

**Reality as Stratification of Surfaces.
The Concept of Transit in Mario Perniola's Philosophy**

Summary:

The aim of this paper is to show in what terms reality can be considered as a stratification of surfaces by developing Mario Perniola's philosophy of transit. The first part will deal with the etymology of the word transit, in order to explain its meanings and uses. As it will be clarified, the development of the notion of transit goes together with the conception of reality as deep in the sense of full, available, rich, as the realm of "difference" and "enigmas". The second part will explain the particular conception of temporality implied in the transit. Together with Perniola's analysis, Nietzschean and Deleuzian reflections about "*amor fati*" and "eternal return" will be further explored. This concept is crucial to understand not only Perniola's overall philosophy by clarifying his position against postmodern thinkers; it also provides a theoretical framework from which the task and the challenge of the philosopher in the contemporary world emerge.

Keywords

Transit, Enigma, Surface, *Amor Fati*, Eternal Return

Published in *European Journal of Psychoanalysis*, February 2019.

<http://www.journal-psychoanalysis.eu/reality-as-stratification-of-surfaces-the-concept-of-transit-in-mario-perniolas-philosophy/>

1. *Reality as Stratification of Surfaces*

The objective of this section is twofold. On the one hand it will clarify the notion of transit, to which the Italian writer and philosopher Mario Perniola devoted the volume *Transiti. Come si va dallo stesso allo stesso (Transits. How to go from same to same)*; on the other hand, it will show the peculiar revaluation of the notion of depth developed by Perniola. In fact, according to the Italian philosopher, among the postmodern thinkers there is a commonplace for which the concept of depth belongs to metaphysics (object of criticism by postmodernism), and because of this it is refused and rejected. On the contrary, Perniola argues that depth has other significant meanings, not taken into account by postmodern theory, that enable us to rehabilitate this notion. As will be made clearer further on, Perniola's considerations over the concept of depth can help better understand the notion of transit. At

the end of the paper, it will be clear why Perniola understands reality as a stratification of surfaces.

The word 'transit' comes from the Latin *transitus*, meaning “passage”, “transfer”, “transition”, which also refers to the verb *transeo*, “to go across”, “to pass through”, “to transform”. Different uses of this term have arisen from its Latin etymology: in its daily usage, “transit” can mean carrying people from one place to another, or passing through a place; philosophically speaking, different conceptual declinations are involved. On the one hand, the idea of transit refers to a certain specific literature based on the transience of life – that is, on the precariousness and the shortness of our earthly passage. A telling example of this literature is expressed by Asai Ryōi in the novel *Ukiyo Monogatari* (*Tales of the Floating World*), written in 1661:

living only for the moment, savouring the moon, the snow, the cherry blossoms, and the maple leaves, singing songs, drinking *sake*, and diverting oneself just in floating, unconcerned by the prospect of imminent poverty, buoyant and carefree, like a gourd carried along with the river current: this is what we call *ukiyo* (qtd. in Hickman 6)

Perniola's philosophy takes a different direction on the concept of transit.

The first to dwell on the nature of transit in Western tradition, according to Perniola, was Heraclitus, for whom the things of the world share the essential characteristic of the so-called *enantiodromia*—the coincidence of opposites. This implies considering every reality as always-becoming, as everything is susceptible to turn into its opposite. For instance, the famous aphorism, “You cannot not step twice into the same river,” implies that one may apparently be immersing oneself into those same waters, yet at the same time the river flows on and thus changes unceasingly. This is “at once a process of passing from the same to the same and the persistence of what is in itself different” (Perniola, *Enigmas* 17). *Enantiodromia* and transit share a fundamental feature, namely they imply the *atopic* character of every reality. The adjective *atopic*, from Greek *atopos*, both means “a-topos” (“devoid of a place”; “placelessness”) and “singular”, “unusual”, “unclassifiable”. The very history of philosophy, for Perniola, can be understood through this concept. Why many philosophers, from Thales to Socrates, Boethius, Giordano Bruno and Heidegger, were denigrated, hated or persecuted? Because of the “atopic nature of philosophy” itself: “the hatred of philosophy has deep roots, unmentionable motivations, surprising manifestations: what actually animates it is the philosopher's avoidance of a definitive collocation, his/her staying in transit” (Perniola, *Transiti* 2). The philosopher, according to this view, does not follow any *utopia* or *topicality* but is oriented toward the *atopia*. These three terms share the same Greek etymological origin, namely the word “topos” (place). However, where *utopia* means “no-place”, and *topical* means “actual” in the sense of a “deposit of stereotypes” (Perniola, *Transiti* 2), only *atopia*, according to Perniola, has a privileged relationship of affinity with reality. The *utopia* is considered by Perniola as a non-existing representation that revolves around an ideal community or society only imagined, without a proper consistence and significance: a “motionless and perfect republic of the spirit” (7); on the other hand, the *topical* is that particular, ordinary dimension of thinking, which dissolves reality in the ephemeral actuality. In contrast with these two notions, Perniola sees philosophy as that particular and unique kind of thought that can account for reality, understood as multi-layered and enigmatic. Here reality is used in a broad sense because Perniola develops the transit as a wide-ranging and multifaceted notion: from an “erotic transit” (69-83), to a “transit ritual” (189-203), from a “telematic transit” (217-229) to an “artistic transit” (150-158). Even if at first glance the subtitle of *Transiti* (“How to go from the same to the same”) seems to imply a sterile movement terminating with the state of a certain thing or phenomenon remaining unchanged, the actual meaning is the opposite, namely the flourishing of difference within each reality:

to think of the richness of changes implicit in the same phenomenon, at the same time, in the same reality. Not to claim that A is equal to B, C, D [...] and ultimately, that one thing is as any other—but indeed to show that B, C, D [...] can derive from A through minimum distinctions, subtle slips, imperceptible declinations. (*Transiti* 1)

To clarify this passage, it is necessary to understand the re-evaluation of the concept of *depth* developed by Perniola. In an article devoted to this concept (“Per una rivalutazione della nozione di profondità”), Perniola argues against the postmodern conception of depth and praises the idea of “depth as stratification”, as will be clarified further on. In Ihab Hassan’s table of differences between modernism and postmodernism, Perniola highlights the opposition between “depth”, which falls under modernism, and “surface”, belonging to postmodernism. The postmodern opposition, according to Hassan, lies between cause, substance, truth, origin, metaphysic, on one side, and, on the other, flexibility, lightness, ephemerality. The weakness of this dichotomy, according to Perniola, can be seen in the undue match between depth and metaphysics. Postmodern thinkers, in their crusade against every concept gravitating around the notion of metaphysics, have also wrongly addressed their critique over “depth”. Hassan’s table is a clear example of this perspective, in which there is a direct link between these two notions. This inclusion, for Perniola, misleads the very concept of depth, as will be made clearer shortly.

In order to develop his perspective, Perniola addresses the semantic expansions of the words *profundus* and *báthos* (respectively Latin and Greek terms for depth) as the English word “depth” has its semantic roots in the Indo-European *dheu-b*, from which the Latin word *fundus* originated. *Pro-fundus* – “far [is] the bottom” – had two principal meanings: in the Roman age it used to indicate something immeasurable, without an end, in a pejorative and negative sense (for instance: *profunda avaritia*, deep avarice). With the advent of Christianity, and particularly with the works of Augustine of Hippo, it shifted to a positive connotation. In fact, even though indicating the boundless depth of human sins, at the same time it implied its overturning, namely the salvation through God’s love: “the soul is deep not only because it reproduces in itself the abyss of sin, but especially because in that abyss the premises for its redemption are already present” (Perniola, “Per una rivalutazione” 97).

The Greek word *báthos*, in its archaic use, expressed the idea of fullness and richness, both physically (the deep sea) and metaphorically (a deep affect, sentiment or thought). Philosophically, Perniola quotes Diogenes Laertius who referred to Heraclitus as a “sea-diver” who immerses himself into the depths of thought. From Plato on, Perniola continues, a decisive turning point occurred. True knowledge started to be conceived as an *ascent* to the hyperuranium and not a *descent* into the profound and earthly world. *Báthos* became pejorative and *hypsélós* (the Greek word for “sublime”) emerged. This spiritualistic element marginalized the semantic spectrum of depth (*báthos*). An example of how *báthos* lost its importance by acquiring negative meanings can be seen in Neoplatonism. Indeed, the father of Neoplatonism, Plotinus, considers “depth” the *sinful* things of the world (matter, bodies...) whereas, on the contrary, the spirit, the soul and the ideal can be reached only through a vertical movement of transcendence.

Perniola’s aim is to re-evaluate the notion of depth by avoiding the postmodern commonplace for which “depth” is closely related to interiority, authenticity, truth and eventually metaphysics. By showing the etymological uses of the words *profundus* and *báthos* he reaches the conclusion that the spiritual element (transcendence, totality, absolute) is not necessarily present in the notion of depth. As the Greek *báthos* and the Roman’s first use of *profundus* indicate, these terms used to have an earthly connotation and not a transcendent one. For Perniola, in addition, the Augustinian conception of depth should not be considered spiritualistic but dialectic, as it consists in the awareness that something is deep

when it is susceptible of changing into its opposite. Thus, when postmodern thinkers argue against the notion of depth, they wrongly include it within the wide range of metaphysical concepts, by erroneously taking for granted that depth means transcendence and ultimately metaphysics. This is the reason why Perniola disengages from postmodern critique by re-evaluating the very notion of depth within the perspective of the transit. The development of the concept of transit goes together with the conception of reality as deep in the sense of full, available, rich—and not deep because transcendent, as postmodern thought incorrectly claims. Reality, according to this view, is paradoxically made of *deep surfaces*:

This possibility opens up when I think depth as a stratification of surfaces, that means something full, instead of empty. This idea seems to me particularly close to archaeological depth, in which what is ancient emerges layer after layer, surface after surface, in the context of a philosophical perspective that eliminates emptiness. (“Per una rivalutazione” 95)

Surface *layers* because nothing appears *under* the surface itself. In other words, there is not a dualism between an interior which is covered by an exterior. On the contrary it is all surfaces and exteriority. This is why Perniola argues that “philosophizing is like peeling an onion” (*Enigmas* 7), namely because under every ring there is still another ring. Precisely here lies the link between Baroque thought and Perniola’s philosophy. In fact, Baroque theory conceives reality as sinuous, rich, full, wrapped and enveloped by itself. This perspective should not be understood in negative terms, on the contrary, it implies that the philosopher’s task lies precisely in explaining and developing what is complex, enigmatic, labyrinthine, if not uncanny. Philosophy, according to Perniola, proceeds through a spiral-like movement: it does not investigate its objects of study in their immediacy as if they were simple and transparent objects; rather, it explores them trying to understand their opacity and thickness, namely their richness and complexity. Moreover, here lies a theoretical distinction between postmodern perspective and Perniola’s thought. According to Perniola, when postmodern thinkers define postmodernity by marking it as a passage and a rupture with modernity, they actually carry on the very same argument of modern thinkers against pre-modernity. In other words, both modern and postmodern thinkers share the same attitude of considering themselves within a new era brought about by a fracture with what preceded them. The paradox—underlined by Perniola—is that postmodernity can be considered as a new epoch only insofar as it is not understood as a break with the past, but as a minimal shift, a transition, a transit¹.

Reality, according to this view, cannot be understood in terms of polar oppositions (such as true / false, substance / appearance), but as a dynamic set of never-ending micro-changes. Instead of judging reality through the meter of an ideal truth (eternally fixed), reality itself should be understood in its *continuum* of mutations and variations, namely in its perennial transit. The very idea of a substantial truth, Perniola argues, mystifies the labyrinthine nature of reality by simplifying it in a once-and-for-all formula: “knowledge is not simply the revelation of a secret, nor the illumination of something that was obscure, nor lastly the expounding of a concept given *a priori*, but the drawing out, the unwinding, the expression of something that is tangled, wound up, gathered in” (*Enigmas* 5). It is no accident that one of the recurrent themes in Perniola’s works (*20th Century Aesthetics*; *Art and Its Shadow*; *Enigmas*; *Ritual Thinking*; *Sobre el pensar barroco*; *The Sex Appeal of the Inorganic*) is the Baroque period, as it fundamentally mirrors a declination of the transit:

1 For this reason Perniola does not actually criticize postmodernity *tout court* but some perspectives that have developed within it (such as Vattimo and Baudrillard), while his philosophy is closer to other postmodern thinkers (namely Lyotard and Deleuze).

from a Baroque perspective, in fact, the world teems with matter coiling, writhing, tangling and developing on itself, exploiting its own inexhaustible subtlety and richness. Importantly, here also lies the post-nihilistic tonality of Perniola's overall thought. His thought does not deal with Being or Nothingness, but, more modestly and at the same time more complexly, with the concept of "something". If the world exists, Perniola writes commenting on Leibniz, it is not because it is the best one, "it is rather the other way round: it is the best because it exists, because it is what there is" (*Enigmas* 9). This world is made of endless combinations of "something" (and never monolithic entities), for which one thing is susceptible of *becoming-something-else*.

This section focused on the relation between the transit and the spatial element (reality as a full inexhaustible presence); the following one will deal with the temporal experience of the transit.

2. *Transit and Different Repetition*

The concept of transit is influenced by a series of philosophies and thinkers who have developed the notion of repetition. Perniola links together Stoic thought, Roman religiosity, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, Freud, Kubler, and Klossowski. Despite the historical (but also conceptual) gaps between them, Perniola individuates a common thread: the notion of "different repetition". To have a closer understanding, Nietzschean philosophy will be addressed in this paper. There are two main reasons for choosing the German philosopher. First of all, Perniola himself relates Nietzschean thought with the transit (*Transiti* 16-20; *La società dei simulacri* 48-51); secondly, Nietzsche can be considered among the leading modern philosophers to have delved into the very experience of transit. His entire philosophy can be considered atypical, together with a thinking attitude of "different through the same" which permeates his work (what Deleuze called the "difference through repetition"). The key concepts to understand how Nietzsche can be considered a transit-thinker and—more importantly—what typology of temporality the transit implies, are "*amor fati*" (*love of fate*) and "eternal return".

Perniola argues that the notion of transit is affirmed in the Nietzschean concept of *amor fati*, as by loving one's own fate, life is experienced in its "present-ness" and availability. On the contrary, metaphysics privileges a time that has yet to come (the world beyond the world, that is, the ideal). The objects of Nietzschean critique are the great metaphysical narratives: morality, Christianity, truth, substance. These narratives essentially imply an entry into an ideal dimension, detached from reality and its actuality. In other words, they attempt to fully mould reality, while also emptying it by means of creating a "world beyond the world"—that is, a product of the human mind disguised as eternally existing and true. If the concept of "ideal" orients an individual's life, this means that this very individual shapes his/her life around *how things should be* and not on *how things are*. Ultimately, at the very rise of each metaphysic, an "ought" (*Sollen*) judgment arises too. According to Nietzsche, this imperative dictating how things ought to be produces an unfixable distance between human beings and their own lives, and between thought and action. This distance emerges because for Nietzsche life is an unceasing becoming in which there is no place for a fixed conceptual entity. Thus, an imperative regarding how things *ought to be*, in his perspective, is an arbitrary crystallization that can only pervert the movement of life itself. Metaphysics, subsequent to this argument, is at its very core nihilistic. In fact, to judge reality according to an "ought" implicitly corresponds to a declaration of powerlessness over reality itself:

This super reality is nihilistic in its very substance, because it knows very well that it cannot be affirmed and maintained at a factual, empirical, vital level: it sells itself for *ideal* because it is not *real*, it poses something beyond because it has no strength to be here and now, it speaks of a transcendent or future life because it was defeated in the only existing one. (*Transiti* 17)

At odds with this perspective there is Perniola's concept of *amor fati* borrowed from Nietzsche and defined as the "experience of unconditional and passionate loyalty to what *is*" (*Transiti* 19, italics mine). Nonetheless, in what terms should the experience of *amor fati* be understood? On the one hand, through *amor fati* the past is appropriated by the choice of its infinite repetition; on the other hand, life is not procrastinated into a time that is yet to come (an ideal world, a utopia, a paradise...). However, *Amor fati* should not be understood as a fatalistic law dominating history, or a theological assumption for which one should passively adapt to life's events provided that there is a God behind Fate or Providence: it corresponds, instead, to an actively chosen lifestyle, which sees life as an experience of endless affirmation. Several questions may arise here: how can one "passionately" affirm events or things that he/she normally despises? How can sadness, death, misery and unhappiness be accepted and "chosen" in one's own present? How can one *love*, and not merely bear, the *necessary* of life? Developing the concept of eternal return, which is strictly connected to *amor fati*, might be of help.

Eternal return is linked to a reconsideration of time, especially of its understanding as a linear configuration, where three main moments can be clearly marked out: past, present and future. These three moments are marked by their mutual difference and by their continued deprivation. The difference indicates the resolution of each event in its uniqueness, so what one experiences now, as far as one can try to repeat it, will be experienced one time only. Deprivation then follows, since all accomplished actions, once acted, are lost in a past, so to speak, already remote "ontologically". The eternal return is at odds with this perspective. It is the thought of the possibility of a circular time, that is, of the time that preserves itself and which perpetually shows the same combinations of events.

Among the interpretations provided on this notion, the one elaborated by Gilles Deleuze will be highlighted in this section. Deleuze's argument sets apart the cosmological-probabilistic perspective, that in a finite space, given an infinite time, all possible combinations are eternally reverting, making the return a process identical to itself. This perspective, Deleuze writes, is reinforced by the fact that Nietzsche, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, gave two different expositions of the eternal return:

One regards a *sick* Zarathustra, the other, a *convalescent, almost healed* Zarathustra. What makes Zarathustra sick is the very idea of the cycle: the idea that Everything returns, that the Same returns, and that everything returns to the same. [...] What happened from the moment Zarathustra is convalescent? [...] Zarathustra understands the identity "eternal Return-Being selective". How could what is reactive and nihilistic come back, how could the negative come back, since eternal return is the being that can be predicated only for the affirmation, for the becoming in action? [...] Eternal Return is Repetition; but the Repetition that selects, the Repetition that saves (*Nietzsche* 39-40).

Deleuze means that Zarathustra himself criticizes the idea of the eternal return at first, as it was conceived by his travel companions—the eagle and the snake—since they reduced it to a banal "organ song", namely to a sterile and identical repetition of what happens. On the other hand, this idea would not be consistent with the discourse on the transvaluation of values, for then the last man, Christian morality, metaphysics and, not least, nihilism would all return. Eternal return is instead "selective", both as *thought* and as *being*: as thought, since all one wants is wanted according to *amor fati*. On the other hand, it is selective as being,

since only what can be affirmed comes back. Deleuze compares the eternal return to a spinning wheel, which, turning faster and faster because of centrifugal force, expels from its centre all that contradicts its rotation. The being expels from itself, so to speak, all that contradicts its affirmation. Nihilism and reactive forces are encountered only once, since they return transformed from the eternal return's centrifugal wheel. As Daniela Angelucci points out: "this repetition that saves us is a choice, a selective act, a staging of an element that turns out, however, each time moved, masked, different, without there being an original principle, a final term of the series" ("Situazione e ripetizione" 47). The "heaviest burden" Nietzsche writes about in *The Gay Science* consists of engraving the instant with the seal of eternity, for it is only by deciding to live again every moment as it has been that the past does not crush man under its unbearable weight. Only the transformation of each "It was" into "I wanted it thus", keeps the possibility of the eternal return from being the most terrifying of possibilities. It is precisely for these reasons that Nietzsche defined the doctrine of the eternal return of the same as "the highest formula of affirmation that could ever be attained" (*Ecce Homo* 67). This affirmation consists precisely in the ability to bestow value also on repellent objects. Only in this way, according to Nietzsche, it is possible to make things beautiful:

I want to learn more and more how to see what is necessary in things as what is beautiful in them—thus I will be one of those who make things beautiful. *Amor fati*: let that be my love from now on! I do not want to wage war against ugliness. I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse the accusers. Let looking away be my only negation! And, all in all and on the whole: some day I want only to be a Yes-sayer! (*The Gay Science* 157)

It is crucial to understand that this statement should not be read with a vitalistic emphasis. The affirmation highlighted goes together with the (different) repetition brought about by the choice of eternal return. This repetition, according to Perniola, leads closer to a ritual thinking than to a vitalistic one. Through repetition, the formal element is preserved, which implies continuation, prosecution, transmission. On the contrary, Perniola considers vitalism nihilistic and iconoclastic as in its effort to satisfy the drives and the instincts of the individual, it dooms each form into dissolution. What Perniola suggests is that in the traditional philosophical dichotomy between *form* and *life*, Nietzsche has to be understood within the former. Precisely in this link between form, different repetition and rituality, Nietzschean thought meets Perniola's concept of transit. Maintaining the same conceptual register, transit is a philosophy of the present but it is not vitalistic. That is to say, it does not imply an acephalous and unoriented present where the individual lets him/herself go to his/her desires and impulses. It is not a hedonistic present in which insatiable hunger for pleasure guides existence. On the contrary, the present of the transit, through *amor fati*, is *loaded* with the past which is always "redeemed" by a choice of the will. This choice consists in appropriating one's own entire past; if all the past is "ours", nothing can happen which does not belong to us. Indeed, it is through this attitude towards existence that, according to Perniola, one can master his/her own condition.

The philosophy of the transit, elaborated by Perniola, is a philosophy of the *present* and of the *presence*, precisely because it does not deal with metaphysics and eternal ideals but with earthly historical phenomena. In other words—as was already pointed out in the first paragraph—it does not privilege a time that has yet to come (a utopian future), nor the metaphysic's conception of time which in turn suspends time by elaborating and believing in *timeless* truths. On the contrary, the transit allows precisely a dwelling with the present and its atemporality, namely with its richness, availability, presence and depth (in the meaning given to this word over this section).

A philosophy of the present and of the presence as the *transit* cannot complain about the absence of something, nor regret the lack of anything: it is not in mourning for the loss of some values or ideals, nor of any positive entity. Firstly, because values and ideals have always been too unrealistic and abstract; secondly, because it appropriates, it bears on its shoulders, it makes live in the present what is positive that the past conveys. Contrarily to the image of an empty world, of a *kénosis*, which would characterize the present society, my research is animated by the image of a full world, of a *plèroma*, in which everything is at hand. (*Transiti* 3)

There is no fatalistic resignation in the transit thought. It is both distant from metaphysics (by avoiding traditional metaphysical concepts such as “ideal”, “truth”, “morality” and so on) and from postmodernism (which praises notions like precarious, ephemeral, flexible—nowadays also the key words of economic neoliberalism). Transit’s thought, on the other hand, draws closer to a present where nothing is missing as everything *is present* (though folded and wrapped).²

The philosopher, in addition, being an atypical figure *par excellence*—according to Perniola—is thus a privileged reader and actor of the contemporary age. In fact, by avoiding ideologies and metaphysical truths, he/she is in the position of “listening” to the present time in its continuous becoming without obstacles (being those disordered affections or pre-given beliefs). In order to understand the uncanny events that happen not only in one’s own life but also in the broader social framework, the philosopher becomes “nothing but an intermediary, a transit zone, a *gateway*³ for phenomena that, because they present themselves in an unexpected and unpredictable way, surprise, disturb and astonish” (*Enigmas* 43). Only in this way can the philosopher be in “direct connection” (*presa diretta*) with the social-historical reality.

Conclusion

To sum up, this paper explored Perniola’s notion of transit by developing it in relation to spatiality and temporality (respectively first and second section). In the first section I highlighted Perniola’s re-evaluation of the notion of “depth”, which according to him can be defined as a “stratification of surfaces”. More specifically, by following Perniola’s enquiry over the semantic expansion of the word “depth” back to its Greek and Latin origins, it was shown how this concept only recently gained a meaning connected to the spiritualistic and metaphysical spectrum of “interiority” and “profundity”. Instead, its ancient uses showed how depth can indicate “fullness” and “richness” linked to the earthly world and more generally to effectual reality. Perniola’s concept of transit can be inscribed into this re-

2 It is precisely for these reasons that, according to Perniola, there is a strong connection between society and thought, and this is why the notion of transit can be considered as a sort of helpful lifebelt in the agitated waters of the current world. Perniola explains how the concept of transit “fits” appropriately into contemporary society, better than the key concepts of modernity, namely “tradition” and “innovation”, since they seem to have vanished in a present unquestioning about “neither past nor future, neither a homeland nor a utopia” (*Transiti* 7). Transit is not the diachronicity of a present continuously transcending itself towards the future, but the place where space *becomes* time in the unlimited availability of presence. The orbital centre of contemporary experience should then be localized in the present. Internet developments provide an indispensable framework for placing the transit experience inside contemporaneity. Massimo Di Felice’s research investigates precisely Perniola’s notion of transit and its contribution to a new theory of network ecologies (see *Paesaggi post-urbani*)

3 In English in the original text.

evaluation of reality intended as a full available presence. In order to clarify the notion of transit, the second section underlined its connections with Nietzschean philosophy. In particular it revolved around the ideas of *amor fati* and eternal return. I claim that these should be considered as mutual concepts: the former provides the temporal framework that allows one to move away from the Western-linear conception of time (past, present and future); the latter provides, through the acceptance of this temporality, a propulsive energy through which the very thought of an eternal repetition can be loved (as it will never be a sterile repetition but a different and selective one). The transit can be related to them as it has to be understood as the experience of an “absolute present”, in the etymological sense of *absolutus*, namely “untied” (from linear time) in which nothing is missing because everything is at hand, available. This does not mean that data and events in their immediacy are what to look for. Transit does not imply a vitalistic experience of reality in its immediacy but, as stated in the first section of this paper, it conveys the idea of a deep world made of layers of surfaces. Surface, thus, should not be confused with superficiality, immediacy, or banality. The “polemical objective” of *Transiti*, as Perniola points out in the *Preface to the Second Edition*, is the very notion of banality: “the opposite of the *transit* is the *banal*, what is perfectly adequate to itself, what is incapable of transformations” (*Transiti* 1). Transiting means going beyond banality without falling into spiritualistic or ideal conceptions by, paradoxically, praising this peculiar perspective of the *surface*.

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