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Language of Religion and Art for a Post-crime Humanitarian Society

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Abstract

How to name the genocide in order to therapy it? On the way of reconciliation, the provisional mediation in the art and religion reminds first moments of the stop of the genocide. Rwanda fast remembered first moments of the humanity when she had to find a language to say the inhospitable: the terrible nature. The Arts and Religion were and are another common language for both the victim and the culprit to be cured by communicating it with others, being listened to and understood in a language which does not need an interpreter.

Introduction

There is a question which has not yet been solved so as to satisfy all minds, which is of Parmenides, when he states that "being is, non-being is not", with that consequence which crosses all philosophy, that of "the intelligibility of being" and of "the non intelligibility of non-being". The metaphysics, in its highest part, the philosophy of being, knows that the non-being is only the absence of being. When that metaphysics comes to found the ethics, the latter concludes, in its turn, that the evil is only the absence of good. But, the immediate experience to the test of evil rather knows that some crimes beckon to "evil in itself", according to this expression which can only be spontaneous, if the man is facing the horrible "I saw the evil".

The evil moment is never a rest. Immediately, it convenes to life as resilience. Then this question arises: tell us what happened or what has just happened? Asking such a question, seeking to understand, naming, this is the first stage of healing process. At that moment, by instinct, any afflicted man/woman or people remember the first moment of humanity when they should find a language to say the inhospitable: the frightening nature. This article clears up the existential

situation of man to the test of evil, the effects of religion and arts in favour of healing and the new integration of a post-crime society.

1. Existential situations of man to the test of evil

The shame and secrecy

As Aristotle says, the contemporary world is that of generation and corruption. Let us rather state the positive postulate, but which concurs with all religious and philosophical traditions: man is good in himself, an element never immediately given, only that he discovers it by the moment he comes back to himself and reflects on himself. The philosopher Hegel insists: the reflection is the proper of man as his self-movement and return to himself which must be rendered by those expressions: appearing in himself, returning to himself, coinciding with himself. In reflecting on himself, he discovers himself in his essential determinations that are identity, freedom and equality with oneself, type $A=A$.

On the active side, that is to say on the side of the one who dared the evil, the first image that every humanitarian crime offers is that it is the act of man in his other being, rendered as such by the appropriation of negative identities. We see those who have dared the evil to that degree, by confessing, they say "I myself do not understand". The logics of testimonies are instructive: in court, the suspected actors of the genocide stand up, accuse themselves that they were part of an anonymous crowd, that crowd came and did this and that... Rarely the individual names himself and names his own action. It is the other or the "they". In the opaqueness of existential situations of the man who was rendered capable of the crimes is still hidden the inauthentic "they" which must be changed into historical "I". At that level, the task consists of coming out of the muteness or the presentiment and express. Conversely, in the passive, that is to say on the side which suffered the evil, every humanitarian crime is like a void of humanity in the being of the victim or the survivor.

By surpassing, the dichotomy or logic of this one or that one, an insistence done to the other, a statement of the disjunction or the exclusivity or incompatibility, considers immediately the culprit and the victim as they are opposed. They have in common the existential situation of

secrecy, one for having been conditioned by the trend of events and dared the evil at that point, the other for having been humiliated in his/her being. The dialectic of the victim and the culprit then opens up a third term: the liberation of shame and of secrecy and the liberation of the worst which can be revenge or extermination. On the side of the culprit, the evil horribly committed makes the culprit a strange being to himself. It is a man "without descendant and without lineage," according to Homer's words, a being without reference points as both opening and limited, as a theoretical structuring for his/her thought and practice for his action and behavior. It is in that distractedness where the secret and shame of the evil are hidden.

The survived victim, on his side, is also experiencing a double evil: on the one hand, the physical suffering inflicted on him, and on other hand, the shame of having suffered such evil to such a degree and the shame of the rejection of self and of the other for not having been rescued. It is paradoxical; the evil suffered also shames the victim. The survived victim and the culprit have something in common, between them, in the midst of them. We must then perceive them from two perspectives: *retrospective and prospective*. Retrospectively, two people cannot be in conflict unless they have something that unites them, we must then go and see what they have done with it. Prospectively, at the end of conflicts, the survived victim and culprit have in common the shame and secret, the latter for having inflicted the evil, the former for having suffered the evil. It is in this midst, between them, between the two shames and secrecy that is found the space where the dialectic of reconciliation is spread out. They must both get out of their secrets and heal their shames. "Why did you do that to me?" the victim asks.

The worst: extermination and revenge

The dialectic of the culprit and the survived victim involves the category of the concern: "the other worries me" and of solicitude: "the other solicits me". If to be worried means to be carried to, the culprit is turned to the missing victim or survivor, reciprocally, the survived victim is turned to the culprit in a permanent relationship. While in this same relationship, solicitude is a call, the presence of the other beckons me, calls me to go in his direction to sincerely listen to him.

There is a wrong way to live the concern. On the one hand, the face of the victim always beckons to the culprit, constantly reminding the latter of his shame for having dared to do the evil. That is what explains, on the side of the culprit, the blind passion of returning to exterminate the survivor. It is exactly due to the fact that the survivor's face shames the culprit. On the other side, the face of the culprit reminds the victim of the shame of having suffered such an evil, constantly reminding the victim of his inability to fight, combat and survive. That is what explains that, on the side of the survived victim, the passion of revenge. This is because the face of the culprit shames the survivor.

However, there is a good way to live the concern, what becomes solicitude. The evil committed or the crime inflicted causes the culprit or the survived victim to lose the sense, each one, of the existence. Each one is rendered or treated in absurdity, according to Sartre's words. The mutual solicitude between the culprit and the survived victim is a silent way of mutual exchanges of the sense of existence. Considered as the call of the culprit and a donation of generosity on the side of the victim, forgiveness is the meeting-place and the release of the fault, the shame and secrecy. Both, in forgiving each other, they give meaning to their lives.

Destruction of identity points of reference

If, in a post humanitarian crimes society, I go out for a moment, I meet a person whose scars such as a disfigurement of the human remind of the moment of a crime inflicted. The sudden appearance of this instinct of survival comes from the fact that the body is the first place of emergence of the identity of self, as what is shown, according to natural traits of the good. On the other point, against all Leibnizian logic according to which each "monad" or substance, and man here, is a discernible identity, distinct from all what is not him, I rather meet a person whose behavior beckons to the indiscernible. This is because at the next level, man is consistent with realism and symbolism of the family, father, mother, sisters and brothers. Whether the family is natural or acquired as the fact of belonging to a dense enough institution for being like a new birth, because it essentially fulfils the functions of support, continuity and feeling of being respected, it inscribes the man in the cycle of giving, receiving and rendering.

Jacques Lacan notes that the symbolic dimension of acquired identity is accompanied with a debt which the subject contracts with regard to all those who allowed him to internalize the social

patrimony³. The man/woman is consistent with the cycle of the gift, he is relayed to give, receive and render to prosperity. The donation dimension is wider. I am myself as the link of an intergenerational descendant, the heir of norms, values, knowledge and practices transmitted by those who, before me, have inhabited my universe of representation which I myself wish to convey to those who come after me. It is not only a question of accepting and acknowledging a gift but also of extending or enlarging it and wishing to transmit it. This is what Jacques Lacan calls "the anthropology of the debt"; "I am one of the links who receives and gives"⁴, he says.

Thus, the symbolic dimension of identity emerges the category of otherness. The identity intuition of this continuity puts me in a symbolic dimension that is founded in a manner which is both self-referential and hetero-referential: I am both myself, with a positive amiable identity and in debt, in the same cycle of giving, receiving, rendering and continuing or perpetuating so that the referential patrimony chain will not be interrupted.

What is destroyed in humanitarian crimes is very precious because they are the identity points of reference. Do humanitarian crimes, as the destruction of identity points of reference not raise the question of my identity origins? Very soon, the man/woman, child or adult asks themselves questions of identity and he asks himself all the more that he lives in an environment where the identity points of reference are blurred. Who am I? Where do I come from? What is that that gives meaning to my life? Between the nostalgia of a wrongly known or ill-accepted origin and the difficulties of an ill-accepted integration, there lies the situation or feelings of emptiness.

The paradigm of identity risks is an ineluctable consequence of a society overwhelmed by humanitarian crimes. It is expressed in forms of recovery, such as: 1° flight or recovery by negative affiliations which subjugate the imagination of some to the control or to the tyranny of others; 2° excluding memories; 3° identification with weak identities, according to the categories of the victim and of the culprit; 4° the identity fallback and the fear of the other; 5° the self-condemnation of genealogical identities which shame and for whom I am nothing; 6° belonging to

³ Jacques Lacan, *Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse*, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1978, p. 127.

⁴ Jacques Lacan, *Le moi dans la théorie de Freud et dans la technique de la psychanalyse*, Paris, Editions du Seuil, 1978, p. 127.

the genealogical identities themselves antagonistic; 7° the fashion mimicry: clothing, gait, formulas prefabricated by the recovery environment: media and others.

The first effort of the survivor of humanitarian crimes is to refuse to be the one who requires pity or to confuse himself with the situation of survivor, as if it were a property. As in the first case, the culprit's effort is not to identify him with guilt, not doing the crime the property of culprit, according to the term "a criminal". The culprit remains always the human, and that is how he must know himself, in accordance with the Kantian imperative of the moral law that reminds this maxim: "Always treat mankind in yourself".

2. Religion in favour of new integration in a post-humanitarian crimes society

Religion is the most profound mode of knowledge or world view since it penetrates the sense of things. It is a practice, essentially ethics. In its effort to fathom the mystery, it goes as far as the limits of the understanding and offers the same understanding of reasons to believe. It is also a place where the sense of life is revealed, the revival of the sense of life of which man can only find in his attachment to God.⁵

Raising the look of man to the fourth dimension

Religion is a part of thought, with the same origins as the philosophy and science, as all these concerns are about the language of the world and end in a metaphysical quietism. Religion finds a favourable echo in the very nature of man as a metaphysician satisfying himself only in a look beyond the usual dimensions: length, breadth and depth, to the fourth dimension: a kind of irrational of which all the real still carries within itself. For this reason, religion is a function of the theoretical and practical structuring of man.

In permanent insecurity, in fear of the uncertain and in the persistent inability to name things, religion offers itself as an alternative to man whose conditions of existence are always disturbed by conflicts, wars and humanitarian crimes. The great religions know how to seize that permanent

⁵ Cfr. Rick Warren, *Une vie motivée par l'essentiel. Pourquoi suis-je sur la terre ?* Purpose Driven, 2002. L'auteur indique que la vie qui a un sens est celle qui plait à Dieu.

anxiety which lies in man because they initiate the faithful to the virtues of hope in prayer, deliverance in tao or awakening in yoga.

Raising man to his own greatness

Humanitarian crimes are practices of the strangeness of self, of man rendered other than self; they are also rejection of the image of divinity in man. From the infinitely great, man passes to the infinitesimal, of the full man, it passes to the hollow man from his spirituality. From this point of view, the task of religion consists in further moulding the soul, which must be allowed to dwell by the divine absolute, if we can dare to "invoke again the divinity" in man".

If, in its origin, all religion is a spiritual project, directly arising from the absolute, in fact, it is also a human project, both taking place between men/women and within a definite space: the temple, the worship place or cathedral architecture.

For any temple, architecture follows all the rules of good geometry. Each of these three dimensions: length, breadth and depth refer the inner eye of the meditative soul to the horizon of the infinitely great. Each is a wonder that leads man to his innerly true essence. The inner is an architecture inhabited doubly: it is the horizontal space and vertical space where the two encounters unfold, between men themselves, all united spiritually or divinity and between men and transcendence. Thus, the man/woman is in a relationship of convergence, horizontally enters with his brothers/sisters (general sense) and vertical with the Divine.

Effect of healing the evil

Religion unfolds in the consciousness of the sacrifice of an innocent, in the resentment of guilt of original sin and in the guilt mysteriously ascribed to all humanity. Between evil and hope are the threats of the strongest chastisement. Thus, suffering, dying away and repenting always go together. That is in line with a society to the test of the humanitarian crimes inflicted to innocent.

Effect of getting out of isolation

On the path of deliverance, religion is never the business of an individual who would be abandoned to the component of his singularity. It is an assembly. The assembly brings to the survived victim the feeling of being, being with, being surrounded and being seriously listened to.

Effect of reconciliation

It is a good sign that also indicates a good start: in an assembly of the faithful there is not one table for the victims, another for the culprits, another for the living and another for the dead. The man / woman who enters the temple or religious worship, victim or culprit, knows that there will be moments of celebration of the death inflicted to innocent, saving pain, atonement for sin and the gift of forgiveness.

Effect of commemoration

According to the Catholic concept, religion is an assembly of the living, but also of the Saints. It is a prospective celebration of the innocent sacrifice and anticipatory of the expectation of a blessed life. With the liturgical mystic which the religious leader surrounds himself: clothes, objects, acolytes and rites, with the persons or personages whom he celebrates, religion prefigures a timeless world where each one, according to his failings or plenitude, finds gratification.

Effect of internalization

Ascetic practices, admission of the fault or the sin, confession, contrition, remorse and repentance, fasting, prayer, desert, pilgrimage and moral codes ..., everything is liturgically linked up in a composite assembly of victims and culprits. It is a whole dynamic and anxiety in full revival, because with religion, man will always remain suspended asymmetrically between his present being and his duty to be.

Effect of denunciation

On earth, Freud draws religion from another source: *"Life is too heavy, it inflicts on us too many sorrows, disappointments, insoluble tasks"*⁶. Under this situation, which is in harmony with the

⁶ Freud, *Malaise dans la civilisation*, p. 16.

experience of all, anybody who wishes to read his society must also be attentive to religion, because sometimes it beckons to a world in distress. Is not life still there when the living can still feel, laugh or cry? But is not shouting, crying the way life planned to beckon to something that came to oppose it? The extreme rationalists see in religion a kind of illusion. Even there, it is the mirror of society. Houari Maïdi sees briefly two sides of religion. One is *the expression* of real distress as a sign of a society that goes wrong; the other is *the protest* against that distress, as a revelation of a heartless world, but also as a denunciation⁷.

3. Art in favour of new integration in a post humanitarian crimes society

Let us imagine the less consoling hypothesis, that of a nature at the inhospitable origin: waters, lands, forests, deserts, thunders... Man does not let himself completely be invaded by nature, he rather seeks to dominate it, to exorcise it, to name it, to understand it because he has the intuition that all fear comes from the incomprehension of something. That is how religion, art and mythology were the first languages of man on a terrifying earth. A long time after becoming familiar with the nature, man is no longer astonished to frequent the beaches of the oceans, the lianas of the forests or the caves; he pays them rather expensive as places of tourism and entertainment. How could man find that the immense ocean agitated by the storm is sublime while the spectacle it offers is horrible? Nietzsche says: "*The greatest acquisition we owe to the humanity that has gone before us is to no longer be forced to live in the constant terror of wild beasts, barbarians, gods and our own dreams*"⁸.

Art is a language, essentially of the beautiful, beyond the inhospitable. To find it beauty, Kant wrote, you must start by feeling safe and forgetting all shipwrecks and drowning. Marc-Alain Descamps, in "Art and creativity", borrows the image of the picturesque. Is really picturesque what is worthy to be painted? Nature was only found beautiful when it became a subject of painting. Then, it inspired poems, songs, novels, movies and trips. Thanks to art, Marc-Alain Descamps

⁷ «Effets et fonctions de la religion dans les conditions victimaires », par Houari Maïdi, Psychologue clinicien. MAÏDI H. (2003)

⁸ Nietzsche, *Aurore*, p.128.

said, the modern man has learned to find beautiful inhospitable places which were frightening in the past centuries: forests, deserts, mountains and glaciers⁹.

Effect of communication in a language without borders

In his fine phrases, Marc-Alain Descamps said this:

*"Art is a unique communication factor among all the humans of the earth, beyond the differences of cultures, languages and borders. All those who are in love with beauty can, by art, communicate and be united in the same worship, escaping the solitude of people and the divisions of peoples. Art is the shortest path from one man to another and a bridge between the nations"*¹⁰.

Under these considerations, art is also a means for a society to cure itself of humanitarian crimes, by communicating them to others in a symbolic language without borders to say the unspeakable. Paul Klée points out that *"The art does not reproduce the visible, it makes it visible"* and Schopenhauer continues saying: *"The artist lends us his eyes to look at the world"*. By means of the work of art to put the human soul in vibration, it is an itinerary of union to the world and to the being. Thus, the artist's vocation which is of projecting light into the depths of the human heart can be realized as Schumann has expressed¹¹.

Effect of contemplation

The object of art is the good. The good itself is transcendental, i.e. the highest quality in being at the same level as the true, the good is unique. What is lacking in mental category is only described as a humanitarian crime in such a way that even ugliness does not suit it.

The art succeeds its role because it is essentially the work of the beautiful and has a contemplative character, and therefore disinterested. The look directed towards the object of art is reflexive, which means, it retracts into the soul of the contemplative. This is how, with art, memorial sites of

⁹ Marc-Alain Descamps, et col. *Art et créativité*, <http://www.europsy.org/marc-alain/artfonctions4.html>, « Les fonctions de l'art », 15/1/2011.

¹⁰ Marc-Alain Descamps, et col. *Art et créativité*, <http://www.europsy.org/marc-alain/artfonctions4.html>, « Les fonctions de l'art » 15/1/2011.

¹¹ Marc-Alain, et col. *Art et créativité*, <http://www.europsy.org/marc-alain/artfonctions4.html>, « Les fonctions de l'art » 15/1/2011.

the evil are adorned and arouse recollection. Is it not adorned what is beautiful to become even more beautiful? For which trick artwork transforms the site of evil into a place of voluntary visit and recollection?

In gratuity and freedom, the distinctive and contemplative characteristics of the artist, there are works: dance, music, poetry, sculpture, engraving, exhibition, - dulls the singularity of evil which becomes site, ceremony, celebration and moment of contemplation. In the commemoration, there is no longer any question of time in its objectivity of numerical magnitudes. Time does not much matter because the mind perceives a work of art, no matter how immense it is, from a single look, and every work of art is a started and finished history.

Effect of distancing compared with memory

Art is at the same time a memory, a distance and a wrenching away from the temporality of memory, for an ecstatic future. As can be said by Marc-Alain, *"The human being is determined by his past and liberated by his future, as soon as it can see there a sense"*¹². This is in line with art for a post humanitarian crimes society as soon as it is able to cross the time and bear the testimony of the past with a single look.

Profane and sacred art

The radical character of the evil does not allow any adventure of profane artists of the theatricalness of worldly life and of the commercialization of the horrible. Such a lassitude would be at several risks: 1. rendering banal what is inexhaustible in depth; 2. disregarding victims and survivors; 3. trivializing evil and lightening the burden which the culprits bear of their crimes.

Happy encounter, because art in several historical societies, except for some juvenile inopportune imports, is of aristocratic inspiration of elegance and subtlety. It is remarkable at the moments of commemoration of the memory of evil: it is an astonishing fact to sing and dance after evil, not by lamentations, but by elegance.

Expression of emptiness and fullness, absence and presence

¹² Marc-Alain Descamps, et col. *Art et créativité*, <http://www.europsy.org/marc-alain/artfonctions4.html>, « Les fonctions de l'art », 15/1/2011.

A society rescued from a humanitarian crime also carries a heavy burden of its past. The art has two dimensions: the full and the emptiness, the certain and the least expressed as an opportunity to the contemplative eye to place there its proper failings. Emptiness, it is the nostalgia for a universe of loved ones. Thus, songs, dances, poems, litanies, enigma, oracles, hymns, tales ... which embellish the commemoration days of the evil express the drama of a survived people. But these artistic manifestations are also confessions, lullabies and expressions of new hopes. This is why every work of art has an element of fiction or a horizon that is both close and not yet acquired. There is then in celebration the intuition of the presence which is "showing" of something, and the religious family; as new birth, survivors, friends... The evil being a void of humanity, the language being that which names things, any effort of language after the evil is again giving a sense.

Conclusion

Rwanda's recent history, prolonged by activities of the genocide commemoration, reveals the singular functions of the arts and religions as forms of understanding, naming and healing the genocide. According to Kant's words, Genocide is "evil in itself" or "radical evil" or "absolute evil". The genocide limits the legitimate use of theoretical reason so that any conceptualization is always an inaccuracy. In a word, man is obliged to redo the history of humanity and go to coincide with the first men when they had to find a language to say the inhospitable: the frightening nature. Arts and religion, by their symbolism, were then preparing for that point. In similar situations to a universe that does not immediately offer itself to conceptualization, such as that of genocide, arts and religion have been and are still a common language, both for the survived victim and the culprit, to heal from the genocide, by communicating it to others, by being heard, listened to and understood in a language which does not need any interpreter.

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