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THE ORDER OF THE SUBJECT: REFLECTIONS ON POSTMODERNISM STARTING FROM SOME RECENT PUBLICATIONS ⁽¹⁾

The problematic eccentricity of postmodernism – In recent years the interest in the relationship between geography and philosophy has been renewed also thanks to the publication of two papers by young Italian authors, which although different regarding themes and methods are nevertheless united by the need to study some epistemic and gnoseological nexuses of geography in greater depth and by the necessity to utilize philosophical approaches.

Marcello Tanca, author of *Geography and Philosophy. Work Materials* (FrancoAngeli, 2012) presents the possible historical and methodological intersections between philosophy and geography which Alessandra Bonazzi constantly finds in the recent history of cultural geography (Laterza, 2011). As Tanca notes «the underground history of the interferences between geography and philosophy is still largely waiting to be written» (Tanca, 2012, p. 13), despite the fact that geographic and philosophic discourse are not «separate and distinct fields» (*ibidem*) but codes that meet and mix constantly.

The urgency for geography to carry out a systematic debate is evident in works such as those by Tanca and Bonazzi: *it is becoming ever more difficult to carry out good geography without referring to philosophical discourse*.

Tanca defines his own geography as eccentric respect to the standard approaches, both for method and for the themes he deals with, while Bonazzi's approach is heretical, which summarizes the situation of thirty years of *cultural studies*. Be it «eccentric» or «heretical», the geography that intercepts the postmodern is perceived by its authors as critical thought differing from the dominant discourses and with a strong subversive potential ⁽²⁾.

(1) The reflections that make up this paper are based on two texts which were originally to be reviewed (Bonazzi, 2011; Tanca, 2012). Given that the central topic developed here is the relationship of postmodernism with modernity it was decided, as regards the book by Marcello Tanca, to concentrate attention on the dense chapter dedicated to Michel Foucault, omitting the other, no less important, essays which make up a constellation on the relationship between philosophy and geography in some of the most important thinkers of the last two centuries.

(2) The studies of the two authors have the same “tutelary deity”, Franco Farinelli, who has made the relationships between geography and power the distinctive feature of his provident work, which has legitimated the geographic discourse, «poor» from the theoretic point of view, overturning the

Although a strong dose of eccentricity and heresy is necessary for geography, it is legitimate to ask how much there is in the culturalist shift and in postmodernism in general. Is it free from compromises with the regime of truth characteristic of modernity? ⁽³⁾ Does it respond effectively to the challenges that the relationship with politics involves? Does it maintain the promise to combat the hegemony of power in favour of the multiplicity of points of view?

The hypothesis that this paper will try to demonstrate is that postmodernism leads to the fulfilment of modernity thus by strengthening the same traits that it has tried to criticize. An indication of continuity is the constant presence of subjectivism.

The comparison with philosophy leads to the questioning of the epistemic assumptions at the basis of the practice of geography, and it is this that will be done here with the postmodern approach using the texts by the above mentioned authors as a starting point, therefore as a cue to start reflection and debate and without any claims to be exhaustive. The organization of the paper follows as a result, in the first part a careful critique of the themes dealt with by Tanca and Bonazzi will show several keys of the geographic postmodernism coherent with subjectivism: instrument, relation, will, condition and point of view. The second part will demonstrate that these keys are attributable not to just any subjectivism but rather to that which arises with modernity and more precisely in Cartesian metaphysics.

One of the essential critical problems of postmodernism in geography is precisely the subject of "point of view": is it the individual or rather the subject of modern metaphysics? Without this distinction it would be impossible to demonstrate the contradictions of postmodernism and that which we here define as subjectivism would remain indeterminate.

The consequences of these lines of reasoning bring to light the fact that concepts which have become usual in geography, such as the equivalence knowledge/instrument, nature/extended thing and as well, the point of view, the relation and constructivism in general have an unstable foundation.

For geographers the use of categories serves to avoid contradictions but not only, the mastering of apparently distant methods allows the experimentation of the unity of knowledge and the practising of one's own discipline with greater awareness. If the field of epistemic reflection were left only to the philosopher then the geographer would have difficulty even in forming an idea of what the others have thought to his advantage. Possessing the basis of philosophical reasoning involves a reflection which starts from the unity of the knowledge to then regain a path which is specific to geography, autonomous but always connected to the totality ⁽⁴⁾.

relationship of strength with philosophers. Geography thus reveals itself to be a foundation of the entire western speculation thanks to the table and its Anaximander-like use (Farinelli, 2003).

(3) In this paper the term modernity refers to the historical-existential process that, conventionally, goes from Descartes to the present day.

(6) Robert Tally, on the contrary, limits himself to experimenting the «loan» of a fundamental category for geography, spatiality, to another disciplinary field, but he does not question its content and relative theoretical legitimacy (2013).

Knowledge as instrument and power as technology: the world is (still) res extensa. – The deconstructionists criticize the classical metaphysics of Descartes, Kant and Hegel to question modernity as exclusivism of truth and false objectivity. The pretension to demonstrate the incontrovertible truth of the world is attacked to the point of denouncing the intrinsic political and imperialistic nature.

Although one of the strong points of the deconstructionists is in the critique of every foundation they remain entrapped just the same in the founding process of the I as subject. The critique of objectivism, in effect, should also involve the role of the subject, since it makes up an inseparable hendiadys with the object. It follows that the principal critical objective, the *reductio ad unum* of the multiplicity of the world, not only is not knocked down but rather continues to guide the proposals. In order to comprehend the problematic node it is necessary to follow the path of deconstructionism between knowledge and power, which leads to a new type of politics based on will.

For Bonazzi the implicit assumption of *New Cultural Geography*, one of the most advanced points of postmodernism in geography, is the contamination between culture and politics (Bonazzi, 2011, p. XIII): «the aim of geography is to explain the whole of the political, economic and material relations that are responsible for the construction of the cultural landscapes in which they are found, strengthen and legitimize» the cultural identities (Bonazzi, 2011, p. XII). Culture, therefore, is no longer the prime cause which explains everything, but represents the *medium* between the social relations and the processes of appropriation of space (Bonazzi, 2011, p. 97). The landscape, in particular, is «the paradigm of comprehension for the functioning of the world and of the social political and cultural relations which define its space » (Bonazzi, 2011, p. 125).

This means that culture, as Raymond Williams concurs, is a social product and an instrument of power which at the same time allows the understanding of and permits the relations of power within society (Williams, 1968). That which is said is not important but instead, who it is said by, and as a consequence culture is «...a means to ensure for the élites...the dominion and the control over the fields of knowledge, over individuals and over society» (Bonazzi, 2011, p. 47) ⁽⁵⁾. It can be concluded that culture is an instrument, in so far as it is necessary. The relationship between knowledge and politics is rediscovered in the logic of means-ends, to the point of marking an important moment in movement towards subjectivism. Being an instrument means that the knowing-subject selects the object of knowledge and gives it meaning, therefore no object pre-exists discourse and power. Knowledge is an instrument for

(5) Bonazzi specifies, supported by Williams, that the relationship between society and culture is not rigidly equivalent to that between structure and superstructure (Bonazzi, 2011, p. 78). Caution advises avoiding the association of determinism to postmodernism, although this latter mostly functions on the generative relationship between text and context, where the former makes sense thanks to the latter.

the subject in its constant action of change on the world, it is the way in which every entity is subjugated to its will ⁽⁶⁾.

If knowledge is an instrument, then also power is mechanical, «technological». Power, for example in Michel Foucault, is a multiplicity of relations and of relationships of changing forces (Tanca, 2012, p. 204-205), it is circular, totalizing, but also produces waste that allows forms of opposition. The Foucaultian critique becomes analytical of power in the attempt to separate the flows which make it up ⁽⁷⁾.

Although Foucault did not develop a systematic notion of space, nevertheless spatial organization assumes a central role in the comprehension of technology of the disciplinary power and in the reaction to it. The genesis of the discourses should not be analyzed starting from types of consciousness, perceptions or ideologies, but on the basis of the strategies of power. The strategies have a spatial dimension, therefore the organization of space permits the deciphering of the relationship between the strategies of power and the structuring of the dominant discourses (Tanca, 2012, p. 195). Foucault is not as interested in space itself as in the spatial dimension of the practices of power, that is distribution, dividing lines, settlements, control of the territory. Following Tanca, for Foucault geography is not a form of knowledge like others, but «the condition of possibility of every knowledge, of every discourse and of every practice of power» (Tanca, 2012, p. 196).

Knowledge and power do not identify with each other, otherwise there would be no sense in trying to understand their constant and numerous relationships. The capacity of power to articulate itself in knowledge and to generate a discourse and a dominant practice is only activated spatially, since power is, above all, a relation and the relation is proximity, that is, it is local. The centrality of the concept of relation seems to synthesize the effort by Tanca to demonstrate the spatial character of Foucaultian thought; only via relations the nexus knowledge-power will be able to render concrete its hegemony in a given society and produce a regime of truth (Tanca, 2012, p. 213). As a consequence, Foucaultian space is discontinuous and heterogeneous, a variable aggregate of the flows produced by the relations of power in a specific situation.

The reduction of the world to a mechanism is functional to the possibility to perform it with maximum efficiency.

Being a performative and political instrument, the knowledge that postmodernists revitalize has nothing to do with the so-called high culture but on the contrary seeks out confirmation in social practices. The practical meaning of *New Cultural Geography*

(6) Foucault cleared better than others that knowledge is not an instrument at the service of someone but rather of something. The relations of power always need to find physical form and this explains why a little above there is the reference to the corporeality of the dominant. However, the relations of knowledge-power do not function based on the awareness of the actor but rather on the quality of the practices of power, which characterize an era independently of the awareness with which they are carried out. To use an image, power is like a theatre in which the mask denotes the actor, and rarely the contrary. All the sense of the operation of Foucault lies in the invitation to know how to choose one's own mask.

(7) In so much as it is analytical effort, that is, of that which unties, Foucault preferred to speak of relations of power rather than power.

lies in reconnecting culture with society in its entirety, in so much as it is no longer a system of ideas but instead of doing. Both in the case of Foucault and of Richard Hoggart the attention on lowly knowledge is totally functional to the practical aim of knowledge, that is, «change» the world: «theory is politics and every theory acts as a practice on the world» (Bonazzi, 2011, p. 92).

Cultural Studies, and in particular Hoggart, combat the culture of the bourgeoisie understood as culture on high which looks down at that below, that is, at the popular cultural practices and the working classes (Hoggart, 1970). It is an inevitable transition if one starts from the premise that culture is a performative practice that establishes relations of power between classes. High and low are no longer a qualitative distinctions, but are social, of power, an evident sign that culture is above all political. If society consists of the struggle between diverse cultural forms, that is diverse classes, *Cultural Studies* give voice to the disadvantaged social component in order to transform the existing relations of power. They reveal the arbitrary character of power and they take the part of the oppressed in order to try to build a more socially just space.

Also for Foucault «lowly» knowledge (but in the sense of «technical») help us to understand the functioning of society and the transformation of the relations of power in regimes of truth. For the development of our societies the routine practices of doctors and administrators are more relevant than the thoughts of philosophers. Thought is no longer the paradigm of an era, a role now played by disseminated knowledge, in the same way that what is important is not the vertex but the social mechanism and its functioning. The traditional barriers between science and politics no longer have reason to exist, given that, once the modality through which the knowledge produces power has been revealed, it is demonstrated that the choice of knowledge implies a political position. An example is the biography of Foucault, which dedicated entire lines of research only to political themes, as for example surveillance systems, which served the polemic about the necessity to reform the prison regime.

The world needs to be a set of mechanisms to be able to employ them freely: understanding the social mechanisms allows access to the maps of power. The possibility of the change/possession is given, however, by the instrumental character of the knowledge, that is by its capacity to be a functional means to the aim. In this sense the knowledge changes the world, that is, first it represents it as a mass of mechanisms and then constructs and produces the instruments suitable to modify it. This is why the space of the postmodernists is an effect of the practices of representation, construction and production of the subject. It follows that the same instrumental character of knowledge and mechanism of power belong to the will of the subject to place the object of personal knowing.

Power is deception, point of view and will: authenticity as dinner-guest of stone. - The recovery of the political dimension of culture does not open to a positive relationship with power, but rather a conflictual one. The conflict arises from the discovery of the

deception by authority, based on a point of view that strives to make itself universal. This is why postmodernism has in the anti-hegemonic struggle its own principal political objective, as well as the fundamental polemic node towards modern culture.

The dominant representations are only privileged points of view: «Postmodernism...to the totality of the great narratives presents the fragment, to foundation caducity» (Bonazzi, 2011, p. 22). The point of view is the rule of representation, which renders the subjectivity of the observer, conditioned by context, the norm of knowledge. There is no true knowledge, but only interpretations, that depend on the relationship between the position of the subject and that of the object (*ibidem*). Deception, point of view and will intertwine constantly and make up the vision of power characteristic of postmodernism.

Landscape, for example, is produced by economic, social and cultural relations which it then tends to conceal. Landscape is «the careful selection of functional elements to represent the meaning of the world according to a precise point of view or command» (Bonazzi, 2011, p. 123) and therefore it becomes «inadvertent exercise or coercion» (*ibidem*), which causes only the values specific to the ruling class to be shared. The landscape truly functions when it cancels the relations of power that have produced it, so as to present itself as anonymous but precisely for this reason it is even more powerful, as it is taken for granted. Power is silent.

Antonio Gramsci, Foucault and Gunnar Olsson have played a key role in revealing the silent and deceptive character of power ⁽⁸⁾.

The Gramscian vision maintains that winning hegemony means imparting one's own moral, social and cultural direction to society, while making it believe that this partial vision of the world corresponds to a universal position. In this passage, the particular interest linked to one's own point of view is blurred and the ambiguity which characterizes every hegemony is generated (Bonazzi, 2011, p. 87), which manifests in the fine tuning of the assumptions which render the predominance of one group acceptable. Hegemony is a dynamic relationship which never exhausts the social field, there is always something that escapes it and therefore a counter-hegemonic discourse that contends the match against the dominant (Gramsci, 1977). Thanks to Gramsci, *Cultural Studies* possess the methodology to explain how intellectuals play a key role in the maintenance of the hegemony of a class through the organization of cultural hegemony.

In the same way, also one of Foucault's most lasting lessons regards the cunningness of power. Its circular nature means that it is everywhere, hidden precisely there where least expected, in a medical record or in a building development plan, in a newspaper headline or in an advert. The symbiotic relationship between power and knowledge means that even the most seemingly innocent actions reveal themselves to be relations of power, just as stubborn as they are anonymous. In order to live knowingly it is the individual's task to free himself from all the «secret» devices thanks

(8) Among the authors discussed most by Tanca and Bonazzi these three are those who are best suited to the theme of deception and authority.

to a critical capacity which is able to abandon a life not lived according to conscience. As a reminder of care of self (a theme dear to the Frenchman) we can see a call for awareness, to be awake (Foucault, 2004) ⁽⁹⁾.

In the postmodern roaming the abyssal thought of Gunnar Olsson outlines a map of the daily-life in which we are immersed, determined by power and which presents itself as normal, familiar, although its nature is anything but benevolent. Olsson challenges the appearance of the world, even if not in the name of the real world but in order to encourage us to choose the appearance we wish to embody. Olsson questions the mechanisms of appearance but not to escape them, but rather in order to be a «conscious» user (Olsson, 2007).

The implicit or explicit call that various authors close to postmodernist sensibility have made for awareness highlights a limit in the argument. Awareness presents a problem of authenticity, that is, of truth. The world of truth, however, has already been eliminated, therefore it is not possible to take a position on representation and be able to declare freely to the point that we can think that we are able to act with authenticity. In geographical terms: how can a man judge his own position if not by looking at it? And if he observes it, he will not have reached an awareness of the representation «other» than the position which he is occupying? ⁽¹⁰⁾.

The problem is not so much the discovery of a contradiction, but rather noting the presence of an unconscious mechanism in the reasoning and then to analyze what the paradigm of truth implicit in postmodernism consists of.

Apparently, postmodernism delegitimizes power in so far as it delegitimises the authority of truth and leads to a struggle without quarter against every form of knowledge that claims for itself a universal nature, thus to return it to its own position and render it a point of view (Bonazzi, 2011, p. 166). All this is evident from the role of knowledge in Foucault, which does not serve to destroy power but rather to dismantle the relationship between knowledge, power and truth, to then declare that every power that claims to be legitimate on the basis of true knowledge is misleading: it is not a question of freeing truth from power, but rather to separate the power of the truth from the forms of hegemony (Tanca, 2012, p. 223). Ultimately, this is not so very different from the realist principle according to which power is not good but necessary; in both cases the result is that the problem of power is separated from that of justice and truth. We do not have to free ourselves from power but from its deceptively just character.

Once the trick is revealed, the nudity of the Emperor prevents us from accepting his reasons, which will always be the reasons of some but never of everyone. Undoubtedly, a stupid opinion will continue to receive less attention than an intelligent one and certainly Foucault does not take away from us the means to distinguish.

(12) Here there is the first and fundamentally political and practical statement of Foucaultian thought. However, what the attributes of this «awake» man are, still needs to be made clear.

(13) And if instead we wanted to maintain that the representation is always deception, in so far as it is fruit of an oscillating context, then our task should be reduced to maintaining misleading projects only because (apparently) they are contiguous with our position?

However, in politics the disappearance of the nexus between truth and power means that it is no longer possible to decide on the goodness of an instance on the basis of the criterion of truth. Without the criterion of truth, the use of demonstrative systems finalized to overcoming each other becomes useless. Politics will be carried out only by subjects and science will have value only as deconstruction of the power.

Given these premises, the critical Foucaultian knowledge is found to be incapable of *knowingly* constructing the alternative. The deconstruction of the concept of truth and authority impedes the search for legitimization of power. The critique of every foundation does not allow postmodernism to discuss its own foundation, rendering the problem of power extremely insidious and obscure. But precisely the reduction to «point of view» hints that a paradigm of truth moves forward in postmodernism, although perhaps unknowingly: subjectivism. The constant call for awareness and authenticity finds coherence only in the metaphysical qualities of the subject, which now take the shape of an invisible symbol of a new form of authority. On the postmodernist plane, authenticity can be experienced only as point of view and will. It will be necessary, therefore, to recognize point of view and will as criteria of truth. All this does not render the criticism ineffective, but rather it reveals its true nature.

Tanca, as in other respects Bonazzi, attempts to identify an assertive aspect (non subjectivist) in postmodernism when he specifies that the thought of Foucault does not limit itself to identifying the lack of awareness in what we do and say, but invites us to think and do different things. The invitation derives from the awareness of the conditioning which the relations of power operate on us and the possibility to think differently starting from the liberation from illusions. The truth of the freed in Foucault constitutes the possibility to be authentic doers of the world, but this liberation consigns man not to himself but rather to the subject.

The attempts to give form to a concrete political proposal underline the role of voluntarism and have no other outcome than to conceal the incomprehension for metaphysical subjectivism. Now, culture possesses a voluntaristic aspect which permits the transformation of the world and it is the subject which is proprietor of the transformative work. In cultural production, nature functions only as a thing-like element in contrast to man who instead completely appropriates the cultural sphere understood as the product of the intellect. It follows that the destruction of the Leviathan can only come to pass through an appropriation of the discourses and for the recognition of the possibility of the subject to create and recreate the world. The link between will and culture is particularly evident in Denis Cosgrove and Edward Soja.

Cosgrove, a neo-Marxist, confirms that power-knowledge is deception and point of view, so that landscape is an instrument of government which reiterates the dominant ideology and supports it. If cultural geography wants to reunite theory and praxis it has to attack the alienated landscapes of capitalism in order to favour «the production of new landscapes» (Bonazzi, 2011, p. 41). Culture, for Cosgrove, is not a residual category but is the *medium* which allows the expression of every instance of social

change (Bonazzi, 2011, p. 42), therefore creating culture will mean equipping oneself with an instrument whose aim is to modify the material relations. The Marxism of Cosgrove no longer believes in the Hegelian self-affirmation of a society without classes, therefore culture as will is the principal instrument of this change. From will, and not from a sense of history, will depend the transformation into reality of the reasonings of socialism (Cosgrove and Jackson, 1987).

Soja, in particular, has continued with the more coherent attempt to overcome the political limits of postmodernism. Space, in as much as it is a condition of possibility of social organization, permits the production and reproduction of hegemony within the social context: «the active construction of the space of our lives through actions and discourses obliges us to become aware of the political and social consequences of such a construction» (Bonazzi, 2011, p. 114). Soja theorizes a space in which conscious action produces new practices and permits freedom from social conditioning. The daily life of the «non aware» is affected by practices derived from constant reproduction of certain social and spatial contexts. Soja's space, however, tries to constantly open towards otherness, overcoming and questioning its own boundaries. It is the third space, the creative dimension, that remodels the social space in a conscious way; placed on the limit, on the boundary, it attempts to hold together praxis and theory (Bonazzi, 2011, p. 117).

Soja's method is based on the antagonistic character of politics. Politics is possibility, but absolute possibility, that is, freed from every link with context, if not in terms of opposition. The dialectic character of politics means that the third space is the place of pure will, that is, freed from every bond that is not one's own conscience, therefore it will be the moment of reification of subjectivism (Soja, 1996). This oppositional antagonism renders the more radical dimension of cultural geography a form of dualism: the movement of will against the stasis of the «hegemonic» relations of production which have by now become landscape.

Geographers rouse us and remind us that, ultimately, the world is pure will. The extreme outcome of the Nietzschean statement has not been at all rendered obsolete, but rather made true. The following pages will demonstrate this.

Will and representation: postmodernism out to conquer the world. - However, the path delineated so far is not enough to establish the centrality of deconstructionism for modern discourse. The thought that Tanca and Bonazzi have called into question will now be made to react with the lesson of Martin Heidegger. Postmodernism accomplishes what Descartes started, that is, subjectivism, the fundamental metaphysical position of modernity which renders the subject the judge of every entity (Heidegger, 2003, p. 166). It is here that the modern forms of hegemony and of homogenization find their foundation and point of conjunction with deconstructionism. We have identified in culture as instrument to change the world, in politics as will and in point of view the knots which tie postmodernism to

subjectivism. It must now be demonstrated that instrument, will and point of view do not refer to a subject understood as individual, but rather to the metaphysics of the subject, foundation of truth ⁽¹⁴⁾.

We will begin specifically from the demonstration that the «point of view» does not refer to the individual but to the subject. It fell to Descartes, in the field of speculation (Heidegger, 2003, p. 168), to establish that *the way of being of the new type of man, the subject, consists in witnessing the certainty of the representing* (Heidegger, 2003, p. 197): «to the representing belongs, by essence, the reference to he who represents and towards this latter is gathered all the representedness of the represented» (Heidegger, 2003, p. 195). Starting from Descartes thought // thinking means representing (Heidegger, 2003, p. 180), that is taking possession of something by placing it before oneself. An entity is represented / thought only if it is *available* for use by of the subject: «The represented is time by time made safe within the horizon of the calculating disposition» (Heidegger, 2003, p. 182). Being available means that the representing determines the essence of the entity, established time by time on the basis of what has value for man (Heidegger, 2003, p. 218).

Modern man bases the stability of his knowledge on his capacity to represent and even if more than can be represented *exists*, however only that which is represented is *certain*: «Man is the eminent foundation that is-at-the root of every re-presentation of the entity and of its truth, and on which every representing and what in this is represented are and must be placed in order to have stability and existence» (Heidegger, 2003, p. 203). Nature is *res extensa* only when the subject is self-founded as a measure of the entity. Nature becomes object for the subject, thus rendering every form of assurance of the subject certain.

The point of view is an activity of representation because every entity is measured from the position of the observer. It is a fact that it is the position that has a founding relevance, independent from the individual circumstances of the observer. From here, postmodernist gnoseologia finds its foundation in the law of representation given that representer and represented are both part of the act of representing. The representing activity of the subject is first and foremost self-awareness, from the moment that the subject itself is involved. Indeed, he who represents, holds the represented in front of himself and in this sense forms part of the representing (Heidegger, 2003, p. 185). In every representing it is inherent that the representing activity «takes place within the horizon of he who represents» (*ibidem*). It follows that awareness of objects is first and

(14) Stuart Elden has highlighted the influence of Heidegger on Foucault and developed spatiality as an interpretative pivot of the affinity which unites them. The aim of Elden is to use the thought of Foucault and Heidegger to support the birth of a spatial history, where the comprehension of the historical fact is joined to the study of the place. Foucault, Heidegger and Nietzsche lead history towards the present, that is, the critical study of the past is functional to taking a position in the present, not simply in order to understand it. However, here too he proceeds more by philological assonance than by real demonstrations. In Heidegger, Elden is searching for a thought regarding space but without explaining its foundation (Elden, 2001).

foremost self-awareness, or rather, the same possibility of the object is based on the certainty of the subject. In the language of deconstructionists we would say that every knowledge is subject to the point of view, that is, the observer is not neutral respect to the observed. Given that the point of view may use the entity on the basis of the certainty offered by self, it can be deduced that the point of view does not refer to any individual but rather to the subject of modern metaphysics.

The deconstructionists still move along the well-worn path first trod by Descartes because they consider known only that which is represented by man and therefore for them *all knowledge can be gathered in favour of he who knows*. Although they deconstruct the certainty of that which is represented, nevertheless they take possession of the sequence represent-know, *or that every knowing is a representing*. The *representing* is not questioned. The entity is equivalent to that which is represented, therefore «man can decide (...) about the entity as such, in its whole, as he assigns the measure of the entity-ness of every entity» (Heidegger, 2003, p. 206). In so far as he is subject, man establishes the dimension of the entity, so as not to restrict its availability within any limit (*ibidem*). The fact that things no longer exist, but instead their interpretations, does nothing but confirm the initial assumption. The interpretation is the possibility given to the world to exist through the *medium* of the subject.

The reflexions on point of view as form of subjectivism are confirmed in the attention that a (neo)Marxist like Harvey gives to the body, an irreducible point for the new position of values (Bonazzi, 2011, p. 149) and the overcoming of the limits of the transcendent modern subjectivism. However, despite everything the attempt is ineffective, because it tries to join together body and point of view. Subjectivism is born, in effect, from the centrality of self-respect to the extended material. The subject has complete decisional power over the body and this demonstrates that the ultimate source of legitimacy lies precisely in the determining subject. It is the point of view that decides about the body, in so far as it presumes a transcendent subject that takes a position regarding the world, presenting itself as foundation of its knowability.

If the point of view represents the new paradigm of truth, then it is not correct to assert that postmodernism rejects the logic of sense. It recognizes the essential role of will, therefore it is founded on the subject and its goal is will itself.

We can demonstrate this, for example, by observing that in postmodernism truth and error are functional to the relations of power and of point of view only if distinguishable according to the need to ensure more strength to the subject: «Modern metaphysics (...) in so far as it is metaphysics of subjectivity manages to pass as obvious the opinion that the essence of truth (...) is determined by the hand of man in so much as it is the true subject » (Heidegger, 2003, p. 234).

True and false are distinguished, therefore, thanks to will, which evaluates some things as being important (of value) for power, while others are less so. In fact, the "value is that which is important" (Heidegger, 2003, p. 47) and its essence is evaluating, that is, estimating. But this evaluating is a desire, that is, it is will. The equivalence evaluating-desire is the paradigm of the modern era. The conclusion is that *when things*

are estimated in relation to value, they are in a relation with will. Only the subject can give value because only it can guess what is important starting from its own centrality respect to the entity, therefore for itself. Giving value to things means wanting to dominate them and assure increased power. In this sense, the point of view is the activity of the will which establishes values.

In geography, the investigation of will allows the study of the action of man but also the questioning of the concepts of limits and boundaries. Regarding the latter, it should be remembered that for modern man the essence of truth is the certainty of the subject as entity that is founded on itself. The auto foundation consists in the fact that man has control over his own essence, therefore, «chooses what is constraining and is thus constrained» (Heidegger, 2003, p. 170). The auto foundation of man as subject renders certain every intention and human representation presents itself as foundation of every representability of the entity (Heidegger, 2003, p. 65). The re-presenting is based unconditionally in itself, so *conditions* of possibility of the entity can be established (Heidegger, 2003, p. 287).

It was the postmodernist shift that deconstructed the ideas of constraint, condition and limit, but as a critique of the failed fulfilment of modernity, so as to assure the subject the maximum control over things. The constraints have not disappeared, but rather they are concealed under the false guise of the will of postmodern man. For example, the Kantian metaphor of knowledge as an island in the midst of the Ocean is evaluated as a socially imposed limit, which excludes from its horizon several social classes. In geography however, limit, constraint and condition take the forms of boundaries. Once the notion that every limit is transitory has been established, it can be admitted that the subject has to freely decide over the limits that were formerly placed as unconditional; the only unconditional thing left is the subject and his will. The unconditional, then, is the unconditional pre-eminence of man in the entity and the proof of the process of his strengthening (Heidegger, 2003, p. 67).

It is with Kant that representing becomes «condition» of possibility of the entity. It then fell to Nietzsche to give to the «condition» the name of value (Heidegger, 2003, p. 285). The will of might lays down the conditions that allow it to strengthen itself, therefore value is for this strengthening. It can be concluded that the activity of assigning values is simply an activity which marks out the conditions of possibility of the things: «the assurance of supreme and unconditional self-expression of all the faculties of humanity until unconditional dominion over all the earth is the secret spur that drives modern man to ever newer initiatives, and which compel him to constraints that make safe the assurance of his progress and the security of his ends» (Heidegger, 2003, p. 172). In Kant, the condition is represented by the limit and as such his thought establishes the limit between error and truth in cartographic sense. Also in traditional geography the limit took the form of the Kantian cognitive constraint (Bonazzi, 2011, p. 98-99). The vehement critique of Kant carried forward by postmodernism strikes a chord with Nietzsche's tirade and it follows the same stages.

However, if in postmodern thought the will establishes itself as essence of politics and methodologically as an overcoming of the limit, this occurs in correspondence to the Nietzschean concept of truth. The limit, the condition, the constraint are attacked as a hindrance on the subject's employment of the entity in its whole: «Subjectivity (...) itself now has available all kinds of limitation and of dissolution from limits» (Heidegger, 2003, p. 241). It is the transitory character of the limit in Olsson (Bonazzi, 2011, p. 110) that expresses the availability of every constraint for the subject, which means that its constant overcoming can be thought of as willpower: "Power can maintain itself within itself, that is, in its essence, only by going further and bettering the level of strength reached time by time, therefore by going further and bettering itself" (Heidegger, 2003, p. 33-34). Now the world is "becoming" (Heidegger, 2003, p. 35), but it has no other value than that determined by will. Politics-as-will opens the door to thinking based on values, which is «give value to», that is, the movement by which the subject confers power to the essence of the entity so as to ensure that itself is at the foundation ⁽¹²⁾.

The will and the unconditional as traps of subjectivism.- The problem of the "condition", connected to its geographical equivalents, from border to doorstep, also involves the same contradictions in the work by Foucault, a pillar of the postmodern theory.

Foucault engages in one of the apical attempts of postmodernism to free itself from the subject as transcendence so as to guarantee freedom of action of the individual without falling again into the forms of hegemony and homogenization. Foucault's thesis is that the modern subject has lost in quality respect to the conception which it had in antiquity. Foucault maintains that the subject as action has been replaced by the subject as knowledge in modernity (Foucault, 2004, p. 471). The relationship between care of self (action) and knowledge of self (intellect) is inverted respect to antiquity, which gave precedence to care and established that the apperception of truth by the subject had to undergo the condition of a transformative, ethical process. However, in modernity, truth joins only the cognitive process, that is, the intellectual effort, so that the subject is no longer asked to call itself into question in its quality as self (Foucault, 2004, pp. 15-19). If, in the care of self, truth were a characteristic practical behaviour

(15) The non-representational theory, even though it takes root in *New Cultural Geography*, would seem to deviate substantially from the limits of this on representation, that is, in giving meaning to things. Nigel Thrift's critique strikes every attempt to recover the identity of the subject, while embracing an analysis of action more than of the actor and asserting that every representation merges with the pre-cognitive (Thrift, 2008). Again, for Anderson and Harrison every action is interaction, that involves corporeality as materiality and sociality equally in a constant relational becoming. The subject, as every other phenomenon, is the unstable fruit of the oscillating relations between the entities of which reality is the aggregate (Anderson and Harrison, 2010, p. 23). However, the non-representational theory seems to remain subjectivist precisely because of the relational formulation. Firstly, within multiple relations each of us always occupies a point of view, given that the nodes of the relations establish a position; then the change, which occurs thanks to the event, that is a possibility freed from every constraint of representation but which at the same time creates new constraints and therefore, in reality, coincides with will, true self-interest of subjectivism.

of the good man, now, in the awareness of self, truth is independent from the moral qualities of the individual and it is only made up of rational utterances, that need to be understood and no longer acted out. Foucault's target is the solitary intellection, which creates abstract categories of inclusion and exclusion, in a universalistic pretence that leads modern hegemonism to its zenith.

Despite Foucault's wanting to rehabilitate the care of self against the awareness of self, his problem of study remains modern and Cartesian right from the definition of philosophy as «a form of thought that aims to determine the conditions and the limits within which can come about the access of the subject to the truth» (Foucault, 2004, p. 17). The emphasis on the «conditions of truth» is a sign of truth seen as conscious knowing, that has to reach the certainty of its own representing. If the «condition» is the possibility to represent things and therefore to make them exist, then the subject uses it in its assuring activity bearing them in mind as category and worth (Heidegger, 2003, p. 283), therefore, philosophy in Foucault is thought based on values.

Foucault specifies the conditions of care of self, arguing for philosophical research «interested in recognizing the conditions and the indefinite possibilities of transformation of the subject» (Foucault, 2004, p. 474). The conditions are indefinite for the intellect but however exist, now, thanks to the will of the subject, which gives them value.

The work on self which characterizes the Foucaultian care is the will, that determines if the subject can have access to the truth or not. Although conscious knowing is not, as for Descartes, pure intellection, it remains however, within the realms of modern subjectivity: will and reason, are in fact united in so far as they are attributes of the subject. Depending on will alone, the care of self has no other proof of its own validity except for a slight internal coherence.

The world constitutes, at most, a means or proof for the art of living. But this proof, once again, which should justify a subject which is not the fruit of the mere will, is placed by the subject itself as «condition». The self is the foundation of the relationship of the subject with the world: «...the relationship between self and self as principle, as rule of relations with things, with events and with the world» (Foucault, 2004, p. 485). The world is experienced now as limit from which to free oneself in view of the «authentic self», moment of the self-foundation of the subject (Foucault, 2004, pp. 433-436).

Care needs to be taken to ensure that the failed relationship with the world is not substituted by that with the body. Although care of self demonstrates that ethics and knowledge were inseparable in antiquity, Foucault does not include the body, but rather he attempts to demonstrate the rise of the self as separation from the body (Foucault, 2004, pp. 50-65).

Ancient man, in reality, had to attempt to connect self-mastery with the harmony of the cosmos. The Foucaultian care of self only considers mastery and thus renders itself partial: the failed return to the city and to the cosmos make ancient man, *sub specie* Foucault, a man who measures his own choices only against himself: «a man must not

try to establish what he is by using the system of rights, of obligations that differentiate and place one respect to the others, but rather to question that which he is so as to deduce what is the best course of action» (Foucault, 2004, p. 486) ⁽¹³⁾.

The attempt to recover a stoic moral, crowned during recent years, reaches its peak with the care of self, but outside a community logic. It can be concluded that for Foucault the work on self is finalized to «unconditionality and the autofinality of the relationship of self with self» (Foucault, 2004, p. 480). But only the will is without conditions, therefore the relationship with self will have to be will to be authentic, so, the search for the authenticity of the subject will have a modern outcome, placed in a process of autopoiesis determined by will.

So, as already seen in Nietzsche (Heidegger, 2003, p. 239), postmodernism experiences subjectivity as unconditionality and puts forward, as a consequence, the equivalence of will and truth. The postmodern truth does not determine proportions, gerarchies, demonstrations, but rather «establishes what should be called right and wrong based purely on the strength of its own power » (Heidegger, 2003, p. 240). The hegemonic charge, subtracted from intellect, belongs now to will, freed from any conditioning and precisely for this reason is itself centre, measure and condition for every entity.

The world, reduced to a projection of the subject, therefore a human production, now can be fundamentally modified. If the weapon of critique serves to change the world in a Marxist way (Bonazzi, 2011, p. 166) it is to allow power to explicate itself, so that the world surprisingly resembles realism: «In the space... the bodies and the places are ruthlessly geopolitical» (*ibidem*), that is, bound to the relations of power.

Machiavelli had already sensed that reality is very different from how we wish it to be. The assumption, explained by Herbert Spencer, means that thought (constructive) can only occupy itself with the world of utopia and of voluntarism, to the point that the world as it is becomes a disenchanted reality, or rather, the concept itself of reality coincides with disenchantment. In the same way, for the critics of realism the world of voluntarism is the world as we would like it to be, set against the conflictuality of the relations of power of the world as it is. This dichotomy results in the supremacy of the subject, which will tend to overcome it dispensing with the world according to its own will.

(16) Foucault's attempt can be summarized in the seizure from ancient ethics of the aristocratic sense, of reserved benefit, maintaining it however, in opposition to the universalizing moral as much Christian as it is modern, the emphasis on care of self, that is on an ethic which makes proposals and not an obligatory codification. However, it is a difficult operation: it is hard to imagine an ethic of the proof of self which makes no distinction between he who begins a path of realization and he who does not. It would be like saying that testing oneself only has an exclusively individual value, devoid of effects on the city and on the world. How can we imagine the Greek man outside of the political dimension? Precisely because truth has a practical dimension, practically it has to be at work. It is difficult to hypothesize a concrete ethic of distance. The question arises as to whether in Foucault's last course, dedicated to the Cynics, he wanted to hint that the only subjective ethic possible lies in provocation.

The silent hegemony of the postmodern subject. - The «practical» thought of postmodernism becomes confused with voluntarism because every possibility to act is confused with will. Thus the dualism between stasis and movement is created, where the latter is equal to will.

The world is change when it is held that movement is superior to stasis and this is why the end of the work by Bonazzi, dedicated to the work by Cresswell (2006), is truly the best possible. The landscape is «a social active process» (Bonazzi, 2011, p. 11), in which process indicates mobility, or «a sort of silent, white space which presents itself as an alternative to place, to narrowness, to foundation and to stability» (Bonazzi, 2011, p. 11). Space is sedimentation of movement, thus strengthening the dignity of the dynamic of stasis. The uncertainty of landscape is the absolute freedom for the will of the subject from every constraint to the representability of the landscape itself.

In politics, Tanca proposes the overcoming of the model of the Leviathan, that is, of the modern European centralized and monolithic state, which has deceived us with the pretence of representing society in its totality. The anti-hegemonic role of the net supported by Tanca leaves unanswered, however, disturbing questions. The ever more microphysical dimension of power, widespread and manifold, would permit the destruction of the Leviathan, that is, of the pretence of uniqueness of truth and therefore of power: «society is an archipelago of diverse powers» (Tanca, 2012, p. 207). In this sense power would not disappear with its misleading and coercive outcomes, it would however be unmasked and rendered less «unjust» from its well-known mutability, which would assure the possibility to be at one time subject of power and subjugated. This dual dimension would make the most hateful aspect of power, its hegemonic character, disappear. Not by chance, Foucault is the philosopher of the fragment who declares the totality dead in favour of differences, flows and concatenations. Once the hegemonic charge of modern power's claim to justify according to truth has been defeated, the microphysical power however, remains. Its pervasive character conceals, despite every effort, the same peril that Foucault saw in the Leviathan: deception. If power is widespread it is easier to lose sight of the conditionings of our authenticity/will. The Leviathan, ultimately, allowed a major recognisability of the conditionings because they derived from a single point. The problem of authenticity, which seems to be at the centre of the reflections of the postmodernists, becomes less clear in the society of pervasive power.

But the deception inherent in power is not the only political problem that postmodernism leaves open. The hegemonic and homogenizing thought remains unknowingly the way through which the deconstructionists exercise their relationship with the world. The postmodernist solution consists of multiplying the «constraints» (points of view) of the representation, which give order and strength. The relations of power are multiplied but sight is lost of the fact that the entity-man has already established his predominion over all other entities. The multiplication of the constraints/points of view is only one aspect of the *decisional power* of man, who even before *is he who places* the constraints. The hegemonic (metaphysical) character of the

point of view cannot be avoided by multiplying it because the recognition of the multiplicity already has at its base an idea of the world as representation, which is hegemony.

Above all, reality for the postmodernists is afflicted by an absolute conflictuality from the moment that the points of view, in so far as a form of representing, are irreducible to something else respect to their own subjectivity.

The state of mind from which postmodernism emerges is *bewilderment* (Heidegger, 2003, p. 76), prophetically sensed by Nietzsche with reference to the ultimate form of nihilism: "in this position the reality of the becoming as the *unique* reality is acknowledged, every sort of alternative path to reach worlds behind worlds and to false divinities is forbidden - but *this world which cannot be denied is only with difficulty tolerated* ..." (Nietzsche, 1979, p. 257).

The postmodern critique is not sufficiently eccentric to overcome the quick sands of modernity and its hegemonic and homogenizing outcomes, but only one of the latest forms in which the will of the man-representer is given: «the man who represents, decides for himself, from the beginning and everywhere, what has value as place and as constant» (Heidegger, 2003, p. 188). The key concepts of postmodernism which have entered geographic culture and are discussed here, from point of view to relation, to constructivism, compose an organic whole whose contradictions cannot spare any of these single aspects.

The necessary research for an eccentric approach has to lead to the very origins of geography. The origin is not a point in time but a place. In the coming years, it would be wise to continue to look into the inexhaustible patrimony of philosophical learning and on its place.

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Summary – The advent of the postmodernist shift has characterized the last thirty years of geographic debate with a vast theoretical production that has changed the familiar points of reference of the discipline. In particular, postmodernism appeared as a solution to the hegemonic and homogenizing character of the knowledge of the modern tradition. This paper will attempt to demonstrate that the objective of postmodernism has not only not been reached but has been totally contradicted, bringing about by means of *will* that which modernity had already experienced as *rationality*. In the first part some typical traits of postmodernism will be highlighted, mostly taken from geographic literature or in any case of interest for geographers, which are assimilable to a subjectivist perspective; the second part will demonstrate that the subjectivism present in postmodernism is not a vague individualism, but rather the transcendent modern subjectivism. Subjectivism, the theoretical key of modernity, shows itself to also be the foundation of postmodernism, a denuncia of the contradiction generated. Given the multiplicity of authors and sources linked to postmodernism it was decided to limit the field of analysis to two papers by young Italian authors, which however cover a wide ranging spectrum of analysis and are significant indicators of the attention being given by the new generations to the relationship between geography and philosophy.

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