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The Hidden Third and the Multiple Splendor of Being

**EL TERCERO OCULTO Y EL ESPLENDOR
MÚLTIPLE DEL SER**

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ABSTRACT There is a big spiritual poverty present on our Earth. It manifests as fear, violence, hate and dogmatism. In a world with more than 8000 academic disciplines, more than 10000 religions and religious movements and more than 6000 tongues, it is difficult to dream about mutual understanding and peace. There is an obvious need for a new spirituality, conciliating technoscience and wisdom. Of course, there are already several spiritualities, which have been present on our Earth for centuries and even millennia. One might ask: why is there a need for a new spirituality if we have them all, here and now?

RESUMEN Actualmente existe una gran pobreza espiritual en el mundo. Se manifiesta a través del miedo, la violencia, el odio y el dogmatismo. A pesar de coexistir más de 8.000 disciplinas académicas, más de 10.000 religiones y movimientos religiosos y más de 6.000 lenguas oficiales, es difícil soñar la comprensión mutua entre

los pueblos y la paz. Se hace evidente la necesidad de una nueva espiritualidad, la conciliación de la tecnociencia y la sabiduría. Por supuesto, que ya hay múltiples espiritualidades, que han estado presentes en nuestra Tierra durante siglos e incluso milenios. Entonces, uno podría preguntarse: ¿por qué hay necesidad de una nueva espiritualidad, si existe tantas aquí y ahora?

1. Introduction: Spiritual Dimension of Democracy-Utopia or Necessity?

Before answering this question, we must face a preliminary question: is a Big Picture still possible in our post-modern times? (Gablik, 2004) Radical relativism answers this question in a negative way. However its arguments are not solid and logical. For radical relativists, after the death of God, the death of the Human Being, the end of ideologies, the end of History (and, perhaps, tomorrow, the end of science and the end of religion) a Big Picture is no longer possible. For cosmodernity, a Big Picture is not only possible but also vitally necessary, even if it will never be formulated as a closed theory. Fifty years ago, the great quantum physicist Wolfgang Pauli, a Nobel laureate in Physics, wrote: "Facing the rigorous division, from the 17th century, of the human spirit in isolated disciplines, I consider the aim of transgressing their opposition... as the explicit or implicit myth of our present times" (1999: 178)¹.

The first motivation for a new spirituality is technoscience, associated with fabulous economic power, which is simply incompatible with present spiritualities. It drives a hugely irrational force of efficiency for efficiency's sake: everything which can be done will be done, for the worst or the best. The second motivation for a new spirituality is the difficulty of the dialogue between different spiritualities, which often appear as antagonistic, as one can testify to in our everyday life.

Simply put, we need to find *a spiritual dimension of democracy*. Social and political life goes well beyond academic disciplines, but they are based upon the knowledge generated by them. We therefore need transdisciplinarity. Transdisciplinarity can help with this

¹ The corresponding chapter "Science and Western Thinking" was first published in Wolfgang Pauli, *Europa- Erbe und Aufgabe*, Mainz, Internationaler Gelehrtekonferenz, 1955.

important advancement of democracy, through its basic notions of “transcultural” and “transreligious” (Nicolescu, 2002).

Homo religiosus probably existed from the beginnings of the human species, at the moment when the human being tried to understand the meaning of our life. The *sacred* is our natural realm. We tried to capture the unseen from his/her observation of the visible world. Our language is that of the imaginary, trying to penetrate higher levels of Reality—parables, symbols, myths, legends, revelation.

Homo economicus is a creation of modernity. We believe only in what is seen, observed, measured. The *profane* is our natural realm. Our language is that of just one level of Reality, accessible through the analytic mind—hard and soft sciences, technology, theories and ideologies, mathematics, informatics.

The only way to avoid the dead end of *homo religiosus* vs. *homo economicus* debate is to adopt *transdisciplinary hermeneutics* (Nicolescu: (2007: 35-60). Transdisciplinary hermeneutics is a natural outcome of transdisciplinary methodology.

The transdisciplinary approach of Reality allows us to define three types of meaning:

1. *Horizontal meaning* - i.e. interconnections at one single level of Reality. This is what most of the academic disciplines do.
2. *Vertical meaning* - i.e. interconnections involving several levels of Reality. This is what poetry, art or quantum physics do.
3. *Meaning of meaning* - i.e. interconnections involving all of Reality—the Subject, the Object and the Hidden Third. This is the ultimate aim of transdisciplinary research.

Cultures and religions are not concerned, as academic disciplines are, with fragments of levels of Reality only: they simultaneously involve one or several levels of Reality of the Object, one or several levels of Reality of the Subject *and* the non-resistance zone of the Hidden Third. Technoscience is entirely situated in the zone of the Object, while cultures and religions cross all three terms: the Object, the Subject and the Hidden Third. This asymmetry demonstrates the difficulty of their dialogue: this dialogue can occur only when there is a *conversion* of technoscience towards values, i.e.

when the techno-scientific culture becomes a true culture (Nicolescu: 2004). It is precisely this conversion that transdisciplinarity is able to perform. This dialogue is methodologically possible, because the Hidden Third crosses all levels of Reality.

Technoscience has a quite paradoxical situation. In itself, it is blind to values. However, when it enters into dialogue with cultures and religions, it becomes the best mediator of the reconciliation of different cultures and different religions.

Transdisciplinary hermeneutics is able to identify the common germ of *homo religiosus* and of *homo economicus*, which can be called *homo sui transcendentalis*.

In the more or less long term, one can predict that transdisciplinary hermeneutics will lead to what Hans-Georg Gadamer calls a *fusion of horizons* (1960) not only of science and religion but also of all the other fields of knowledge, like arts, poetry, economics, social life and politics, so crucial in the science/religion debate. Transdisciplinary hermeneutics avoids the trap of trying to formulate a super-science or a super-religion. Unity of knowledge can be only an open, complex and plural unity.

Homo sui transcendentalis is in the process of being born. Each of us will not be some new person but a person reborn. This new birth is a potentiality inscribed in our very being.

Our language is generated by the notions of levels of Reality of the Subject, levels of Reality of the Object and the Hidden Third. In transdisciplinary hermeneutics, the classic real/imaginary dichotomy disappears. We can think of a level of Reality of the Object or of the Subject as being a crease of the Hidden Third. The real is a crease of the imagination and the imagination is a crease of the real. The ancients were right: there is indeed an *imaginatio vera*, a foundational, true, creative, visionary imagination.

2. Pre-Modernity, Modernity, Post-Modernity and Cosmodernity as Different Visions of the Relation between the Subject and the Object

The relation between the Subject and the Object is a crucial problem of philosophy.

This relation varied in the different periods of human culture. In the pre-modern world, the Subject was immersed in the Object. In the modern world, the Subject and the Object were supposed to be totally separated, while in our post-modern era the Subject becomes predominant as compared with the Object (see Figures 1-3).

Fig. 1. The relation between Subject and Object in pre-modernity

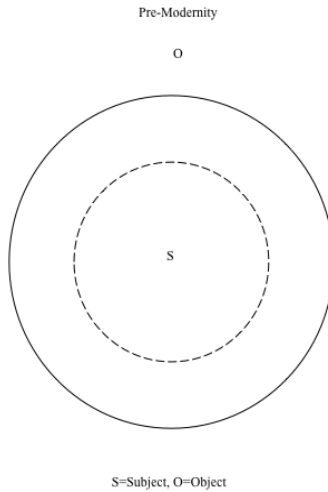


Fig. 2. The relation between Subject and Object in modernity

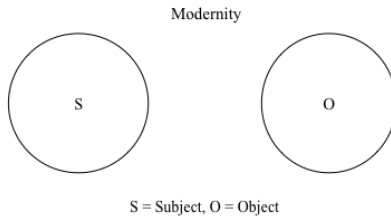
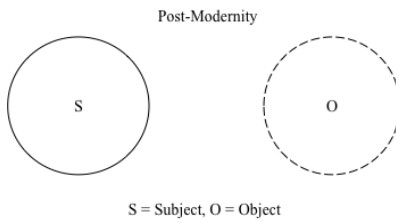


Fig. 3. The relation between Subject and Object in post-modernity



Dictionaries tell us that “reality” means²: 1. the state or quality of being real; 2. resemblance to what is real; 3. a real thing or fact; 4. something that constitutes a real or actual thing, as distinguished from something that is merely apparent. These are clearly not definitions but descriptions in a vicious circle: “reality” is defined in terms of what is “real”.

In order to avoid any ambiguity, “reality” is defined in a sense which is used by scientists, namely in terms of “resistance”.

In order to avoid further ambiguities, we have to distinguish the words “Real” and “Reality”. *Real* designates that which *is*, while *Reality* is connected to resistance in our human experience. The “Real” is, by definition, veiled for ever (it does not tolerate any further qualifications) while “Reality” is accessible to our knowledge. The Real involves non-resistance while Reality involves resistance.

3. Ladder of Divine Ascent and Levels of Being

In fact, the idea of “levels of Reality” is not completely new. From the beginnings of our its existence, the human being felt that there are at least two realms of reality—one visible, the other invisible.

Theological literature expressed the idea of a “scale of being” in a more elaborate way, which corresponds, of course, to a scale of Reality. The scale of Jacob (Genesis 28: 10-12) is one famous example, so agreeably illustrated in the Christian Orthodox iconography. There are several variants of the scale of Being. The most famous one is found in the book *Climax or Ladder of Divine Ascent* of Saint John Climacus (c. 525–606). The author, also known as John of the Ladder, was a monk at the monastery on Mount Sinai. There are thirty steps of the ladder, describing the process of *theosis*. Resistance and non-resistance is well illustrated in the scale of John of the Ladder: the human being climbs the steps, which denote the effort of human beings being to evolve from the spiritual point of view through the resistance to their habits and thoughts,

² <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/reality> (accessed 2 mayo 2014).

but the angels, these messengers of God, helps them to jump through the intervals of non-resistance between the steps of the ladder.

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In the second part of the 20th century, two important thinkers on the problem of levels of Reality are Nicolai Hartmann and Werner Heisenberg.

Nicolai Hartmann (1882-1950) is a somewhat forgotten philosopher, who had Hans-Georg Gadamer as student and Martin Heidegger as his successor at the University of Marburg, in Germany. He elaborated an ontology based on the theory of categories. He distinguishes four levels of Reality (Poli, 2001: 261-283; 2007: 1-18): inorganic, organic, emotional and intellectual. In 1940 he postulated four laws of the levels of Reality: the law of recurrence, the law of modification, the law of the *novum* and the law of distance between levels (Hartmann, 1940). The last law postulates that the different levels do not develop continuously but in leaps; it is therefore particularly interesting in the context of the contemporary view of Reality.

Almost simultaneously with Hartmann, in 1942 Werner Heisenberg, the Nobel laureate in physics elaborated a very important model of levels of reality in his *Manuscript of 1942* (Heisenberg, 1984: 218-306)³, which was only published in 1984.

The philosophical thinking of Heisenberg is structured by

two directory principles: the first one is that of the division in levels of Reality, corresponding to different objectivity modes depending on the incidence of the knowledge process, and the second one is that of the progressive erasure of the role played by the ordinary concepts of space and time (Heisenberg, 1984: 240).

For Heisenberg, reality is “the continuous fluctuation of the experience as gathered by the conscience. In this respect, it is never wholly identifiable to an isolated system” (Heisenberg, 1984: 166).

³ Trans. from German and introduction by Catherine Chevalley. German original edition: *Ordnung der Wirklichkeit*, Munich, R. Piper GmbH&KG, 1989. Published first in *W. Heisenberg Gesammelte Werke, Vol. C-I : Physik und Erkenntnis, 1927-1955*, ed. W. Blum, H. P. Dürr, and H. Rechenberg, R. Piper, Munich: GmbH&KG, 1984, 218-306. A translation in English of this book can be found on the Internet page <http://werner-heisenberg.unh.edu/t-OdW-english.htm#seg01> (accessed on May 2, 2014).

As written by Catherine Chevalley, who wrote the Introduction to the French translation of Heisenberg's book, "for him, the semantic field of the word 'reality' included everything given to us by experience taken in its largest meaning, from experience of the world to that of the soul's modifications or of the autonomous signification of the symbols" (Heisenberg, 1984: 145).

In agreement with Husserl, Heidegger, Gadamer and Cassirer (whom he knew personally), Heisenberg states ceaselessly that one has to suppress any rigid distinction between Subject and Object. He also states that one has to end with the privileged reference on the outer material world and that the only approaching manner for the sense of reality is to accept its division in regions and levels.

Heisenberg makes the distinction between "regions of reality" (*der Bereich der Wirklichkeit*) and "levels of reality" (*die Schicht der Wirklichkeit*).

"By regions of reality," writes Heisenberg, "we understand an ensemble of nomological connections. These regions are generated by groups of relations. They overlap, adjust, cross, always respecting the principle of non-contradiction." The regions of reality are, in fact, strictly equivalent to the levels of organization of the systemic thinking.

Heisenberg is conscious that simple consideration of the existence of regions of reality is not satisfactory because they will put classical and quantum mechanics on the same plane. It is for this essential reason that he was regrouping these reality regions into different levels of Reality.

Heisenberg regroups the numerous regions of reality into three distinct levels.

"It is clear", wrote Heisenberg,

that the ordering of the regions has to substitute the gross division of world into a subjective reality and an objective one and to stretch itself between these poles of subject and object in such a manner that at its inferior limit are the regions where we can completely objectify. In continuation, one has to join regions where the states of things could not be completely separated from the knowledge process during which we are identifying them. Fi-

nally, on the top, have to be the levels of Reality where the states of things are created only in relation with the knowledge process (Heisenberg, 1984: 372).

20 — The first level of Reality in the Heisenberg model corresponds to the states of things, which are objectified independently of the knowledge process. At this first level he situates classical mechanics, electromagnetism and the two relativity theories of Einstein; in other words classical physics. The second level of Reality corresponds to the states of things inseparable from the knowledge process. Here he situates quantum mechanics, biology and the consciousness sciences. Finally, the third level of Reality corresponds to the states of things created in relation with the knowledge process. On this level of Reality he situates philosophy, art, politics, 'God' metaphors, religious experience and inspiration experience.

One has to note that the religious experience and the inspiration experience are difficult to assimilate to a level of Reality. They rather correspond to the passage between different levels of Reality in the zone of non-resistance.

It is important to underline in this context, that Heisenberg proves a high respect for religion. In relation to the problem of God's existence, he wrote:

This belief is not at all an illusion, but is only the conscious acceptance of a tension never realized in reality, tension which is objective and which advances in an independent way of the humans, that we are, and which is yet at its turn nothing but the content of our soul, transformed by our soul (Heisenberg, 1984: 235).

The expression used by Heisenberg -"a tension never realized in reality"- is particularly significant. It evokes "Real" as distinct from "Reality".

For Heisenberg, the world and God are indissolubly linked: "this opening to the world which is at the same time the 'world of God', finally also remains the highest happiness that the world could offer us: the conscience of being home" (Heisenberg, 1984: 387).

He remarks that the Middle Age made the choice of religion and the 17th century made the choice of science, but today any choice or criteria for values has vanished.

Heisenberg also insists on the role of intuition: "Only intuitive

thinking,” wrote Heisenberg, “can pass over the abyss that exists between the concepts system already known and the new concepts system; the formal deduction is helpless on throwing a bridge over this abyss” (Heisenberg, 1984: 261).

4. Towards a Unified Theory of Levels of Reality

Transdisciplinarity is founded upon three axioms (Nicolescu: 1996):

1. The ontological axiom: *There are different levels of Reality of the Subject and, correspondingly, different levels of Reality of the Object.*
2. The logical axiom: *The passage from one level of Reality to another is insured by the logic of the included middle.*
3. The epistemological axiom: *The structure of the totality of levels of Reality appears, in our knowledge of nature, of society and of ourselves, as a complex structure: every level is what it is because all the levels exist at the same time.*

The introduction of the levels of Reality induces a multidimensional and multi-referential structure of Reality. Both the notions of the ‘Real’ and ‘levels of Reality’ relate to what is considered to be the ‘natural’ and the ‘social’ and is therefore applicable to the study of nature and society (Cilliers, Nicolescu, 2012: 711-718).

Every level is characterized by its *incompleteness*: the laws governing this level are just a part of the totality of laws governing all levels. And even the totality of laws does not exhaust the entirety of Reality: we have also to consider the Subject and its interaction with the Object. *Knowledge is forever open.*

The zone between two different levels and beyond all levels is a zone of *non-resistance* to our experiences, representations, descriptions, images, and mathematical formulations.

The unity of levels of Reality of the Object and its complementary zone of non-resistance constitutes what we call the *transdisciplinary Object*.

In agreement with the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) (1966), one asserts that the different levels of Reality of the Object are accessible to our knowledge thanks to the different

levels of perception which are potentially present in our being. These levels of perception permit an increasingly general, unifying, encompassing vision of Reality, without ever entirely exhausting it. In a rigorous way, these levels of perception are, in fact, *levels of Reality of the Subject*.

As in the case of levels of Reality of the Object, the coherence of levels of Reality of the Subject presupposes a zone of non-resistance to perception.

The unity of levels of levels of Reality of the Subject and this complementary zone of non-resistance constitutes what is called the *transdisciplinary Subject*.

The two zones of non-resistance of transdisciplinary Subject and Object must be identical for the transdisciplinary Subject to communicate with the transdisciplinary Object. A flow of consciousness that coherently cuts across different levels of Reality of the Subject must correspond to the flow of information coherently cutting across different levels of Reality of the Object. The two flows are interrelated because they share the same zone of non-resistance.

Knowledge is neither exterior nor interior: it is simultaneously exterior and interior. Studies of the universe and of the human being sustain one another.

The zone of non-resistance plays the role of a *third* between the Subject and the Object, an Interaction term which allows the unification of the transdisciplinary Subject and the transdisciplinary Object while preserving their difference. In the following this Interaction term is called the *Hidden Third*.

There is a big difference between the Hidden Third and the included third: *the Hidden Third is a-logical*, because it is entirely located in the area of nonresistance, while *the included third is logical*, because it refers to the contradictories A and non-A, located in the area of resistance. But there is also one similarity. Both of them unite contradictories: A and non-A in the case of the included third, and Subject and Object in the case of the Hidden Third. *The Subject and the Object are the supreme contradictories*: they do not only cross the area of resistance, but also that of nonresistance. Thus, it is understandable why in the view of some Christian thinkers, such as Jacob Boehme, when God decides to create

the world (and thus to know Himself), He places the contradiction at the origin of the world. It is understandable also why the Hidden Third is the one that gives meaning to the included third, because, in order to unite the contradictories A and non-A, located in the area of resistance, it must cross the area of nonresistance: the included third is actually a “middle-without-name”. This is precisely where lies the great difficulty of formulating a true logic of the included middle, which must necessarily integrate the discontinuous leap between the levels of Reality. This new logic will be a *trans-categorical* one. If the compatibility between the levels of Reality and the included third is certain, however, their reconnection inside certain logic will not be achievable according to the patterns of the known logics. Despite the efforts made so far, the problem remains open (Brenner, 2008).

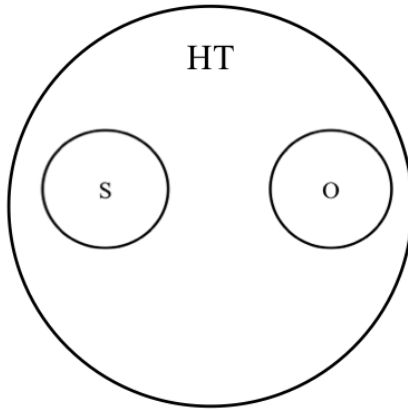
The role of the Hidden Third and of the included middle in the transdisciplinary approach of Reality is, after all, not so surprising. The words *three* and *trans* have the same etymological root: “three” means “the transgression of two, what goes beyond two.” Transdisciplinarity means transgression of duality opposing binary pairs: subject-object, subjectivity-objectivity, matter-conscious, nature-divine, simplicity-complexity, reductionism-holism, diversity-unity. This duality is transcended by the open unity that encompasses both the Universe and the human being.

The Hidden Third, in its relationship with the levels of Reality, is fundamental for the understanding of *unus mundus* described by cosmodernity. Reality is simultaneously a single and a multiple One. If one remains confined to the Hidden Third, then the unity is undifferentiated, symmetric, situated in the *non-time*. If one remains confined to the levels of Reality, there are only differences, asymmetries, located in time. To simultaneously consider the levels of reality and the Hidden Third introduces a breaking in the symmetry of *unus mundus*. In fact, *the levels of Reality are generated precisely by this breaking of symmetry introduced by time*.

The ternary partition {Subject, Object, Hidden Third} is, of course, different from the binary partition {Subject vs. Object} of classical, modern metaphysics.

Transdisciplinarity leads to a new understanding of the relation between Subject and Object, which is illustrated in Figure 4.

Fig. 4. The relation between Subject and Object in cosmodernity

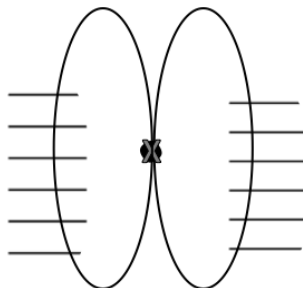


S = Subject, O = Object, HT = Hidden Third

In the transdisciplinary approach, the Subject and the Object are immersed in the Hidden Third.

The transdisciplinary Subject and its levels, the transdisciplinary Object and its levels, and the Hidden Third define the transdisciplinary Reality or *trans-Reality* (see Figure 5).

Fig. 5. Trans-Reality



In Figure 5, the Hidden Third is constituted by the point X of contact between Object and Subject, the zone of non-resistance between the Object and the Subject and the zone of non-resistance between the levels of Reality.

The incompleteness of the general laws governing a given level of Reality signifies that, at a given moment of time, one necessarily discovers contradictions in the theory describing the respective level: one has to assert A and non-A at the same time. It is the included third logic which allows us to jump from one level of Reality to another level of Reality.

All levels of Reality are interconnected through complexity. In fact, complexity is a modern form of the very ancient principle of universal interdependence. The principle of universal interdependence entails the maximum possible simplicity that the human mind could imagine, the simplicity of the interaction of all levels of reality. This simplicity cannot be captured by mathematical language, but only by symbolic language.

The transdisciplinary theory of levels of Reality appears to be conciliating reductionism with non-reductionism. It is, in some aspects, a multi-reductionist theory, *via* the existence of multiple, discontinuous levels of Reality. However, it is also a non-reductionist theory, *via* the Hidden Third, which restores the continuous interconnectedness of Reality. The reductionism/non-reductionism opposition is, in fact, a result of binary thinking, based upon the excluded middle logic. The transdisciplinary theory of levels of Reality allows us to define, in such a way, a new view on Reality, which can be called *trans-reductionism* (Nicolescu: 2008, 11-26).

The transdisciplinary notion of levels of Reality is incompatible with reduction of the spiritual level to the psychical level, of the psychical level to the biological level, and of the biological level to the physical level. Still these four levels are united through the Hidden Third. However, this unification cannot be described by a scientific theory. By definition, science excludes non-resistance. Science, as is defined today, is limited by its own methodology.

The transdisciplinary notion of levels of Reality leads also to a new vision of Personhood, based upon the inclusion of the Hidden

Third. The unification of the Subject is performed by the action of the Hidden Third, which transforms knowledge in *understanding*. "Understanding" means fusion of knowledge and being.

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In the transdisciplinary approach, the Hidden Third appears as the source of knowledge but, in its turn, needs the Subject in order to know the world: the Subject, the Object and the Hidden Third are inter-related.

The human person appears as an interface between the Hidden Third and the world. The erasing of the Hidden Third in knowledge signifies a one-dimensional human being, reduced to its cells, neurons, quarks and elementary particles.

This trans-Reality is the foundation of a new era –the cosmodern era-. *Cosmodernity* means essentially that all entity in the universe is defined by its relation to the other entities. The human being, in turn, is related as a person to the Great Other, the Hidden Third. *The idea of cosmos is therefore resurrected*. This is the reason why I introduced the word "cosmodernity" in 1994, in a book of aphorisms called *Poetical Theorems* (Nicolescu: 1994).

The present book gives the scientific and philosophical foundations of cosmodernity. The arguments coming from the contemporary American literature, exposed in the book *Cosmodernism* by Christian Moraru (2011) are excellent and necessary complements.

By analyzing American narrative in the late-globalization era, Moraru identifies several axes of his book: "These axes (a) thematize the cosmodern as a mode of thinking about the world and its culture, about cultural perception, self-perception, and identity; (b) forefront, accordingly, the intersubjective-communicational, dynamic dimension of cosmodernism; and (c) articulate the cosmodern imaginary into five regimes of relatedness, or subimaginaries: the "idiomatic," the "onomastic," the "translational," the "readerly," and the "metabolic" (Moraru, 2011: 8). The cosmodern mind is a "vehicle for a new togetherness for a solidarity across political, ethnic, racial, religious, and other boundaries" (Moraru, 2011: 5). A "new geometry of 'we'" (Moraru, 2011: 7) and a powerful *withness* (Moraru, 2011: 23, 57) distinguish cosmodernity from modernity or post-modernity. All cultures are inter-related. Cosmodernity is, by its very nature, transcultural and transreligious. In agreement with what is said in the present book, Moraru asserts that

“...cosmodern rationality is relational. In cosmodernism, *relatio* is a new, sui generis *ratio mundi*” (Moraru, 2011: 29). Modern rationality is metamorphosed in relationality. Moraru coins the very evocative word “poethics” (Moraru, 2011: 55) and he stresses that “...cosmodernism is best understood as an ethical rather than “technical” project. This project has considerable bearings on how we think not just about the subject but also about discourse, history, culture, community, patrimony, and tradition” (Moraru, 2011: 316). The ethical imperative of cosmodernity is that of togetherness (Moraru, 2011: 304). The entire world, our world, is a “web of ideas and images” (Moraru, 2011: 312), of people, cultures, religions, and spiritualities.

The original in Spanish “Tercero oculto” was published in *No tinguís res a les mans* (Sabadell, Spain: Papers de Versàlia, 2010, 35).

Poets and writers perceive better than scientists all the potentialities of cosmodernity and of the Hidden Third. The great Spanish poet Clara Janés (b. 1940), who integrated the scientific vision of the world in her poetry (1999), wrote a wonderful poem entitled “The Hidden Third” (Janés, [2014]):

To rest in the green
of the forest,
in the bird which calls out the alphabet,
in the suspended drops of water,
letters
beyond the concept
descending on the foliage,
like a gentle breath
which tempers
the dark swirling
of the word.
Return to me you virginal call
in the form
of pure resound
piercing the heart
and filling it with communicant light
abolishing the limits
established by the other
through enunciation.
And you, tired mouth,
follow attentively
the secret of the waves
and learn
transparency.

5. At the threshold of New Renaissance

The unified theory of levels of Reality (Nicolescu, 2014) is valid in all fields of knowledge, which, at the beginning of the 21st century, involve more than 8.000 academic disciplines, every discipline claiming its own truths and having its own laws, norms and terminology. The transdisciplinary theory of levels of Reality is a good starting point for erasing the fragmentation of knowledge, and therefore the fragmentation of the human being.

In this context, the dialogue of transdisciplinarity with apophatic thinking will be, of course, very useful. The Hidden Third is a basic apophatic feature of the unified knowledge (Nicolescu: 2006, 19-29). The dialogue with *biosemiotics*, as developed for example, in the stimulating book *Signs of Meaning in the Universe* of Jesper Hoffmeyer (1993), is also important. *Biosemiotics is transdisciplinary* by its very nature (2007). We live in the *semiosphere*, as much we live in the atmosphere, hydrosphere and biosphere. The human being is the unique being in the universe that is able to conceive an infinite wealth of possible worlds. These possible worlds certainly correspond to different levels of Reality. Powerful concepts elaborated by biosemioticians, like *semiotic freedom*, could lead us to understand what “personhood” could mean.

“What is Reality?” asks Peirce (Eisele, ed., 1976: 383-384). He tells us that perhaps there is nothing at all which corresponds to Reality. It may be just a working assumption in our desperate tentative knowing. But if there is a Reality, says Peirce, it has to consist in the fact that *the world lives, moves and has in itself a logic of events, which corresponds to our reason*. Peirce's view on reason totally corresponds to the cosmodern view on Reality.

A unified theory of levels of Reality is crucial in building sustainable development and sustainable futures. The considerations made until now in these matters are based upon reductionist and binary thinking: everything is reduced to society, economy and environment. The individual level of Reality, the spiritual level of Reality and the cosmic level of Reality are completely ignored. Sustainable futures, so necessary for our survival, can only be based on a unified theory of levels of Reality.

The consequences on ethics of such a vision of Reality are crucial in the context of *Anthropocene*, of the existence of the danger, for

the first time of history, of the annihilation of the entire human species (Hamilton, 2010). As Clive Hamilton writes, it is difficult to accept the idea that human beings can change the composition of the atmosphere of the earth to a point of destroying their own civilization and also the human species. One can predict the elevation of the sea level by several meters during this century and the total dissolution of the Arctic ice in one or two decades. One can even predict that the ice of the entire planet will disappear in several centuries, leading to elevation of sea level of around 70 meters. From my point of view, in agreement with Clive Hamilton, it is not the technology which will save our species but a radical change of our vision of Reality. Reality is *One*. For a sustainable future, we have to consider simultaneously all levels of Reality and also the Hidden Third.

We are part of the ordered movement of Reality. Our freedom consists in entering into the movement or perturbing it. We can respond to the movement or impose our will of power and domination. Our responsibility is to build sustainable futures in agreement with the overall movement of Reality.

We are witnessing a new era -*cosmodernity*- founded on a new vision of the contemporary interaction between science, culture, spirituality, religion, and society. The old idea of cosmos, in which we are active participants, is resurrected.

Reality is plastic. Reality is not something outside or inside us: it is simultaneously outside and inside. We are part of this Reality that changes due to our thoughts, feelings and actions. This means that we are fully responsible for what Reality is. The world moves, lives and offers itself to our knowledge thanks to some ordered structures of something that is, though, continually changing. Reality is therefore rational, but its rationality is multiple, structured on levels. It is the logic of the included middle that allows our reason to move from one level to another.

The levels of Reality correspond to the *levels of understanding*, in a fusion of knowledge and being. All levels of Reality are interwoven. The world is at the same time knowable and unknowable.

The Hidden Third between Subject and Object denies any rationalization. Therefore, Reality is also *trans-rational*. The Hidden Third conditions not only the flow of information between Subject and

Object, but also the one between the different levels of reality of the Subject and between the different levels of reality of the Object. The discontinuity between the different levels is compensated by the continuity of information held by the Hidden Third. Source of Reality, the Hidden Third feeds itself from this Reality, in a cosmic breath which includes us and the universe.

The irreducible mystery of the world coexists with the wonders discovered by reason. The unknown enters every pore of the known, but without the known, the unknown would be a hollow word. Every human being on this Earth recognizes his/her face in any other human being, independent of his/her particular religious or philosophical beliefs, and all humanity recognizes itself in the infinite Otherness.

A new spirituality, free of dogmas, is already potentially present on our planet. There are exemplary signs and arguments for its birth, from quantum physics till theater, literature and art (Nicolescu, 2014). We are at the threshold of a true New Renaissance, which asks for a new, cosmodern consciousness.

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