

When speaking about art and science, or about artistic research, it is almost automatically presumed that the discourse is about the relationship between art on the one hand, and natural and technological sciences on the other. It is believed, by a sort of reflex, that the arts and the natural and technical sciences are all particularly capable of innovation, and that consequently collaboration between them must yield something particularly innovative. This is countered by the fact that the arts, in fact, stand in a much closer relationship to the humanities: historiography, philosophy, and philology, as well as various cultural and media sciences. In this article, I would like to get closer to the art of reasoning in the arts and the humanities. That it is a sort of thinking that has a different temporal structure from the “classical” temporality of the natural sciences, which ostensibly investigate what has always been there (that is, nature and its laws). Here the research follows its object in terms of both time and logic. The structure of artistic and philosophical, philological and historical research, however, follows the paradoxical structure of post hoc ergo propter hoc: if we observe something in one way or another, it must have been so. This way of knowing counts on its own historical conditions and that of its objects. It is aware of the retroactive quality of interpretation. It situates its own statements in space and time. It puts into perspective what can be known in its own, specific horizon and positions that which can be said within a discursive universe of possible articulations. That is no relativism, but rather a sort of relationism, since taking into account the conditioned quality of knowledge does not mean rendering all possible statements equivalent, and therefore indifferent – but to make that knowledge manifest in its meshwork of relationships.

[2] Another contemporary of Freud's, who also lived in Vienna, paid respect to Rückert as a Romantic poet several years earlier: it was Gustav Mahler, whose Kindertotenlieder and Rückert-Lieder were the musical versions of Rückert's poems. The subject of Freud's text – it is about the tension between the life drive and the death drive, between the capacity for culture and the self-destruction of human associations – finds an echo in this deeply mournful music written by Mahler.

[1] Sigmund Freud, Jenseits des Lustprinzips, Studienausgabe, Frankfurt a.M.: S.Fischer, 1975 [1920], p. 217-72; here: p. 272. English translation: Beyond the Pleasure Principle, transl. by James Strachey, New York and London: W.W.Norton & Co. 1961, p. 58.

I. LIMPING METHODS

Limping and flying: both terms sound weird when applied to a method of knowing. And yet they originate from a formulation found in the epilogue to one of the most influential texts from the 20th century: *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* by Sigmund Freud from 1920. There he consoles his readers in the following way:

We may take comfort, too, for the slow advances of our scientific knowledge in the words of the poet [Rückert in the *Assemblies of Al-Hariri*]: “What we cannot reach flying we must reach limping.

The Book tells us it is no sin to limp.” [1]

Here we find a complicated rhetorical construction: Freud as a scientist (as he liked to see himself) refers at the end of a highly speculative text to a 19th-century poet. It becomes even more complicated if one considers the text he is quoting here: *Assemblies of Al-Hariri* is an Arabic prose poem that was first published in German translation in 1826. It was translated into German by Friedrich Rückert [2], a Romantic poet who is also known as

the founder of Oriental studies. The Assemblies themselves were written by Al-Hariri, a famous erudite from Basra (b. 446 – d. 515/516 according to the Islamic calendar). “The circumstances of his life,” as Rückert writes, “are unimportant, but his work was highly esteemed in all of the Orient, and because of its difficulty it was glossed and commented by many.”[3] It was clear to Rückert that the Assemblies were virtually untranslatable, since “the core itself, the centre of many of his maqamat is something that adheres to the original language and falls off together with it. In such cases, I provided various substitutes, on which the reader can find comments in the annotations to the particular maqama. But that which could not be solved in any way, I decided to leave out altogether.”[4]

[3]
Friedrich Rückert,
“An die Leser,” in:
Die Makamen des
Hariri,
www.bit.ly/
footnote3.

[4]
Ibidem

In other words, Rückert engaged in poetry and philology at the same time. To practice philology (in other words: to compose a post hoc commentary) and to produce poetry (the “initial” phase of creation) have the same result: they provide substitutes, comment on the present text, and leave out some of its elements. “Providing substitutes” – that leads us closer to Aristotle’s understanding of poetry. His central notion, that of mimesis, has been traditionally interpreted in two ways: as (naturalistic) imitation and veracious representation, or else as performative enactment. Rückert’s substitutes move somewhere in between. However, the term “substitute” also introduces a completely modern notion of poetry, namely that of the Russian formalists such as Roman Jakobson. He established the poetical functions of language as an innovation-generating play of substitution and adjustment: according to him, poeticity is a function of language, in which the linguistic material itself first emerges by being substituted on a “wrong” axis of language; when, for example, an acoustic equivalent dominates the statement instead of a semantic operation, which occurs in rhymes or in alliterative forms of language: Tick, Trick & Track, horrible Henry, klipp & klar.

Therefore, the text quoted by Freud is in itself a multilayered entity in terms of time, place, and language: he uses Arabic poetry from the 12th century – according to the Christian calendar – in a 19th-century German translation in order to make his own undertaking in a very speculative text more plausible. The speculative nature of his text was clear to him. Freud knew that in many “arguments” he did not really know, but rather guessed, and that he was moving far beyond the framework of established methods of scientific reasoning. He even stated precisely why he combined empirical and speculative elements: he wanted to understand a phenomenon that occurred in his patients, which he named “the repetition compulsion”. However, it was a phenomenon that he could not explain by using psychoanalytical theory as it was recognized at the time, and it was also not adequately covered by any other psychological theory. Therefore, in this text he attempted to reposition a weak spot in his own thought, trying at the same time to expand his discipline (psychology).

His problem was the following: in the original theory of the psychological apparatus, everyday dealings and actions are caught between the pleasure principle and the reality principle. According to that idea, the organism is primarily oriented towards the

maximization of pleasure and the minimization of suffering. However, owing to the social character of man and the social norms that are therefore omnipresent, not every pleasure can be obtained immediately and that is the reason for the emergence of the reality principle, which allows an individual to fulfil some desires indirectly, or in a “discounted” form. With early Freud, this results in conflicts which he outlined in his Oedipal scheme, in which the father represents the reality principle, while the mother stands for the “oceanic” of instantaneous gratification. What irritated Freud around the year 1920 was, however, that he was realizing, again and again, that his patients by no means acted so as to avoid suffering, but quite on the contrary: they systematically lived out such situations (e.g. they always repeated the same painful relationship constellations). An even more extreme case was his therapeutic experience with the patients suffering from war neurosis, who were obviously dominated by an obsession to recall their wartime experiences again and again, instead of recollecting in their memory the pleasant experiences they had before the war.

In order to explain the repetition compulsion, Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* takes different approaches: he argues physiologically (along with Gustav Theodor Fechner or Josef Breuer), by looking at the body as a machine that is subject to impetuses, and tries to establish an equilibrium; he argues from the viewpoint of evolutionary biology in order to explain the relationship between reproduction/libido and death; and eventually arrives to the ancient myth of differentiation between man and woman. It is the idea of spherical beings, who get split by Zeus and are ever since searching for their opposite pole, which brings Freud to the death drive. All this he must mobilize in order to give structure to his counterintuitive theory, namely that – firstly – the drives are not oriented forwards, but quite on the contrary, always tend backwards, towards a state of balance, which is why eventually death is the aim of every drive. Secondly, the pleasure principle is not counteracted by the reality principle, but clamped between life drive and death drive: torn between the desire to socialize and the desire to die, the life of instincts is a perpetuum mobile, and life is but a detour leading to death.

Where does that all lead us? In the text, the interpretation of life as a detour itself takes the form of a detour into various bodies of knowledge. In this way, psychoanalysis as an art of interpretation is extended from individual to general matters, yet it remains speculative. Reading of the text requires some detours as well: the connections turn into a labyrinth, the process of reading is deferred, and one inhabits various worlds, times, and genres, all kinds of sciences and artistic artefacts. This is a typical philological procedure: the more one looks at a cultural artefact under the magnifying glass, the more precisely one studies its origins, the more ramified and fantastic that artefact will become. It will transform itself in one’s hands and after interpretation it will already be something else. Limping, that would be – that is the first hypothesis – the philological commentary: as a matter of fact, “footnotes” are added in order to lend some stability to the “limping” text. As for the flying – the poetry – I will come back to that in a moment.

II. INTEREST IN CONDITIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Another Romantic poet offered in his early writings a brief and succinct definition of philology, to the love of language. Friedrich Schlegel wrote in 1797 with decisiveness: “φλ is interest in conditioned knowledge.” And a note on the margins says: “Is all conditioned knowledge φλ and historical?” [5]

[5]
Quoted from:
Caroline Welsh
and Stefan Willer,
“Einleitung”,
in: idem (ed.),
Interesse für
bedingtes Wissen.
Wechsel-beziehungen
zwischen den
Wissenskulturen,
Munich: Fink, 2008,
9-18; here: 9.

Schlegel was interested in separating the realm of philology from that of philosophy. For philosophy is not interested in conditional knowledge; instead, it seeks the absolute, the eternal, and the unconditioned. Poetry, as the third reference point, is according to Schlegel likewise oriented towards the eternal, same as philosophy, yet has a different sensual form and supports philosophy in its quest for the absolute in a very specific form: since the eternal and the unconditioned is always sought, yet remains unreachable per definitionem – it is the drive of philosophy and the sciences, but also their unreachable goal. It is poetry's task to give sensual expression to both the quest and its unreachable quality. But Schlegel also brings poetry close to historiography. In its highest potency, poetry is equivalent to history, both in its capacity to look out into completely foreign times and places, and with regard to its sensitivity for the mutability of certainties. During the Romantic period, the unreachable quality of the absolute made philosophy reflexive as to its own conditions of possibility and thus gave a new role to poetry: it “can also – more than any other form – hover at the midpoint between the represented and representation, free of all real and ideal self-interest, on the wings of poetic reflection, and can raise that reflection again and again to a higher power, can multiply it in an endless succession of mirrors.” [6] Here we again stumble upon the notion of “interest” in the definition of poetry. In this case, poetry is “free of all real and ideal self-interest.” But what does Schlegel mean by interest? It is quite certain that philology is “interested” as it is bound to the present, for example by investigating ancient writings out of its present interest. Poetry is likewise an intermediary field, but it is “disinterested”, since it is in principle oriented towards the non-present; and yet, it moves between the mirrors of the – historically specific – linguistic forms. That is no eternal with a clear temporal form, but such that gets lost in itself like in a labyrinth.

[6]
Kritische
Friedrich-Schlegel
-Ausgabe, vol. 2,
ed. by Ernst Behler
et al. (Munich,
Paderborn, and
Vienna: Schöningh,
1958ff), 182f,
fragment 116.
English translation:
Friedrich Schlegel's
Lucinde and the
Fragments, transl.
by Peter Firchow
(Minneapolis:
University of
Minnesota Press,
1971), p. 175.

Selfreferentiality of language and indecisiveness regarding the facticity of sensual realities are important features of such poetics. Thus irony, one of the preferred styles in Romanticism, “contains and arouses a feeling of indissoluble antagonism between the unconditioned and the conditioned, between the impossibility and the necessity of complete communication.” [7]

[7]
Ibid., p. 368.
English translation:
p. 156.

What is then the relationship between philology and poetry? Philology is bound to the historical conditioning of knowledge, since all human knowledge is tied to language and the language – as shown in the study of ancient writings – is quite obviously changeable. It shows that all form of knowledge and truth is necessarily relative and unperfect; poetry strives – and always fails – to reach the unconditioned and the eternal, but remains – despite its relative autonomy with respect to the present – materi-

ally tied to language and therefore moving within it in a hovering manner, like in the mirror cabinets; it creates its own, self-referential form of reasoning. In its own way, poetry thus shows that all forms of culture are conditioned. Schlegel's question, noted on the margins: "Is all conditioned knowledge $\phi\lambda$ and historical?" can therefore be answered negatively: conditional knowledge needn't be philological or historical; it can also be poetical, only in that case it is perhaps no longer knowledge, but an image or poetry.

Expressed in a more contemporary form, one could say that philology averts knowledge in time: on the one hand, it elaborates the distance to the past, while on the other it clearly shows that all interpretation is bound to the present; poetry, however, goes beyond that; it does not simply accept the conditioning, but strives to change, develop, reshape, and keep in motion the material of language; it does not want to preserve it in a particular moment of history, and therefore it is oriented towards "eternity". That is likewise implied by Friedrich Rückert's characterization of the narrative logic—he calls it economy—of the maqamat:

The economy of the maqamat is utterly simple: each of them is an autonomous poetical household, perfected in itself, without any relations of exchange with the others, without influencing them or being influenced in turn. In each of them, an adventure begins and ends, and the following does not result from the previous; instead, they emerge together from a common centre, the character of the hero, who then finds its full perfection in the complete circle of the maqamat. One does not see the action progress; and yet, the goal is eventually reached; the presentation does not evolve, it moves in a circle. Thus, the arrangement is planetary, or even radiating like the leaves of a palm tree. (...) The poet is inexhaustible while alternating this uniform pattern; he is always fresh, surprising, and entertaining.[8]

[8]
As in n.3.

However, Friederich Schlegel perhaps drew an even more radical conclusion from the Romanticist notion of poetry, namely the call for a "progressive universal poetry", which should mix all genres at its disposal. It should "mix and fuse poetry and prose, inspiration and criticism, the poetry of art and the poetry of nature (...). The romantic art of poetry is still in the state of becoming; that, in fact, is its real essence: that it should forever be becoming and never be perfected." [9]

[9]
As in n.6, 182 f.
English translation:
p. 175.

The impure mixture, the juxtaposition of the incompatible, is therefore the privileged milieu of the linguistic becoming. Poesis and the post hoc of interpretation that comes back onto itself mix, since the former breaks into the unknown future, while the latter in the alien past; and both do that radically situated in the present.

III. THE LABYRINTH AND THE PHANTASTIC

I will jump into the 20th century now in order to ask again the question about the characteristic features of the poetical/philological/philosophical approach. In my opinion, such an approach can be found in Robert Musil's *Man without Qualities*. In this novel, he has invented a literary procedure that he calls "phantastic precision". He prefers it over the "pedantic preci-

[10]
Cf. Joseph Vogl,
Über das Zaudern,
Berlin and Zurich:
Diaphanes, 2007,
75 f.

[11]
Robert Musil,
Der Mann ohne
Eigenschaften I,
Reinbek b. Hamburg:
Rowohlt, 1987,
p. 247.
English translation:
The Man without
Qualities,
transl. by Sophie
Wilkins, New York:
Vintage
International, 1996,
p. 267.

[12]
Ibid., p. 17.
English translation:
p. 12.

[13]
Ibid., p. 247.
English translation:
p. 267.

sion”, such as that of the courtrooms, with their long deposed truths that can get reactivated, always and everywhere, but also that of the sciences. Contrary to that, in his *Man without Qualities* “phantastic precision” is developed as a genuinely literary method. It correlates with his idea of a “sense of possibility”. According to Musil, that sense does not ignore the reality and the facts, but builds up a different relation to them. It is a relation in which the goals and the ways of doing things are multiplied, ramified, and become opaque; [10] constrictions and constraints reveal themselves as made and only relatively purposeful. “Pedantic precision”, oriented towards an alleged objectivity, on the opposite follows itself the figments of imagination, since it suffers from the misunderstanding that man behaves in a rational manner. It ignores the capacity of human beings to fantasize, to interpret, and to create stories and images. [11] The sense of possibility is therefore not only spleen-like, fantastic, and dreamy: it invents alternative chimeras in order to re-evaluate the supposed “reality” and to trace within it possibilities that have hitherto remained undiscovered. The sense of possibility is therefore not simply fishing in muddy waters. “The man with an ordinary sense of reality” – Musil says – “is like a fish that nibbles at the hook but is unaware of the line,” while a man “with that sense of reality which can also be called a sense of possibility trawls a line through the water and has no idea whether there’s any bait on it.” The sense of possibility is a version of the sense of reality rather than its opposite. The goal-orientedness and the alleged factuality of “the life snapping at the bait” [12] deceives Musil against a concrete practice, which occupies and structures space, even though it is at first erratic or – poetic: the trawling of a string through water. According to Musil, this procedure of “phantastic precision” [13] is even truer to the facts than the mere logics of constraint. It is a richer procedure, truer to reality, since it takes into account the fact of human power of imagination and counts on it. The capacity of imagining, of going beyond the given, the supposedly stable present – I believe that it brings us closer to what Schlegel called eternity of poetry.

For Robert Musil, it is therefore the point of taking into account the preconditions of enunciations, to tickle out the fictional parts within the objective, to bring into light the corona of other possible ways of observation and language. All these approaches, however, have a tendency – as it was the case with Schlegel’s mirror cabinets – to reach no end, to ramify actions into absurdity, to run back into themselves. Robert Musil’s novel is itself the best example: it was never finished. However, the author left a convolute with more than 12 thousand sheets and more than 100 thousand annotations and cross-references, which are since 2009 available as a digital edition. And yet, it is precisely Musil’s project that also shows how productive it can be to get lost in labyrinths. Rückert’s characterization of the maqamat here certainly finds its use: *The Man without Qualities* is inexhaustible, it is always fresh, surprising, and entertaining (even if its hero no longer finds his perfection).

What happens in this ramifying procedures – Kafka would be another specialist in this field, or Samuel Beckett – is a cultiva-

tion of the art of limping and stumbling, of recoiling and hesitating; the cultivation of questions such as: Couldn't it be different? Is this already the last answer? Is there no other way?

In his book on hesitation, Joseph Vogl quotes a conversation between Samuel Beckett and his biographer James Knowlson, which talks about this moment of procrastination, of not-having-yet-decided:

But there is always an "in-between". "I will get up now." One doesn't do it. "I will get up now." And then one does it, as if by magic. As if by magic: that means all that we fail to understand. I tell him (Beckett) of telling someone who is obviously in a state of catatonic immobility: "Try harder." Ridiculous. "Try harder." Still nothing. One talks to him, warns him, or even shakes him. No reaction. And then, when he begins to speak perfectly clear, as if he had never been immobilized, one will never find out what made him break out of the circle in which he was turning. Just a while ago he was caught in it, and then he isn't anymore. Beckett commented on my description: "That is as if an animal were sitting in one's head, for which one tries to find a voice; and one tries to lend it one's own voice." [14]

[14]
As in n.10,
p. 77.

The labyrinth of will, the riddle of intentional action, the historical conditionality of enunciation: We can investigate all that only by limping and in the mode of post hoc ergo propter hoc. A simple "if-then" operation is not sufficient to analyse voices for such entanglements.

In my introductory examples philology as limping and the poetry as flying (Freud, Rückert, Schlegel) were unfolded. In the 20th century they seem to have been reduced to mere limping: even poetry is now a sort of limping, it has turned into a cramped movement. There is no disinterested hovering in mirror cabinets; there are only stumbling efforts in labyrinths.

IV. THE MAGIC OF MIXTURE

Where has the flying gone? It seems to be sensible to consult two philosophers who have determined the notion of "lines of flight": Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Their thought is an impressive document of an attempt to create space for a movement of thought beyond the enlightenment utopias of liberation; a movement that seeks to free itself from blackmailing discursive formations. Whereas we are constantly presented with a lack of alternatives, supported by allegedly rational arguments, it is the confusing diversities of the concrete that already contain the bases for all possible flights.

To identify and comment these bases, and to bring them into surprising contact – that is, according to Deleuze and Guattari, the task of philosophy. Using the words of Isabelle Stengers, we may say that they are trying to "create (...) an in-between space in the ground of good reasons." [15] What are the methods used by Deleuze and Guattari? It is somewhat like Schlegel's "progressive universal poetry": they mix and juxtapose the most heterogeneous images, narrative particles, philosophemes, and "facts" from the sciences, from philosophy and from the arts in order to generate surprising insights. Philosophy itself has here largely become literature. Deleuze and Guattari have transformed the causal

[15]
Isabelle Stengers,
Spekulativer
Konstruktivismus,
Berlin: Merve, 2008,
p. 160.

chains of philosophy into a machine of referential operators, which reveals the conditioning of certainties in ever fresh ways.

Thus we have moved from considerations about the proximity of philology and poetry to the contemporary affinity of artistic procedures and the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari. In the process, however, it has become indistinguishable whether about the artefacts we are dealing with are philosophy, philology, or poetry. Perhaps it is simply a sort of thinking as magic, if we understand magic as an art of mixing. Isabelle Stengers has characterized the magic of such thinking analogous to the procedure of contemporary practice of the sorcerers, as the magic of a “moment, a book, a look, of all that which brings us into the state of thinking and feeling differently.” [16]

[16]
Ibid.,
p. 178.

It is quite sure that we owe to the Humanities, which have dared to reach ever further in the exploration of what is knowledge in the first place, to their interest for historical conditions, that the borderline between artistic and scientific practices has become porous. On the basis of historical epistemology, but also philology, we can observe different cultures of knowledge and different practices of perceiving the world non-hierarchically to one another; we can compare their forms of presentation, their lines of argumentation, and their stories. We can thereby also observe how the patterns of interpretation impose themselves on what we seem to know and how knowledge is presented as necessity or inevitable truth. Now we can begin to question these allegedly self-evident patterns, or even rearrange them. The arts have taken part in that process; and they have remained, even more than philosophy and philology, true to the magic of mixtures.

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