

Rhetoric as Democratic Survival and Resistance

Groundwork for a Philosophy of Communication

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*Wo kommst du her? - Aus den Klüften,
versetzte die Schlange, in denen das Gold
wohnt. - Was ist herrlicher als Gold? fragte
der König. - Das Licht, antwortete die
Schlange. - Was ist erquicklicher als Licht?
fragte jener. - Das Gespräch, antwortete
diese. (Goethe)*

1. What is a philosophy of communication?

Communication is a philosophical word and an occasion for philosophical reflection *par excellence*, because it is full of truisms – it is a subject like that of, for example, colour, which also never ceases to transport us into philosophical terrain. There can be no transparent white. We all communicate, most of the time. What we call “communication” is a pervasive aspect of human existence, a textbook might say. As many writers in communication theory have told us, we live our lives not so much by, as in, communication. Something that is of so much importance to what and who we are, must be studied in detail. Empirical and theoretical investigations of all aspects of communication thrive. Some feel the need to establish “fundamental” theories of communication, but for all means and purposes, researchers have little need for a separate branch office of the Academy dealing with foundational concepts – they are perfectly equipped to make their own when they need them. In communication theory and research, a happy pluralism reigns (Craig 1999 and 2006). What then, is the purpose of a philosophy of communication?

We might point to the fact that there is a demand for ethical reflection on communication processes. As our societies become increasingly complex, and since this process depends on communication patterns, the need to regulate these patterns increases, ensuring fairness and justice in the use, access and consequences of communicative behavior and communicative institutionalization. This complexity, even at the level of interpersonal communication, has already reached such an advanced state that regulation has to take the form of risk- and uncertainty-management.

Communication has become synonymous with technology. The long-standing debate between the sender-receiver model and the community model of communication (or, for that matter, between communication as strategic action or as discourse) takes place on the basis of this shared presupposition of communication as technology, as procedure (which is why it never ends). Thereby a curious situation arises. The basic act of communicating, of speaking with each other, by which our human world becomes accessible to us, can only be approached from a perspective

that has already obscured the disclosing dimension it presupposes. For us to study communication as technology, we already have to have a non-technological understanding of what it is. Communication, we might say, is an idea: it shows itself as showing reality to us. Its circulation, on the other hand, as a theoretical concept makes it, at first sight, an uneasy candidate for philosophy. One of the things a philosophy of communication has to think about, is how this uneasiness has arisen. What has happened to the idea of communication in the course of our philosophical history, and why? But in order to do this, we must first find a way in which to think philosophically about communication.

2. *Speaking*

All forms of human communication refer to the primordial scene of speaking with each other. A simple act of influencing another by my behavior is not yet a communication. There has to be an openness, a possibility of response; in my act I implicitly recognize the freedom of the other.

A mediation of speech can cross great distances of space and time, and it acquires particular characteristics which can be considered in their own right. But all of them take place on the basis of the direct speech situation. “Books are long letters to friends”, Georg Büchner said.

Communication by posture, color, icons *et cetera* are just as much dependent on the speech situation. But they do not speak. What do these communications *say*? – we ask. The use of “saying” here is not metaphorical as opposed to literal. *Saying* is the ground which makes it possible to thus compare the act of speaking and the use of other signs to communicate. We are trying to find the way to this ground. We can say something without speaking.

So, we can say: when we communicate, we are saying something, and something is being heard. (The debate between the sender-receiver and community models of communication arises largely over the question whether priority is to be assigned to the message or to the language, but both presuppose – and create – each other, and therefore *refer* to a philosophical treatment of communication without having to rely on it when they are being used to elucidate aspects of communications. Message and language are theoretical reifications and real constructs.)

A constellation appears: Saying involves and I and a Thou, saying and hearing belong together, something is being said, and saying takes place in time and space. The act of gathering oneself to speak, so say something, although it can involve elaborate preparation, is always a free decision. Prior to the fact that our freedom is demonstrated by our ability to say “What a lovely day” when it is pouring down, as Hannah Arendt said, it is demonstrated by our ability to say anything whatsoever.¹ We can’t apply the logic of cause and effect to the relation between the person and what the person says. In the etymology of the word person this becomes clear. The mask is that through which is being spoken, it is not the cause of the speech. The fact that the human being and the persona were conflated into our idea of the person runs parallel with the insight that there is no efficient cause of our sayings, just as there is no efficient cause of our actions, only our free decision to say or to act.² In what we say, we manifest ourselves (and our freedom), we live and move and have our being, and this relation is open to intellectual analysis, but not in the way in

¹ “Freedom of speech” is a pleonasm, telling and alarming in its necessity to be invoked and defended.

² I will not go into debates over free will, determinism and compatibilism here. These will be dealt with elsewhere (I refer, and subscribe, here only to the position defended by E. Coreth, *Grundriss der Metaphysik*, Innsbruck: Tirolia 1994, pp. 186-190). These debates rest on the confusion of causal connection and manifestation.

which we can causally analyse phenomena. A logic of manifestation has to replace a logic of cause and effect in the philosophy of communication. This is, I believe, the reason behind the dialectic of inner and outer that permeates metaphysics and which has become clearer and clearer in the course of history. It is wrongly construed as representationalism, a critique which does not sufficiently acknowledge that the distinction between a primary and secondary meanings is to be let go of. This logic of manifestation is present, in a hidden form, in Plato's ideas, in the medieval theories of the analogy of being and of the transcategorical predicates. It is also present in the idea of a transcendental philosophy (but there it remains ambiguous and confused with the causal order or explanation), in the dialectic of Hegel and its Marxist version, in Schopenhauer's metaphysics of the will (where the non-causal nature of metaphysical analysis becomes quite explicit), in Nietzsche's writings and in 19th and 20th century philosophies of dialogue. A philosophy of communication is thus possible on the basis of the fundamental metaphysical figure of transference, and it is its re-interpretation, the not-yet of metaphysics.

3. *Manifestation and Question. Grassi and Gadamer as Precursors of a Philosophy of Communication*

In Ernesto Grassi's essay "Rhetoric and Philosophy"³ we find an explication of a logic of manifestation, or as he calls it, of prophecy (pro-phainestai, "to lead before the eyes"). Rational discourse is the kind of talk that proves. We know something when we can prove that it is the case. But proof, demonstration, "means to *show* something to be something, on the basis of something." Demonstrative speech leads claims back to the original principles, the archai, which themselves cannot be demonstrated but which have to be non-derivable. We could not speak or act without presupposing them. But now we have to ask what the nature of the speech is in which this first principles are expressed. It can't be rational-theoretic, demonstrative speech. Grassi says the kind of speech that enunciates the first principles is indicative speech. It notices, points, shows, which is why it is always imaginative or figurative rather than explanatory or conceptual. This kind of language points towards something which has signification, and it does so by metaphor, by transference. (Think for example of the fact that even in mathematics most basic terms are metaphorical – "demonstrate", "premise", "axiom", "deduction" et cetera.⁴)

The crucial thing to note is that language in this function is primary. Rational discourse can take place on the basis of such a metaphorical showing, but it can't happen without it. Ultimately, philosophy has to safeguard the coherence of all other types of discourse. But philosophy in this sense is not rational discourse. Because it is metaphorical, we can call it rhetorical:

If the image, the metaphor, belongs to rhetorical speech (and for this reason it has a pathetic character), we also are obliged to recognize that every original, former, "archaic" speech (archaic in the sense of dominant, *arche*, *archomai*, *archontes* or the dominants) cannot have a rational but only a rhetorical character. Thus the term "rhetoric" assumes

³ In: E. Grassi, in: *Rhetoric as Philosophy, The Humanist Tradition*, University Park: Pennsylvania University Press 1981, ch. 2. Here quoted from the online version on JanusHead, <http://www.janushead.org/3-1/egrassi.cfm> (accessed 30.05.08)

⁴ Quintilian, *Institutio Oratoria*, IX, 3, 1: "paene iam quidquid loquimur figura est".

a fundamentally new significance; "rhetoric" is not, nor can it be the art, the technique of an exterior persuasion; it is rather the speech which is the basis of the rational thought.

This original speech, because of its "archaic" character, sketches the framework for every rational consideration, and for this reason we are obliged to say that rhetorical speech "comes before" every rational speech, i.e., it has a "prophetic" {*prophainesthai*} character and never again can be comprehended from a rational, deductive point of view. This is the tragedy of the rationalistic process.

Philosophy is the original unity of pathos and logos – all true philosophy is rhetorical, and all true rhetoric is philosophical, it does not need an external mark of truth or an external content. Metaphor, the seeing of analogies and similarities, is the fundamental operation in philosophy as rhetoric. For Grassi, metaphor helps us to structure our world, as art structures and thereby creates and shapes the emotions. Even sensory perception involves a form of transference, from stimuli to things. What is to be said, which metaphors are to be elaborated, is a historical matter. The urgency of the situation gives us things to say. If we speak only to instill a contingent framework in the minds of the audience, we are practicing rhetoric as a *techne*; if we reason rationally we can demonstrate but not motivate. If we speak philosophically we make manifest the dominant metaphors, and this, the truth of metaphor, is the highest level of truth available to us.

Philosophy is not rational discourse, and it is not scientific discourse. If it fails to move and if it fails to make manifest *archai*, it fails as philosophy. There is an important difference between myth and philosophy in this respect. For myth remains at the more or less arbitrary form of imagination, it remains an uncritical enunciation of *archai*. Philosophy is indebted to myth, but it is not the same. The rhetorical nature of philosophy implies it recognizes not only its metaphorical character but also its character as a dialectic, as a form of conversation and relation. There is a secret connection between myth and logicism which is to be resisted.⁵ Philosophy, in its allegiance to rhetoric, exposes that connection and remains at bay from it. The enunciation of the *archai* is a matter of dialogue; they are not available in any other way – which is to say, they are not *available* at all.⁶ We have to complement philosophy as rhetoric with a theory of dialogue. In part this explains why, also in this text, I am constantly invoking other voices and responding to them. A philosophical monologue is impossible; even the treatise is also a rhetorical, read *dialogical*, form in that it invariably *positions* itself. In the resolution of *Positionsdenken*, dialogue reclaims itself as dialectic and becomes moveable again.

The origins of hermeneutics lie in rhetoric:

In the comic confusion between question and answer, knowledge and ignorance, that Plato describes, there is a profound recognition of the priority of the question in all knowledge and discourse that really reveals something of an object. Discourse that is intended to reveal something requires that that thing be broken open by the question. For this reason,

⁵ Structurally this insight forms the basis of the theories of the Frankfurt School.

⁶ This can be illustrated by reference to the vagaries of (personal) identity.

dialectic proceeds by way of question and answer, or rather the path of all knowledge leads through the question. To ask a question means to bring into the open. The openness of what is in question consists in the fact that the answer is not settled. (Gadamer, *Truth and Method*)⁷

We can complete the analysis of rhetoric as philosophy by reminding ourselves of some of the characteristics of dialogue, or, as Gadamer says, the art of conducting a real dialogue. All understanding, and all experience, has the structure of question and answer, according to Gadamer. The communicative relation between I and Thou is paradigmatic for all our experiences, understanding and knowledge. The relation between I and Thou is a relation of speaking and listening (hearing). The hearer has to be open to what the speaker says, if the Thou is to be experienced truly as a Thou – as you, this person over against me. Openness means “recognizing that I myself must accept some things that are against me, even though no one else forces me to do so.” Gadamer’s hermeneutics now is nothing else than an analysis of the logical structure of this openness. The openness has the structure of a question, namely whether what is at issue “is this or that”. If we are aware of this openness we know that we do not know – we have reached the point from which Socrates starts to speak. Gadamer says: “the question breaks open the being of the object, as it were”, when a question lacks the openness of an undetermined answer, it is not a real question, but, in a different sense than the one I introduced above, a rhetorical question. Significantly, it is the question that primarily has a sense, a direction. In other words, the openness of a question has to be definite, limited, for the question to be a real question.

What Gadamer calls the art of dialogue, is the ability to ask questions, to find and sustain openness. A prerequisite for this is the desire to know, another is the awareness of ignorance. The art of dialogue is explicitly not the ability to win an argument, but rather the ability not to let questions be suppressed by the dominant view: “the art of questioning is the art of questioning even further – i.e. the art of thinking. It is called dialectic because it is the art of conducting a real dialogue.” In dialogue, concepts are formed and examined as to their meaning. It is essential that a dialogue is about something, that it has an object. The partners in a dialogue “come under the influence of the truth of the object”, and are being changed by the dialogue. A dialogue does not merely consist in putting forth one’s views, but letting oneself be taken up by the movement of truth as it occurs. Gadamer goes so far as to say : “We say we “conduct” a conversation, but the more genuine a conversation is, the less the conduct lies within the will of either partner. Thus a genuine conversation is never the one that we wanted to conduct. Rather, it is generally more correct to say that we fall into the conversation, even that we become involved in it.” We must take these statements quite literally – or at least, we must understand that the distinction between literal and metaphorical speech is here suspended as in the metaphorical enunciation of archai in philosophical rhetoric. Gadamer could not have articulated what he says here in a (fundamentally) different way, and he is also not articulating his point of view. The philosophy of communication does little else than raise this state of affairs to awareness, and to further question its nature.⁸

⁷ All references are to Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, New York: Crossroad, 1981, pp. 358-404.

⁸ For Gadamer it is crucial to note that dialogue is essentially a verbal affair. I will not go into this aspect of hermeneutics here, but there is no reason to deny it from the point of view of the philosophy of communication.

As may be clear by now, part of my intentions with this reflection on communication, is to uncover the deep structure of metaphysical thinking and metaphysical experience, and of the criticism of metaphysics, of the idea that no positive statement about anything absolute is possible. Whereas a conceptual, rational statement about an unconditioned reality is impossible because conceptual thinking is by definition conditioned, while on the other hand the nature of rational thinking leads to the question of the unconditioned, I have tried to indicate that there is a) a form of discourse which is primary and indicative as opposed to conceptual (or rather, it is the ground of conceptual interpretation), but which is nevertheless not irrational, and b) that this form of discourse – I have called it rhetorical – is inherently dialogical. In the dialogue, in the movement of question and answer, we may become aware of and articulate an unconditioned, not as something we possess, but as something which possesses us. What this articulation in the urgency of the moment is, is no longer a matter that can be dealt with in the abstract – it is always historically, I would like to say *existentially*, contextualized.⁹ The closest we can get to it is by articulating the meaning of our at once most general and most concrete concept, that of being. All I have done is indicate that this articulation is what we commonly call communication – in every act of communication, being is articulated. At the limit of this articulation we come up against what Bloch called *the unconstructable question* – a dialogic moment, quite in line with the logical structure of openness we have examined so far, which nevertheless cannot be given any clear limitation, sense or direction. This means the awareness of the unconditioned is at once unitary – there is only one unconstructable question – at multiple – it can arise in any number of contexts. For Bloch it is associated with a coming to a standstill of the dialectical process, and it is associated with wonder, the ground of philosophy, interpreted as a symbolic intention of the absolute, at once lyrical and philosophical to the bone. In order to take the philosophy of communication further, we would have to show how the moment where dialogue reaches this point relates to the logical structure of the concept of being (as prefigured in the classical theory of *analogia entis*). This is a task that must be taken up on another occasion; here I just want to point out the problem of ultimate interpretation.

4. *The dialogical principle in the history of philosophy: Plato's Phaidros.*

One particular, more or less familiar, view on the history of philosophy (and of Western culture) is that from antiquity to modernity to the present day a development can be traced from a largely objective orientation, the discovery of the mind and its capacity to *be* objective, to the discovery of interiority in late antiquity (*in te redi, in interiore homine habitat veritas* – Augustine), to the break-through of the subjective in modernity.¹⁰ The intersubjective, or dialogical, determinants of the basic moments of thought – reality, truth, self – was a late discovery and is only now

⁹ The psychoanalytical dialogue is a very clear example. But even in the case of scientific investigation, when it is a dialogical process of conceptual interpretation, there is an existential dimension, a dimension of *kairos* and of unpredictability.

¹⁰ See, for example, Heimsoeth's classical study *Die sechs grossen Themen der Abendländischen Metaphysik und der Ausgang des Mittelalters* (many editions), which continued to influence discussions throughout the twentieth century, for example Adorno's lectures on Metaphysics. Post-modernity can be seen as a radicalization of the emphasis on the subjective, as the fragmentation of even this historical narrative as a coherent one, and the retrospective institution of itself in the history of thought – in which case it paradoxically affirms itself as a grand narrative.

beginning to be explored to its full extent.¹¹ The idea of the intersubjective, of an “interdependent relation between self- and other-consciousness” (Markova, p. 29) originated in the 18th century and from there it determined, first as an almost implicit undercurrent, the course of philosophy, until it became the principle of philosophical thought, especially in the work of Gadamer and Habermas. On a more broad cultural level, this long development took place in parallel with the discovery of the phenomenon of communication, or mediation, in the wake of 18th century discussions about the private and public dimensions of judgments of taste.¹² Martin Buber mentions Jacobi as one of the earliest thinkers to explicitly formulate the dialogical principle: “I open eye or ear, or I reach out my hand, and feel in the same moment inseparably: I and you, you and I”.¹³

This does not mean that we can't find indications in the earlier history of philosophy of the importance of a philosophical interpretation of communication. Dialogue has been a constant topic of reflection, from antiquity to the present day. Gadamer, of course, discusses the function of dialogue in Plato's work at length. One of Plato's definitions of thinking, found in various places in the corpus – *the conversation of the soul with itself* - indicates the importance of expression, and related to it, communication, and the priority of the dialogical over the monological. In Heidegger's interpretation of Plato's dialogue *Phaidros*, the translation arrived at of “logos” is: *sich Aussprechen ueber etwas zu einem Anderen oder mit ihm* (to speak out about something to someone else or with him).¹⁴ We see that this is not very far from Gadamer's account of dialogue. The philosophical desire to give an account, “logon didonai”, is crucially an act of communication. It relates speaker, topic and addressee in an original unity, meaning in the act of speaking out speaker topic and addressee become internally related to each other. Gadamer spoke of the fact that in a genuine dialogue we do not lead the conversation, but the conversation leads us. The dialogue is unpredictable, and it has the potential of changing the participants, who have to be open to that possibility for a dialogue to occur in the first place. So, in speaking out, in giving an account, we are relating ourselves and our statements and thoughts to a topic and to someone else, who is listening and may be responding. Only within this context of the living word can we speak of philosophy – which is why, for Plato, the written word was at best a pastime, a reminder, but never the expression of a philosophical life:

“[the philosopher will] write when he does write by way of pastime, collecting a store of refreshments both for his own memory, against the day ‘when age oblivious comes’, and for all such as tread in his footsteps¹⁵, and he will take pleasure in watching the tender plants grow up. (...) But far more excellent is the serious treatment of them [philosophical topics], which employs the art of dialectic. The dialectician selects a soul of the right type, and in it he plants and sows his words founded on knowledge, words which can defend both themselves and him who planted them, words which instead of remaining barren contain a seed whence new words grow up in

¹¹ See e.g. I. Markova, *Dialogicality as an ontology of humanity*, in: C.B. Grant, *Rethinking Communicative Interaction: New Interdisciplinary Horizons*, Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishers 2005, pp. 29-51

¹² See D. Baecker, *Kommunikation*, Leipzig: Reclam 2005

¹³ My translation, quoted from M. Buber, *Die Schriften über das Dialogische Prinzip*, Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider 1954. The quotation, from a letter by Jacobi from the year 1775, is on page 287.

¹⁴ M. Heidegger, *Platon: Sophistes (Gesamtausgabe vol. 19)*, Frankfurt: Klostermann 1992, p. 322.

¹⁵ Cf. Wittgenstein's characterisation of philosophy as a collection of “reminders”.

new characters, whereby the seed is vouchsafed immortality, and its possessor the fullest measure of blessedness that man can attain unto. (276d-277a, translation: Hackforth)¹⁶

The immediate context of dialectic is that of the joint investigation, in the form of a dialogue, of what is of concern to the speakers themselves. The philosopher has to pick out the right kind of person, someone who will be fertile soil for the words, the thoughts, he sows in his partner. Philosophy is a *psychagogy*, a leading of the soul or an education. Not everything can be said to everyone at any time. An element of *kairos* is as much part of philosophy as it had always been of rhetoric – again, philosophy and rhetoric merge: philosophy is a leading of the soul by words, on the basis of truth established by joint reasoning (dialectic). Heidegger (*op. cit.*, 344ff.) takes this to mean that, for Plato, the idea of logos is twofold. There is the logos, the articulated thought or word, in the soul, “the most beautiful place”, as Plato says in the seventh letter, which can be shared as lived word in a conversation, an actual occurrence. There is also the logos of the published, publicly available communication. This is never more than a reminder, an instigation for dialogue, an image (eidolon) of the true logos. Reading can be dialogical, and hence a genuine form of philosophy, only if the reader lends the text a voice. This consequence is not drawn by Plato (and, for that matter, also not by Heidegger), but it is central to Gadamer’s notion of hermeneutics as we have discussed it, in which tradition as textual requires reading to be a dialogue between reader and the text which is given a vicarious life by the appropriation by the reader. From Plato to Gadamer, logocentrism is phonocentrism. Although here I cannot go into Derrida’s treatment of phonocentrism as, if I may use the term, a cult of presence, we can point out that even in the ideas of *différance* and *événement*, a concrete, non-repeatable openness to future, and in that sense, an idea of life, is being explored, exactly as the lived dialogue is presence (of truth) and absence at the same time. The relation of this openness of the lived dialogue to the totality of truth to which the metaphysical philosopher claims access is not necessarily one of reified availability of an insight – in fact our analysis may make us suspect that this has never been the upshot of the metaphysical tradition.¹⁷ One of the most important consequences of a philosophy of communication lies precisely in this transformed relation to the metaphysical tradition which it affords us. In contradiction to Habermas, my concept of communication does not so much enable us to continue to defend a notion of universal rationality in the post-metaphysical era, as to enable us to see that metaphysical reason is not what many contemporary philosophers have made it out to be. A speculative, concrete, metaphorical level of thought precedes rationalistic thought and logical reconstruction. At this level metaphysics has its proper home. This level of thought a philosophy of communication can open up to us, as it is predominantly in the act of communicating, whether by language or some other code, that we find speculative, concrete and metaphorical meaning. The very idea of a code or language turns

¹⁶ In: Hamilton and Cairns, *The Collected Dialogues of Plato*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1989, pp. 475-526.

¹⁷ Cf. Roland Barthes: “A meeting for speech should, I think aim at (...) suspension (no matter of what – the desire is for a form), try to rejoin an art of living, the greatest of all arts, according to Brecht (such a view is more dialectical than it appears, in that it compels the distinction and evaluation of the customs of violence).” In: “Writers, Intellectuals, Teachers”, S. Sontag, *The Barthes Reader*, New York: Hill and Wang 1980, p. 402.

out to be an abstraction or, more properly, an operative codification and result, of the communicative encounter.¹⁸

It is the communicative space, which has been opened up in dialogue with philosophical rhetoric, hermeneutics and classical metaphysics of being, that allows us to reclaim the territory of metaphysics as a logic of manifestation. We are not reformulating classical philosophy in linguistic terms, however. Rather, we are rediscovering the communicative ground, the context of dialogic encounter, which is an existential context, underlying metaphysics. The totalizing concept, when referred back to its existential context, is the dialogical turn expressive of the conversation as *standing in the light of* transcategorical or unconditional truth – not more and not less. Language is an army of metaphors, as Nietzsche said, but this does not terminate metaphysics, rather it is the precondition of it. Only the reification of metaphysical content, its commoditization if you will, under the pressure of logic and its view of thought as basically univocal has distorted the correct appreciation of metaphysical language.

Does this mean that anything can be said? Yes and no. We do not know what can and cannot be said, not in a definitive way at any rate. We do not know what dimensions of meaning may still lay hidden in the words we use and the concepts we form. But insofar as saying is responding, and insofar as our role in dialogue is to question first, and answer later, it is also not an arbitrary matter what is being said. Grassi, in the same text I discussed above, makes the point clear:

That which is—namely, individual beings, participants in and participles of being, for only as such do they exist—manifests itself in reality exclusively in a concrete historical situation, defined by the here and now of existence. All beings, in their openness to being, are expressions of a call, an appeal that must be answered in the urgency of every moment. The appeals, in whose realm we exist, are ever-changing and new, and the meaning of beings is transformed according to the modality of our responses to the appeals.

The nature of the appeal is now a matter that has to concern us. The *Phaidros*, which has been seen for long as a basis from which to understand the entire platonic corpus¹⁹, indicates this level by its conjunction of the apparently disparate themes of love, the soul and the relation between philosophy and rhetoric. The true rhetoric is a philosophical dialectic, Socrates establishes. It requires knowledge of the truth, as much as it is the way by which to reach that knowledge. Knowledge is achieved in a process of concept formation and interpretation, very much like the one described by Gadamer.

We bring a dispersed plurality under a single form, seeing it all together – the purpose being to define so-and-so, and thus to make plain whatever may be chosen as the topic for exposition. For example, take the

¹⁸ The communicative encounter itself has a paradoxical character of sharing and withholding, unity and separation, without which there would be no communication – it is not pure, reciprocal presence.

¹⁹ This idea lies behind the long tradition to see the dialogue as the first written by Plato, and, in our context, is also pointed out by Heidegger (pp. 313f: “Wenn die Charakterisierung nicht so kitschig wäre, könnte man ein gewisses Recht darin sehen, wenn gesagt würde, dass der “Phaidros” ein Programmschrift für die Eröffnung der Akademie sei.”). See also S. Benardete, *The Rhetoric of Morality and Philosophy – Plato’s Gorgias and Phaedrus*, Chicago: Chicago University Press 1991.

definition given just now of love. Whether it was right or wrong, all events it was that which enabled our discourse to achieve lucidity and consistency. (...) Believe me, Phaedrus, I am myself a lover of these divisions and collections, that I may gain the power to speak and to think, and whenever I deem another man able to discern an objective unity and plurality, I follow in his footsteps where he leads as a god(265d-266b; the last clause is a quotation from Homer, *Odyssey* 5.193)

The theme of love is related to the discussion of rhetoric and philosophy by an examination of three speeches on love. The dialogical examination proves the point of the nature of true rhetoric. Moreover, with the help of dialectic, the partners in the dialogue establish that love is form of madness, but of divine madness. It is a state of being “possessed” (249d), a memory of the apprehension of truth, which only makes the person who is sought home in this way appear to be “out of his wits” (*loc. cit.*) to normal people. Plato even links the word manic to mantic – to prophecy. The speech that moves by enunciating archai is above all associated with the emotion of love.²⁰

5. *Amor and Psyche*

The *Phaidros* ends with a prayer to the god Pan:

Dear Pan, and all ye other gods that dwell in this place, grant that I may become fair within, and that such outward things as I have may not war against the spirit within me. May I count him rich who is wise, and as for gold, may I possess so much of it as only a temperate man might bear and carry with him. (279b-c)

The dialogue between Phaidros and Socrates on love, rhetoric and the soul took place on the grassy bank of a stream, during the hour of midday, the hour of Pan, when, in the South, the relentless light and heat of the sun bring everything to a standstill, enclosed in its own space, even the sounds. It is the point zero of communication made palpable, the moment before a word is spoken.

Pan, originally the god of shepherds, acquired a much more comprehensive meaning over time, coming to be seen as an all-god (pan), a god of being itself. His outward ugliness is here contrasted with his wisdom, his inward beauty. In Apuleius’ story of the marriage of Amor and Psyche²¹, Pan also features. When Psyche has lost Amor, Pan turns to her in her desperation. Lying in the grass on the bank of a stream, he comforts her and urges her not to give up, to go back to her lover and husband and make up:

²⁰ See also J. Durham Peters, *Speaking into the Air – A History of the Idea of Communication*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1999, pp. 22ff, for a discussion of the close relation between the intellectual history of the ideas of communication and love. Love is both the recognition of unity and the recognition of otherness – we find a similar structure in communication. Durham Peters contrasts both sides by referring to the *Phaidros* and the Gospels. The consequence of the philosophical approach I have attempted to sketch here would be the recognition that unity and otherness do not lay outside of each other but are strictly co-ordinated.

²¹ Not without reason in his *The Golden Ass*, from antiquity also known as *Metamorphoses*.

O fair maid, I am a rustic and rude herdsman, howbeit, by reason of my old age, expert in many things; for as far as I can learn by conjecture, which, according as wise men do term, is called divination, I perceive by your uncertain gait, your pale hue, your sobbing sighs, and your watery eyes, that you are greatly in love. Wherefore hearken to me, and go not about to slay yourself, nor weep not at all, but rather adore and worship the great God Cupid, and win him unto you by your gentle promise of service. (V.25, translation W.H.D. Rouse²²; *Divination*: prophecy)

Pan is, some would say, an expert in non-verbal communication, and in the talking cure. He understands the matters of the heart and is well aware of the measure of rhetoric necessary for love – and isn't prayer a form of rhetoric, did not Plato say, in our dialogue, that the true rhetoric would be the one that would persuade the gods? The soul has no life without love, and the embrace of being can restore love to the soul. The story is not so different from the *Phaidros*. It is also a story of communication, of dialogue, of the soul and her desire for knowledge. It expresses the tragedy of reason and its resolution in philosophical rhetoric. It was Psyche's desire to know who her husband was that led him to abandon her; it was the all-embracing Pan that gave her the resolve and trust necessary to get him back. Pan, the comforter of the soul in her despair, speaks to us as much as we do to each other. "All beings, in their openness to being, are expressions of a call, an appeal that must be answered in the urgency of every moment."

I hope to have shown that a more or less complete philosophy, or rather a programme for such a complete philosophy, is beginning to emerge. The analysis of the concept of being and the relation of philosophical rhetoric to love have only been indicated so far. The philosophy of communication, finally, also has an ethical dimension, although it is not necessarily concerned anymore than other philosophies have been with norms for transmission. Most of these derive from the indictment against lying anyway, without which communication could not occur – basic trust is a communicative concept. Several aspects need to be distinguished and remain for future elaboration: 1) metaphor articulates emotion 2) love is philosophically and existentially fundamental. Love is the principle of metaphor, the non-dialectical and non-logical unity which preserves difference – itself the ultimate metaphor for communication. It is related to sympathy but it is not the same. The ethics of communication is not an ethics of *Mitleid*, pity or fellow-suffering, but of desire, decision, affirmation and solidarity. 3) Psychological categories such as the unconscious, which is based on metaphoric activity or transference, basic trust, the existential importance of having a voice, *Mündigkeit*, *et cetera* can be derived from the principle of communication, as indeed can the metaphysically guiding notions of personhood, freedom, truth, justice. These are then no longer compromised by some of the familiar objections raised against them, in the name of them. The idea of a philosophy of communication in the form in which I have tried to sketch it may seem as going against the grain of the times. Its sensibility is certainly classical, but it is no less existential. As an attempt to overcome the paralysis of reason on one hand and the instrumentalisation of reason on the other, however, it is closely allied to other currents in contemporary thought.

²² In: *Cupid and Psyche and Other Tales from the Golden Ass of Apuleius*, The King's Classics, London 1904 (but there are many other editions).

The question the philosophy of communication poses, or rather which it hurls at us in silence, is: *What do I have to say?* With that question, it points us back to the concrete context of dialogue as the place where philosophy can happen and the place where people can dwell.