this generality with the existential concreteness which, in a way, makes it possible. In a subsequent stage, characterised by the process of thinking and language becoming more and more abstract, these terms will designate a new form of the general, a form which coincides in its pure ideality with the supersensible essence of the multiplicity of individuals, with the "genetic program" of the species or the genus we relate to. Certainly, the "in-itself" of objects to which we relate by highly general evaluative terms is not really their "in-itself" as such, "in-itself"

as "in-itself"; the object is treated "noematically", to use Husserl's term, which means in the present context that its "in-itself" (its ideal "in-itself") always appears as an "in-itself" for me, and it is "transfigured" in the process of its reconstruction by the mediation of thinking and language, the Logos, that is. However, we must accept the idea of a certain "coincidence" of the Logos with the eidetic nucleus of the object in question, otherwise we cannot explain the adequation of highly general evaluative terms to the features of beings integrated in our system of reference.

The above-mentioned utterances could be reformulated of course, and the reflection on them deepened. We will assert therefore that the previously mentioned evaluative terms can be characterised as linguistic signs or symbols ('sign' is used here as a synonym of 'symbol' and vice versa). According to Saussure's well-known definition a linguistic sign (symbol) is an entity consisting of a signifier and a signified, of a phonic complex (an "accoustic image", in fact, as Saussure says, that is, the psychic and mental reflection of the accoustic material proper) and a concept. We can add therefore that an evaluative term is an entity formed by an ensemble of sounds and a concept, a totalising unit of sounds and an ideal unit which refers to the self-identical essence of the species or the genus. To assert that the above-mentioned evaluative terms are (linguistic) signs or symbols is nevertheless an incomplete utterance. They refer, as we have seen, either to a less abstract "in-itself" which is a premonition of the abstract model of the species or genus, or to a more abstract "in-itself" equivalent finally with this abstract model as such, but anyway, to an "in-its-self", the essence or interior form of things and beings. This makes us assert that they are, in fact, ontological signs or symbols. It is quite clear that evaluative terms do not simply derive from our language games combined and "interwoven" with our games of thinking: language and thinking has to take into account that something which exists outside us and to adjust to this in a way or another.

However, there is also another type of evaluative terms. They are not formed as a result of the act of identifying some specific features of real objects but they derive from a self-characterising process. Truth as truth, goodness as goodness, beauty as beauty, etc. or cognitive correspondence (between this and that) as cognitive correspondence (between this and that), measure as measure, harmony as harmony, etc. belong to this category. These terms are components of a tautology, moreover, of a tautology in which subject and predicate are not only one and the same concept, but they are one and the same word. It is beyond doubt that the qualifiable terms "definable" in a tautologic way are signs or symbols but could they be defined as ontological signs or symbols? If we admit in

the line of thought initiated by Husserl in his *Logical Investigations* that besides real objects there are also ideal objects, that besides objects perceived to be outside us there are also objects created as the pure ideal contents of our conscience, then these signs or symbols created wholly on a mental level could also be considered ontological signs or symbols. Naturally, terms that refer to real objects also intend to designate - on a higher or lower level of abstraction and generalisation - their ideal being, but this latter is an ideal-real being so to speak (for it belongs to some real beings) whereas "self-qualifying" terms result directly from the reference of conscience to itself, to its ideal being. Correspondence in itself, measure in itself, harmony in itself, etc. (but not transcendent to the human subject and the community this belongs to, but immanent to them) are self-referential signs or symbols, structures in which the word, on the one hand - but the word specified in one language or another - is meant to coincide with itself until it becomes an abstract "sound" scheme and a linguistic pattern that is deprived somehow of any concrete content and, on the other hand, the concept - one and the same in all languages - places these signs or symbols into the sphere of "eternal fixedness" and stability, by the determination of the identical which is inherent. The above-mentioned signs or symbols or, better said their linguistic pattern (transformed itself into something almost supersensible) do not signify the ideal unity of the genus, but the principle itself of such a unity. They try to represent therefore the suprageneric and ideal unity as such, "the one" posited as the paradigm of the ideal essence "concretised" by including it in the group of individual beings that form a certain class ("correspondence as correspondence" meaning the model of correspondence circumstantiated in the specific relation between certain components of the act of cognition, "measure as measure" meaning the model of measure circumstantiated in the "measure" specific to the relation between certain data or elements, "harmony as harmony" meaning the model of harmony circumstantiated in the harmony specific to the relation between elements of a structure or a configuration, etc.)

Evaluative and "self-evaluative" ("self-qualifying") terms belong to appreciative utterances; as ontological predicates or predicative-ontological symbols they are the basis of the descriptive-constative contents of these utterances. The first category of terms generally refers to the determination of some real objects, trying to designate the "ideal" essence of this type of objects. This category is divided in its turn in two subcategories: one of them contains the terms which aim at designating the cvasiabstract nucleus of some real objects whereas the second subcategory contains the terms which aim at designating the abstract nucleus proper of this class of objects. The second category of terms

which must be placed in a direct correspondence with highly general evaluative terms, generally takes into account pure spiritual activities, trying to designate their "essence", that is, their intrinsic finality. Their main purpose is to develop and present some "eternal" models which could function as transcendental conditions of the existence of all situational and historical models.

However, as we have seen, no evaluative utterance reduces itself to a strictly descriptive aspect. It also has a prescriptive aspect, either an explicit or an implicit one. The presence of the illocutionary force of language and its performative capacity is felt in every evaluative utterance: recommending itself as a rule that must be obeyed by the linguistic community in which it has been uttered, it lays the basis of a permanent interactive relation between speakers. A predicative-ontological symbol can be proposed to the interlocutor either as a model that must be reiterated in all circumstances of life identical to those which rendered possible the formulation of the "recommendation", or as an "eternal" model (an archetype) of all historical models, but posited only as an asymptotic limit towards which any purely spiritual activity tends. But in both cases it irradiates to us with the lively power of the example which we must follow without dereliction.

Finally I would like to discuss another aspect of the axiological themes, an aspect that did not receive the attention it deserved until now. This is the problem of the relation between values and anti-values or, in other words, the relation between truth and error, good and bad, beautiful and ugly, etc. Truth and error, good and bad, beautiful and ugly are correlative terms and they can be adequately defined only by trying to specify and render explicit the nature of the relation between them. This has been observed long ago in the history of philosophy; it was observed by Plato, for example. Nonetheless, if we consider the history of thought on the whole, we are obliged to realise the insufficient extension of research on the relation between these philosophical terms as well as the insignificant conceptual dignity attributed to certain specific terms, such as error, badness, ugliness, etc. However, there are exceptions to this rule, exceptions which should be remembered, partly at least, because of their importance. Thus, Christian dogmatics and philosophy were much interested in the nature of the relation between good and bad and they paid almost as much attention to the concept of bad as to the concept of good. Moreover, there are cases in which the "negative" opponent is endowed with a metaphysical function as important as that fulfilled by the "positive" opponent. Does Plato not say in his *Republic*

(476e) that good as well as bad belong to the category of eîdes, of the ideal essences? And Kant, renouncing the "hypostatisation" of the supersensible first, and then making it dwell in the human conscience, does he not divide it into an intelligible "good" and "bad" and does he not claim that man's conscience is torn by the conflict between the wish to do good observing the categorical imperative and inclination to do something bad, the source of which is in the religious act of the original sin?

The above-mentioned philosophers who include value and anti-value in the "superior" genus of the supersensible do not avoid, however, distinguishing radically between them, designating them as the extreme sides of the genus they belong to. There is also another line of thought which intends to reduce and, in borderline case, to annul the irreconcilable differences that some philosophers establish between them. Nietzsche's attempt is perhaps the most significant in this respect, because of the influence it had. According to the German philosopher, value is a configuration or a structure in which the will to power is objectified in its quality of basic principle of life. Value, in which the will to power expresses itself, should be destined for keeping the permanence and stability of this latter. Value as a value immanent to nature and life would oppose value as the form of being of the pure supersensible and the principal way towards an alleged ideal world and it would coincide at last with what is the anti-value in Platonic metaphysics and Christian philosophy. In Nietzsche's view the authentic value becomes thus identical with the non-value or the anti-value of traditional metaphysical thought. The subjacent conclusion that could be drawn is that value and anti-value are relative terms; their whole meaning derives from the specific context in which they are used: what is called value in some civilisations and forms of culture is designated as anti-value in others and vice versa. Postmodernism draws a great number of its ideas from this conceptual medium (as appears in at least some of Nietzsche's works). The historicist relativism and localist contextualism of such an important thinker as R. Rorty finds its main source of inspiration in this medium. The idea from which the American philosopher starts (see especially *Objectivity, Relativism and Truth*, Cambridge UP, 1991 and *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, Cambridge UP, 1991) is that it should not be an essential distinction between cognition and valorisation, between truth and pleasure (id est value), between "hard" facts and "soft" values. Cognition and valorisation as well as their forms of objectivisation would only be expressions of motives of life and ways of existence characteristic to certain communities that live in a historical "medium" and in a well-determined place. We could use the same type of differentiation (a "weak" type of differen-

tiation) within the category itself of values. It would not be absurd to talk about an "objective value" on the one hand, if the term "objective" means the property of one and the other value (one or the other type of pleasure, that is) of being shared by the majority of the members of a community, of being recognised as such by way of the "relatively frequent" (unimposed) agreement in certain social areas, and about a "subjective value" if "subjective" means the property of one or the other value of being shared by a minority of a community and of being recognised as such by way of the "relatively infrequent" (unimposed) agreement in certain social areas. The final idea that we can deduce from the works of the American philosopher in line with the ideas above is that anti-value is, at last, also a kind of value, a "subjective" value, a value that has not yet been agreed upon in an "objective" and "solidary" way but which has the possibility of becoming accepted on such a level of extension.

Summing up, there are two essential philosophical positions regarding the relation between value and anti-value. One of them established by Plato and Kant asserts that both value and anti-value belongs to the field of the eternal and suprahistorical "supersensible" and places them as the extreme terms of one and the same "genus" in a relation of radical disjunction. The other, established by Nietzsche (in some of his texts) and his followers, sustains that value and anti-value belong to the field of the "sensible" and that of the well-determined practical-historical context and places them in a mobile relationship in which they can change their place and meaning.

I would like to outline now my position. First of all I recall that value in my conception is an ontological sign or symbol, a model to be followed by those to whom it is communicated by acts of speech or written expression. Value⁶ is a word which, as a predicative element of an evaluative utterance points beyond its phonetic body to the abstract "in-itself" of some real objects (an "in-itself" which selfificates towards me and for me) or to an "in-itself" forged as a pure, ideal object of conscience and it is a term where the objective meaning or semantic objectivity is established as a prescriptive model. We could interpret anti-value as the complementary pairing of value, considering it a correlative ontological sign or symbol. But what does the anti-value indicate in its function of predicative element of an evaluative utterance? Undoubtedly it intends to denote either the ideal "in-itself" of some real beings and states of things but an "in-itself" revealed only to our conscience, or the ideal "in-itself" configured as

⁶ Naturally, we refer to the purely 'technical', philosophical meaning of the word.

pure content of conscience, but an "in-itself" which is in both cases only the counterpart or "negative" image of the "in-itself" projected in the very "heart" of value. The designated "in-itself" (an "in-itself" that selfificates towards and for our conscience) can coincide, on the one hand, with the false "in-itself" of the real object in case (and, consequently, with an erroneous result of the cognitive process), with the lack of measure of the immoral conscience objectified in a series of deeds, with the disharmony of some objects offered to our aesthetic contemplation, etc. On the other hand it can coincide with the idea of error as such, with the idea of excess as such (the idea of the lack of measure), with the idea of disharmony as such, etc. and, therefore, with an ideal content created in the "intimacy" of a pure conscience. The critical evaluative utterance is not limited to the finding of the existence of some "negative" ontological structures; it describes them, of course, but at the same time considers them (explicitly or implicitly) an example that should not be followed by any of us; it considers them "anti-models". An evaluative utterance can refer to two types of anti-models: an eternal, suprahistorical anti-model and a "circumstantial", historical one. The antithetical relation between "historical" and "suprahistorical" serves as a background for the dialogue between values and anti-values. This is, in its turn, of a relational nature, for value is that which is only in relation with anti-value and vice versa. The relation between value and anti-value can be projected in the ideal universe of pure conscience and conceived as the expression of the incompatibility of an eternal, suprahistorical model with an anti-model of the same kind. Any individual rendering of such a relation requires the agreement of an "ideal", universal community emancipated from the interference of historical provincialism. But the dialogue between value and anti-value can similarly take place in the concrete circumstances of life in which local and historical communities live and then it acquires a content entirely different from that acquired by the dialogue in an "ideal" and universalist context. The difference between model and anti-model tends to diminish and even disappear in such a perspective. Therefore it is no secret that for certain intellectual communities (certain philosophers, that is) truth becomes relative to such a great extent that it is identified with "opinion" or even with "error" (we admit, an "error" or "fiction" that is useful for the community). Similarly, the representation of good and the order it implies in the conception of certain communities coincides with no less than other communities' representation of bad and the disorder it implies. The idea of the beautiful from the point of view of a community and the idea of the ugly in another community's view almost overlap, etc. The relation between value and anti-value often becomes unstable in a well-determined social-historical context;

their dividing lines might even disappear. This irrepressible inclination of the human being towards relativising and deconstructing all values and ... anti-values is opposed by a similarly strong inclination, that of projecting values and anti-values in the ideal, stable, eternal world of pure conscience, a conscience which opens up in an original way towards intersubjectivity, requiring the consensus of the universal community and hoping for obtaining it. But does this continuous balance between "high" and "low", relative and absolute, eternal and temporal, "suprahistorical" and "historical" not represent, after all, man's essential mode of being?