



Trópos. Rivista di Ermeneutica e critica filosofica

ed. by Gianni Vattimo and Gaetano Chiurazzi

2018, n. 1

On circles and spirals. From self-reference to self-transcendence

On another occasion I wished to jump across a lake. When I was in the middle of it, I found it was much larger than I had imagined at first. So I at once turned back in the middle of my leap, and returned to the bank I had just left, to take a stronger spring. The second time, however, I again took off badly, and fell in up to my neck. I should, beyond any doubt, have come to an untimely end, had I not, by the force of my unaided arm, lifted up my pig-tail, together with my horse, whom I gripped tightly with my knees.

E. Raspe, *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*.

The Adventures of Baron Munchausen have illustrated and sometimes allegedly inspired great insights in philosophical reflections. The essential feature that unites most of them is the issue of self-reference. This usually attracts the interest of those into logic and epistemology: the paradox of the liar, just to make an example, is one of the most famous riddles in the entire history of philosophy. Bertrand Russell's solution to this and to all the paradoxes of its kind, as well as the so-called Munchausen's trilemma formulated by German philosopher Hans Albert are not inferior in fame. The adventures of the famous Baron also sprang up, in a somehow related field, in the coinage of the computer-science term *bootstrapping* that usually refers to a self-starting process that is supposed to proceed without external input.

Besides, it would be simplistic to only point out logical-semantic and epistemic aspects of this adventure. The Baron's self-congratulatory rhetoric also reveals an ambiguity of an ontological-transcendental rank: the famous scene, in fact, puts on stage more than just a confusion between truth and method, but also one of higher order between grounding and grounded, condition and fact. In the history of philosophy, this problem has popped up in many forms and under different names, from Aristotle's *prime mover* – the thought of thought –, up to *the causa sui* in Spinoza, the recursive effect of *sympathy* in Adam Smith, the Kantian *Prozess* of Reason to reason, and to the critical-idealistic notion of *autonomy*, eventually re-emerging in Twentieth Century as *hermeneutic circle*.

Self-reference is indeed said in many ways; and the relationships between these ways are yet to be thoroughly screened. As far as logic is concerned, it mostly gives way to paradoxes of a rather scarce interest, whereas in literature it offers one charming rhetorical device. In visual arts, it shows up as Droste effect, or as a *mise-en-abyme*. In Derrida's reflection and in general in post-modern philosophy, it appears as a necessary consequence of the denial of any *hors du texte*.

When it is said as self-foundation, it appears in its most disturbing form. In such cases, some also suggested to call it self-transcendence: in the murky reflections of self-referential collective practices,

they saw the dawn and the genesis of the sacred, i.e. a violent system of differences grounded in violence (Girard 1972; Dupuy 1996). In other contexts, some imagined that the same logical form might be underlying the genesis of the socio-economic phenomenon that, after a millennium of full-fledged Christianity, has taken the place of the sacred, which is Capital. The latter could in fact be the result of a logical-ontological short-circuit in which the difference between money and goods, that is, between the condition of possibility of the existence of value and its very same occurrence, no longer exists. (Amato, 2015).

Attempts to properly explain what is involved in these and other occurrences of self-reference have yet to find a complete synthesis; for the time being, the only thing that seems certain is that where a meaningful experience is given, in one way or another, a self-referential kind of grounding principle is always hiding; and where self-reference shows up as such, meaning seems to be fading.

Contributions are welcome aiming to focus on the nature of self-reference, on its various historical occurrences, on its links with the problems of the transcendental and of meaning in general. A multi-disciplinary approach is more than appreciated. Though not in formalized terms, the volume aims at clarifying both the notions of self-reference, self-foundation, self-transcendence in themselves and their diverse manifestations, in epistemology, hermeneutics, aesthetics and in other domains, such as philosophy of economics and philosophical anthropology.

Deadlines

Submission deadline: **Dec. 31, 2017.**

Results of blind reviews: **March 31, 2018.**

Publication date: **June 2018.**

Submission Guidelines

1. Papers should be submitted to the editors of the current issue: Emanuele Antonelli e.r.antonelli@gmail.com and/or Francesca Dell'Orto francesca.dellorto@unito.it.
2. Papers should be in English, French, or Italian.
3. Papers should be prepared for blind review (double).
4. Each submission should consist of two separate documents containing the following:
 - A. The full paper including:
 1. Title.
 2. The full paper should not exceed 50,000 characters in total.
 3. An abstract of no more than 200 words - also including an English title.
 4. 5 keywords.
 5. See style sheet below for more detailed information.
 - B. A separate cover letter including the following information:
 1. The title of the paper.
 2. Your name, affiliation and contact information.
 3. A biographical presentation of 50-60 words.

General information:

Publisher Website: <http://www.aracneeditrice.it/aracneweb/index.php/riviste.html?col=tropos>

Journal Website: <http://troposonline.wordpress.com>

Journal Email Address: tropos.filosofia@unito.it

Indexed in: Philosopher's Index, Philosophy Research Index, Catalogo Italiano dei Periodici (ACNP), European Reference Index for the Humanities and Social Sciences (ERIH Plus)

Questions are welcome and should be directed at the editors of the current issue: Emanuele Antonelli, e.r.antonelli@gmail.com, and/or Francesca Dell'Orto, francesca.dellorto@unito.it.

Style Sheet

For the pre-publication preparation, please read carefully the following instructions.

1) Essays should not exceed **50,000 characters in length** and should include:

- **your name and affiliation;**
- **an abstract of no more than 200 words with an English title;**
- **5 keywords of the essay;**
- **a biographical presentation of 50-60 words.**

2) The number of footnotes should be kept to a minimum and appear at the end of each page. Reference marks come after punctuation.

3) The bibliographical references should directly appear **in the text**. Punctuation comes before quotation marks (“ ”) and apices (‘ ’). **The reference to a book or an article should appear in brackets:** (Derrida 1967: 103).

4) At the end of the article, **an alphabetically-ordered list of the references should appear:**

- **Reference to a book (and to its translation):**

Derrida, J., 1967, *De la grammatologie*, Paris, Minuit; Italian translation by R. Balzarotti, F. Bonicalzi, G. Contri, G. Dalmaso, A.C. Loaldi, *Della grammatologia*, Milano, Jaca Book, 1998.

- **Reference to a book, including the year of its first edition, if it is the case:**

Heidegger, M., 1971, *Sein und Zeit* [1927], edited by W. von Hermann, Frankfurt a.M., Klostermann.

- **Reference to an edited book:**

Caciagli, M., Spreafico, A. (eds.), 1973, *Un sistema politico alla prova*, Bologna, Il Mulino.

- **Reference to an article:**

Kellner, M.M., 1975, *Democracy*, “Journal of Politics,” 37, n. 4, pp. 35-64.

4) For further information, please refer to *The Chicago Manual of Style*, 15th ed. (2003).

Trópos - Journal of Hermeneutics and Philosophical Criticism was founded in 2008 at the University of Turin (Italy). The editors are Gaetano Chiurazzi and Gianni Vattimo. The managing editor is Roberto Salizzoni.

Trópos publishes essays that address the most relevant contemporary debates in continental philosophy, in a permanent dialogue with other philosophical traditions. Its main fields of interest include theoretical and practical philosophy, aesthetics, linguistic and literary subjects.

Trópos is published twice a year, by Aracne Editrice. Each issue includes a thematic section, followed by essays on various subjects.

Amato, M., 2015, *L'enigma della moneta* [2010], Salerno, Orthotes.

Dupuy, J.-P., 1996, *Introduction aux sciences sociales. Logique des phénomènes collectifs*, Paris, Ellipses.

Girard, R., 1972, *La violence et le sacré*, Paris, Grasset.