8.

Care and Birth. Emotional Sharing as the Foundation of Care Relationships.

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Care and the "hunger to be born completely"

What is the purpose of care? Is it possible to switch from the perspective of death to that of birth and rethink care not as a way to postpone death but as a means to promote birth and let it germinate? I have always wondered why Dostoyevsky opened *The Brothers Karamazov* with a passage from the Gospel according to John in which it is said that when a grain of wheat falls on the ground, it should not postpone death: "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain: but if it dies, it bears much fruit" [John 12:24]. The grain of wheat will "bear much fruit" if it "dies" in the sense of germinating out of its *integument*, but such a "death" actually does not mean dying: it means being reborn. From this viewpoint, care does not at all follow the abstract scheme of the Hegelian double negation, but rather follows that of *cultivation*: cultivation does not aim to postpone the death of the grain of wheat, but to make it germinate, so that it can grow out of its self-referential integument and shape something that does not yet exist. In this way, we can rethink human development from the standpoint of the unpredictability of life, taking into account the fact that there needs to be a break, so to speak, from what the seed already is. On the contrary, that type of care that seeks to keep the grain intact (even once it has fallen on the ground) is a sterile *cura sui*, because it cannot give rise to anything beyond the confines of the self-referential 'small self': "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain".

Twentieth-century philosophical anthropology has underscored the fact that humans are, in a sense, born twice: the first time when they leave the womb, and secondly when they come out of the integument of their own environmental closedness (*Umweltgeschlossenheit*) in order to blend their own ontogenetic formation process with that of their culture. Having come into the world without (yet) being fully born, they are characterized by an exceptional plasticity that translates into a strong "hunger to be born completely".

Here, it is pertinent to turn to the enlightening phrase coined by Spanish philosopher María Zambrano: "*hambre de nacer del todo*". Drawing on Scheler's *The Human Place in the Cosmos*, Zambrano identifies this "hunger to be born completely" as the cardinal question of philosophy:

> An animal is born once and for all, whereas humans are never born completely; they have to face the fatigue of generating themselves again, or hope they will be generated. Hope is the hunger to be born completely, to complete what we carry within ourselves in the form of an outline [...]; [humans'] birth is incomplete and so is the world that is awaiting them. Humans therefore have to complete their birth, creating their own world, their own place, their own site; they have to ceaselessly give birth to themselves and to the reality around them [Zambrano 1989, my translation].

What fuels this "hunger"? Human beings are animals that are moved by the possibility of germinating, i.e. of taking shape beyond their own integument in the encounter with the Other. They are affected by all the experiences that pertain to birth beyond their own self-referential self: sharing birth, promoting the birth of the Other, being born beyond oneself.

The English language offers a handy distinction between the two terms "*care*" and "*cure*". "*Cure*", which mostly concerns sick or disabled people, is often understood as a medicalization or an activity that aims to compensate for a lack or a disability, whereas "*care*" typically evokes the act of 'cultivating' (such as in farming) and includes all the activities that promote the flourishing of life. Both components are important and necessary. Until recently, though, the scales have been clearly tipped in favor of a medicalizing *cure* in the social sciences and

humanities. It is only in the last few decades – especially thanks to *feminist care ethics* and to the *ethics of care* more generally – that the attention has shifted towards the specificity and significance of *care*. Nevertheless, some crucial topics have been neglected in this literature so far. In this chapter, I would like to reconsider such topics from the perspective of a philosophy of birth and while doing so, to underscore some of the following issues:

1) What is the purpose of *care*? Saying that *care* deals with the flourishing of human beings may still be too generic. In what follows, I wish to suggest that *care* focuses on flourishing understood as re-birth, which takes place when one human being meets another. Personal singularity can be born further in the encounter with the Other, in that the encounter with the Other becomes the "extra-uterine womb" offering the space necessary to be born again beyond oneself. Care thus aims at the re-birth process that occurs in the encounter with the Other.

2) I will insist that *care* necessarily implies a reference to the Other. On the contrary, the phrases *epimeleia heautou* or *cura sui* recall a solipsistic taking care of oneself in our modern culture: taking care of what Hegel described as an inward-looking "beautiful soul" that neglects the rest of the world. This type of care is sometimes relegated to a pre-political dimension, to a private, domestic and subjective one. *In order to avoid this misinterpretation, in this chapter I will use the wording "care relationship" instead of simply the term "care".*

3) Rethinking *care* from the point of view of a philosophy of birth also entails rethinking the phenomenology of otherness. The birth that takes place in the encounter with the Other does not occur on an *inter-subjective* level, but rather on a *trans-subjective* one. The term "inter-subjectivity" suggests that, in the encounter, two monadic adult subjects come into contact by lowering the drawbridges of their own fortresses, but without blending together their own existences: contact thus remains external, in a space "*in between*" two or more already constituted "*subjects*". It is for this reason that I prefer the term "trans-subjectivity", as it conveys more immediately the idea of contact occurring "beyond" the self-referential horizon of the respective "subjectivities". Switching from a theory of *inter-subjectivity* to a theory of *trans-subjectivity*, the

starting point is no longer the description of an isolated adult person, but rather the process that has led a person to shape their singularity through care relationships and through the encounter with the Other. Care relationships and encounters with the Other are a constitutive part of personal singularity and not something external or subsequent to it. In brief, care relationships do not focus on self-preservation, but on the sprout that takes shape outside of the integument. They underlie any "formation" (*Bildung*) process through an act of "self-transcendence", in the sense of a critical distancing from one's own self [Cusinato 2013].

4) It is quite surprising that just as the international cultural landscape is undergoing an epochal "*emotional turn*", the research on the connection between care relationship and emotions, which triggered this very turn [Pulcini 2015], often fails to go beyond the generic mention of the concept of "empathy". If we do not want the term "empathy" to become generic and inflated, we need to distinguish it from the phenomena of sympathy and love. Strictly speaking, empathy is the capacity to feel and comprehend the experience (*Erlebnis*) of the Other as experienced by the Other, which can therefore be distinguished from my own experience. According to this view, empathy is devoid of any ethical value and does not suffice to prompt care relationships: sadists have particularly pronounced empathetic skills by definition [Scheler 1913/1923, GW VII], but this does not motivate them to develop care relationships towards their victim.

The specific case of sadism aside, referring to empathy does not solve the problem of the emotional motivations behind care relationships. Empathy cannot motivate care relationships in situations that cause frustration, disgust or nausea. So far, the problem of emotional motivations underlying care relationships has remained in the background. A more sustained conversation with a *phenomenology of emotions* might make it possible to examine more closely whether the motivation for care relationships can be traced back to attention, respect (in the sense of the German word *Ehrfurcht*) and love.

5) A further aspect that is relatively absent in current debates surrounding the philosophy or ethics of care is an explicit anthropological

frame of reference: what anthropological research or categories are referred to in the various philosophies or ethics of care? I am thinking not only about the categories developed in twentieth-century philosophical anthropology – openness to the world (*Weltoffenheit*), ex-centricity, vulnerability, neoteny, "deactivation of the body" (*Körperausschaltung*) – but also those that are emerging from the latest researches in cultural and social anthropology [Tattersall 1998; 2003; Barnard 2011; 2012; 2016] and in developmental psychology [Tomasello 2008; 2009; 2014].

I suggest that we should go beyond the category of "empathy" by shifting our focus to the concept of "emotional sharing": my thesis is that empathy is a very particular case of the latter. The concept of emotional sharing is a key category in the phenomenology of emotions developed by Max Scheler in the early twentieth century [Scheler 1913/1923, GW VII], as well as in Michael Tomasello's more recent works on the origin of human communication [2008; 2009; 2014]. Both Scheler and Tomasello believe that humans are the result of emotional sharing practices that appear to have evolved following the logic of cooperation (Tomasello) or that of solidarity (Scheler) rather than a competitive and individualistic one.

6) Emotions are extremely "plastic" in human beings; they are like small plants asking to be cultivated. If the forces promoting relationships are rooted in emotions, the problem underlying care relationships – and human existence as such – becomes the problem of "cultivating" emotions.

Indeed, I wish to suggest that it is the same forces that drive care relationships and guide the cultivation of the affective sphere. Who or what leads this process of growth and affective maturation? Is it will? Spinoza noted that will does not influence the affects, in that "an emotion cannot be destroyed nor controlled except by a contrary and stronger emotion" [Spinoza 1667, IV, prop. 7]. It is reasonable to suggest that, more than the power of the will, what influences the affective development of a person is the strength of the "*maieutic testimony of the Other*", derived from the existential success or failure of a person close to us, or from the impact of an artwork [Cusinato 2017, 145-149].

7) Twentieth-century philosophical anthropology has shown that human formation does not follow the logic of organic reinforcement. On the contrary, it is associated with an increasingly pronounced organic weakening, to the point that *homo sapiens* takes on the features of an infant ape (neoteny). Care relationships are often regarded to be the result of such anthropological vulnerability: human beings are vulnerable and need care relationships in order to survive. If this is the only way care relationships are understood, however, we run the risk of reducing such relationships to a reparative and medicalizing conception of care. A similar reasoning applies to institutions and society: Adolf Portmann [1956; 1973] compares the latter to a big cultural incubator imbued with the task of ensuring the survival of an animal species that would otherwise be destined to die.

From the standpoint of the "hunger to be born completely", the relationship between an individual and society is no longer a one-way relationship, but a reciprocal and retroactive interaction. Society can also be re-born and transform itself. The social space revealed by symbolic thought [Barnard 2012] is not only conceived as an 'incubator' whose task is to keep prematurely born beings alive, but rather as an "extrauterine womb" which allows them to *continue* to be born. Human beings are "ex-centric" animals born without a definite shape, whose brain still has large areas to develop and is open to the influence of cultural factors. At a certain point in the homination process, it became difficult for the increasingly sizeable skull of the fetus to go through the birth canal, which made childbirth more and more dangerous both for the mother and for the child. Somewhere along the line of evolution, it proved less risky to be born prematurely, thus with a smaller cranial structure and still with large areas of "soft spots" (a phenomenon referred to today as "fontanelles"). While this characteristic had the good outcome of facilitating delivery (allowing the skull to adapt to the size of the birth canal), it meant, however, that the development of most of the brain had to be postponed until after the birth. Care relationships allow the brain to leap towards symbolic thought. As such, care relationships are not only "compensatory", but they contribute to the making of a being who comes into the world without having been born completely.

8) The term vulnerability covers two distinct concepts: *biological vulnerability*, referring to a lack or an illness, and *anthropological vulnerability*, linked to human plasticity and openness to the world (*Weltoffenheit*). It would be hazardous to extend a medicalizing approach to anthropological vulnerability in my view. Care relationships aim at compensating biological vulnerability as well as promoting the germination of the anthropological vulnerability that characterizes the human being as ex-centric and open to the world. In this sense, they are at the root both of care and of cure.

What I wish to insist on is that the *care* oriented to flourishing is not opposed to the *cure* attending to pain, illness or to the meeting of special needs. *Care* is not the superior 'philosophical' *care* of the soul as opposed to medicalizing or assistive *cure*. *Care* and *cure* enrich one another by converging and embracing the applications of the other; without such convergence, *care* might become a self-referential, inward-looking *cura sui*, and *cure* might reduce the patient to the impersonal subject of a pathology. Moreover, *cure* and *care* cannot be relegated to a domestic or pre-political dimension: without providing assistance to newborns, the elderly, the sick and the marginalized, there would be no human societies and there would be no human beings either.

The point of convergence between *cure* and *care,* I argue, lies in the emotional motivations behind them. Indeed, the openness to the other that flows from a respect for life, the ability to give time, to pay attention, and to listen to the fragility and suffering of the other, *from the point of view of the other*, are constituent and central aspects of any *care* relationship and of *cure*.

Victor, the wild boy of Aveyron

Let us first examine the correlation between care relationships and anthropological vulnerability by drawing on a well-known case. What would happen if a small child suddenly found himself living in nature without any care relationships? Would he be able to become the *homme naturel*, the result of the state of nature so highly praised by Rousseau, spared from any contact with corrupt civilization? Or would he simply die? What happened to the *enfant sauvage* of Aveyron would suggest that

care relationships are not indispensable for the organic survival of the child (regarding a compensating or reparative function in terms of biological vulnerability), but they certainly are for the cultural formation process that leads humans to use the word. In this case, the decisive presupposition for the leap towards symbolic thought that is typical of the human being seems to be a formation (*Bildung*) based on care relationships.

The concept of formation (*Bildung*) was already at the center of Goethe's morphology. In the second volume of his morphological writings, Goethe [1959] studies living beings, starting from the problem of the "formation [*Bildung*] and transformation [*Umbildung*] of organic natures". According to him, organisms are not characterized by a fixed configuration (*Bild*, *Gestalt*), but rather by a formation process (*Bildung*) that implies a trans-formation (*Um-bildung*). The nature of an organism is not permanently bound to a fixed form or essence, but can be found in its formation and transformation process.

The care relationships at the root of human development should be understood as a cultivation praxis. In farming, cultivation originated as taking care of a plant and its growth. Nevertheless, in many living beings, this formation process is widely predetermined: the characteristics of the plant that will germinate from a grain of wheat are mostly already inscribed in the genome of the grain. In this case, the formation process is very similar to an algorithm where the variables are the environmental conditions. The agricultural activity operates on two levels: it seeks, on the one hand, to select the best seeds and, on the other, to ensure the best possible environmental conditions for the development of such seeds.

A grain of wheat can germinate and develop even without being farmed, whereas the survival of the young of many animals in the first months depends on the parents' care. In humans, something else occurs: the formation process that leads to symbolic thought implies long-lasting care relationships. That is what is revealed by Victor's case.

On January 25th 1800, the French press broadcast the sensational news that a boy of around twelve had been found in the woods in Aveyron, in the south of France, who appeared to have grown up living like a

wild animal. He had probably been abandoned in the woods at the age of four, when he was old enough to somehow become biologically autonomous and survive. Nevertheless, his process of cultural education had stalled: he could neither recognize his own image in the mirror nor speak.

Jean Itard, the physician who took care of Victor, wrote two reports about this case [Mason 1964; Moravia 1972]. The Preface to the 1801 report begins with this exquisitely philosophical consideration:

> Cast on this earth, without physical strength and innate ideas; unable to obey spontaneously the laws of the organic order by which he has the first rank in the system of living beings, Man can only find in society the eminent position that was destined to him in nature; without civilization, he would be one of the most feeble and least intelligent animals; a truth that, despite having often been insisted upon, has not yet been rigorously demonstrated. [Itard 1801; 3, my translation].

Itard had the courage to disagree with the diagnosis of congenital idiocy made by the internationally renowned doctor and psychiatrist Philippe Pinel (1745-1826): this mental deficiency was not due to congenital organic causes, but to the fact that the child – whom Itard named Victor in view of the boy's preference for the vowel "o" – had lived in total isolation at a crucial age for his development:

> It is therefore probable, and almost certain, that he was abandoned when he was four or five years old; and if, at that period, he had already gathered some ideas and the knowledge of some words by the virtue of some rudimental education, these would have been obliterated from his memory in consequence of his isolation [Itard 1801, 31, my translation].

Regarding the ability to speak, Victor managed with much effort to pronounce the word "*lait*". However, Itard was forced to notice that it was in fact a sound Victor made in response to the milk, not before seeing it: thus "the word pronounced, instead of being the sign of a need, appeared [...] to be simply an exclamation of joy" [Itard 1801; 94, my translation]. Itard's conclusions are rather clear:

> Consider the following metaphysical problem: "*to determine what would be the degree of understanding and the nature of the ideas of a youth who, deprived from his infancy of all education, should have lived entirely separated from individuals of his species.*" I am either strangely deceived, or the solution would lie

> in attributing to this individual an understanding only connected with his few needs [...]; well, the moral frame of this youth would be that of the Savage of Aveyron [Itard 1801; 24-25, my translation].

Itard's observations about Victor's case suggest that the leap towards symbolic thought, which separates humans from other animals, is enabled by social connections with one's peers. If Victor's brain – perfectly functioning but isolated – lacked the ability to speak, it was because only "social brains" can speak, i.e. brains that experienced an extrauterine growth nurtured by social relationships during childhood. What is so crucial about what Itard calls civilization or education? What stage of social interaction and culture proves to be so decisive for the leap towards *symbolic thought* that seems to characterize humans?

Homo sapiens and care relationships

In recent decades, two main explanations have been proposed regarding the origin of symbolic thought in paleoanthropology and cognitive archaeology: an "explosion" model on the one hand, and a "gradual development" model on the other. One of the most significant supporters of the first hypothesis is the paleoanthropologist Ian Tattersall. His theory maintains that the transition to symbolic thought was not motivated by biological factors, but by cultural ones. According to Tattersall "in the case of Homo sapiens the potential for symbolic thought evidently just lurked there, undetected, until it was 'released' by a stimulus that must necessarily have been a cultural one - the biology, after all, was already in place." [Tattersall 2012, 211].

But when it comes to analyzing the cultural stimuli at the basis of symbolic thought, Tattersall reverts to a typical circular argument: "There are many reasons why the invention of language is the obvious candidate for the stimulus that tipped our ancestors over the symbolic edge." [Tattersall 2012, 216].

In other words, according to Tattersall, the spark that was to lead to the advent of symbolic thought was the emergence of language, i.e. the ultimate expression of symbolic thought itself. Thus, Tattersall needs to establish a daring equivalence between symbolic thought and articulate language [Tattersall 1998].

According to Tattersall, the origin of symbolic thought apparently coincides with the Upper Paleolithic revolution, a relatively recent period ranging from 40,000 to 10,000 years ago [Tattersall 1998]. However, this hypothesis was challenged in 2002 by the recovery of two red ochre pieces dating back to around 77,000 years ago in *Blombos Cave* in South Africa. They show the first sign of symbolic thought: both pieces were painstakingly scraped and engraved with a cross-hatched design that forms a geometrical pattern [Barnard 2012, 32-34]. This discovery forced Tattersall to backdate the origin of symbolic thought, and, consistently with his hypothesis, he then suggested that the inhabitants of *Blombos Cave* already had the ability to communicate through articulate verbal language [Tattersall 2012, 199-206].

The cultural anthropologist Alan Barnard has a different view and argues for the existence of a pre-linguistic symbolism or a proto-linguistic art: the artifacts found at *Blombos* do not necessarily imply the existence of articulate verbal language, as some maintain, "but certainly symbolism, maybe pre-linguistic symbolic action, and maybe art" [Barnard 2011, 96]. Barnard's thesis is that the symbolic revolution at the origin of human beings is characterized by three stages that can respectively be traced to the emergence of *sharing*, exchange and symbolic behavior [Bernard 2011, 104]. Sharing, talking and giving are the elements that make up hunter-gatherer sociality in advanced human cultural entities [Marshall 1961]. The inhabitants of Blombos Cave probably belonged to the first stage, characterized by certain "sharing practices" which are not displayed by anthropomorphous apes. "While chimpanzees share, they nevertheless do not possess rules or definitions of sharing practices" [Barnard 2011, 134-135]. Such practices came with a proto-language that was comprised only of single words or phrases indicating something specific, such as food or fire. So the *origin* of symbolic thought, and therefore of the human condition, is not articulate verbal language—the appearance of which Barnard places only at the end, in the third stage—but rather certain "sharing practices". Indeed, what differentiates humans from animals "is an evolutionary trend towards cooperation, reciprocal altruism and sharing. Thus, humans possess a

special kind of sociality, one dependent on these things" [Barnard 2016, 48].

In 2012, Tattersall investigated a hypothesis, and immediately abandoned it. This hypothesis was that the emergence of symbolic thought eventually became indispensable

> to cope with the dynamics of interaction within societies that were steadily becoming more complex. In other words, modern human cognition developed under the self-reinforcing pressures of increasingly intense sociality – maybe around those campfires. [...]. But a mechanism of this kind [does not explain] [...] why the highly social apes haven't developed a more complex theory of mind over the time during which they have been evolving in parallel with us [...] [Tattersall 2012, 214].

Tattersall's objection would only hit the mark if the anthropomorphous great apes were in the habit of gathering around campfires as well. Tattersall does not seem to acknowledge the fact that there is no evidence of anthropomorphous apes organizing their lives around a campfire. However, we cannot ignore the fact that it was perhaps thanks to those first campfires, in a situation of "insulation" (*Insulierungen*)—to quote a category from Sloterdijk's homination—that new experiences of communicative socialization could develop, producing the leap towards symbolic thought.

What made *homo sapiens* suddenly smooth and engrave the two pieces of red ochre in Blombos, craft ornamental objects and leave those campfires to start painting on the walls of the cave? The importance of food sharing practices in the homination process has already been emphasized by Isaac [1978a; 1978b]. Is it reasonable to assume that around that campfire, in an insular—and therefore protected—environment, practices of sharing food and habits became increasingly complex, to the point that they gradually developed into social relationships that were intricate enough to threaten the existing system of communication? Can we rule out the fact that those sharing practices have developed over millennia until they initiated, again around the campfire, new care relationships between the mother and her newborn child? These new care relationships between mother and newborn may well have become the anthropogenetic and ontogenetic

pivot for the leap towards symbolic thought and towards a new type of culture. It indeed appears sensible to formulate the hypothesis that, due to the increasingly complex social relationships and sharing practices, the pressure towards more efficient expressive forms and new communication techniques, such as verbal language, eventually became so strong that it produced a compelling need, just like the one that led to the invention of new utensil-building techniques and hunting strategies.

Emotional sharing and shared intentionality

Barnard [2011; 2016] believes that the genesis of symbolic thought, and therefore the key to solve the human enigma, lies in certain "practices of sharing" that evolved in the first hunter-gatherer societies. Tomasello [2008; 2009] attributes such practices to the ability to share intentionality in view of cooperation.

An enlightening example is how the gesture of finger-pointing is understood by chimpanzees and by humans. Chimpanzees are perfectly able to make a pointing gesture to indicate an object they want in the sense of *imperative pointing* [Tomasello 2008, 34-35] and to follow another individual's pointing gesture by staring in the finger's direction [Tomasello 2008, 38-41]. The problem arises when we shift our attention from "imperative pointing" to "pointing to offer help". For example, when a human points to an upturned bucket to show that there is food hidden underneath, the chimpanzee can understand that the human is indicating the bucket, but does not understand why. According to Tomasello, the most reasonable hypothesis is that the great apes "themselves communicate intentionally only to request things imperatively, and so they only understand others' gestures when they are imperative requests as well – otherwise they are simply mystified as to what the gesticulating is all about" [Tomasello 2008, 41].

What caused this switch from "imperative pointing" to "pointing to offer help" and to the "joint attention" typical of humans? Tomasello rules out verbal language. Tomasello's research into the pre-linguistic cognitive development of deaf children (who are therefore not exposed to any vocal language) have shown that their deictic gestures are not

compromised. Thus, this switch depends neither on the production nor on the comprehension of language:

> And so we claim that in ontogeny the first manifestations of uniquely human forms of cooperative communication emerge in prelinguistic gestural communication—especially in the pointing gesture—and that they do not depend on language production or comprehension. [Tomasello 2008, 165-166].

The difference between human and non-human animals is more likely to lie in the practices of shared intentionality based on a new "*cooperative communication*" [Tomasello 2014, 3-6]. According to Tomasello, the uniqueness of human cognition appears to derive from the fact that in humans, thanks to such shared intentionality practices, the cultural-ontogenetic development, based mainly on a cooperative-social logic, prevails over the biologic-phylogenetic one (which we share with great apes) based mostly on a competitive-individualistic logic.

Tomasello analyzes the cognitive and cultural processes that separate human children from great apes, and he comes to the conclusion that a form of shared intentionality emerges in human children towards 12 months of age, but does not occur in the rest of the animal kingdom. This new kind of shared intentionality is the premise not only for the ability of imperative pointing and of pointing to share attitudes – something that we have in common with chimpanzees – but also for the typically human ability to point to offer help. According to Tomasello, this shared intentionality is based on specific emotional sharing practices that begin at about 3 months of age [Tomasello 2008, 144, Figure 4.1]. At the origin of symbolic thought there seem to be emotional sharing practices related to deictic gestures that are not only imperative and expressive (like those of chimpanzees), but are also aimed at offering help, thus leading to stronger emotional bonds.

In addition to Tomasello's conclusions, one could also mention the studies on the connection between autism and joint attention in infant cognitive development. If joint attention and shared intentionality are not substantially inhibited in deaf children (who are denied the experience of verbal language), the same cannot be said in the case of autism [Jones, Carr 2014]. This would appear to suggest that the switch from

imperative pointing to joint attention is not due to the experience of verbal language (compromised in the event of deafness), but rather to a certain form of emotional sharing, which is hindered in the event of autism.

Emotional sharing and the development of emotional bonds

If I were asked to pinpoint the difference between a human newborn and that of another mammal, I would answer: the former cries. A newly-born foal does not cry, and neither do other non-human animals. A human baby, on the other hand, almost always cries as soon as it comes into the world. A foal does not need to cry when born because it has a body schema (*Leibschema*) right from the beginning, so much so that it can immediately coordinate its movements and attempt to stand. Maybe that is the reason why a foal is not interested in its reflection in the mirror: it already has a body schema. Instead, a human newborn comes into the world without a complete body schema, as demonstrated by the fact that it lacks full motor coordination: it only has a fragmented image of itself as a lived body (*Leib*).

When a child sees its own reflection in the mirror, it is delighted [Lacan 1949]. It is delighted because it can see what biological birth has not yet given and cannot give: in this reflection the child sees the anticipation of what the child itself, as a being who is not yet fully born, has been deprived of up to that moment. Hence the child joyfully rushes towards his reflected image to make a leap towards symbolic thought, that is, to continue to be born beyond biological birth. In short, a human newborn comes into the world crying, because it lacks a completed body schema. While a foal concentrates all its resources onto learning to stand and to walk before it even starts suckling, a newly-born human comes into existence wailing, as if it knew it was in a situation of utter impotence and that its survival depended solely on its mother's initiative.

Actually, the newborn does *do* something by crying: it seeks its mother's attention and closeness, not only in a physical, but also in an emotional sense. When a newborn comes into the world without being

born completely and carries on being born purely thanks to care rela-
tionships and emotional sharing practices, the development of this
emotional intimacy with the mother becomes as essential as learning
to stand is for a foal.

Now, what makes human beings share an emotion so strongly from
the age of three months? It is a common experience that, when we have
an emotion, we instinctively feel the need to share it: when we receive
good news, for example, the first thing we do is rejoice in it, but the
second thing is usually to think of someone to call to share our joy.
The same thing happens if we receive bad news: once we have recovered
from the shock, it is natural to feel the need to share the pain with
someone who is close to us.

The concept of sharing does not necessarily imply a process of col-
lective uniformity: *shared* and *collective* are not synonyms. Indeed, cer-
tain emotional sharing experiences are precisely what enables the indi-
viduation processes underlying the singularization that goes beyond the
collective common sense. Sharing a significant emotion means verifying
and strengthening our emotional bonds as well as pursuing our birth
in the trans-subjective spaces of living-together (*Miteinanderleben*) and
feeling-together (*Miteinanderfühlen*). Faced with the impact of a relevant
emotion, an individual's life transforms itself thanks to their emotional
bonds: if they do not share that emotion, they do not share the trans-
formation that derives from it either, until they lose contact with the
people close to them.

The debate around emotional sharing

The origin of the concept of "emotional sharing" can be traced back to
the first edition of *Sympathiebuch* [GW VII, 1913], in which Max Scheler
paved the way to a phenomenology of emotions and to social ontology.
The importance of his findings is evident: consider the central role of
emotional sharing in Tomasello's analysis [2000, 2008] and the lively
debate on social ontology and collective intentionality. The latter term
that can be ascribed to John Searle's *Collective Intentions and Actions*
[Searle 1990]. Searle claims that social ontology is based on collective
intentionality, that is, on ways of sharing intentions and beliefs. Now,

ever since the beginning of the debate, there has been much discussion on the degrees of individuality held by the various members of such collective intentionality, understood as the cognitive or normative criterion that connects them [Bratman 1999, Alonso 2009, Gilbert 1990]. However, the phenomenon of *emotional sharing* has hardly been considered, if at all.

Today's phenomenological debate has partially filled this gap, after starting a line of research focusing on emotional sharing in the last couple of years. The various theories in this field have one subject matter in common: the presence of a specific *we-mode*, a first person plural 'we' modality of experience, which is distinct both from the experience in the first person singular 'I' or 'self', and from the one in the second person [Zahavi 2015]. The relationship between these experience modes is still the subject of much discussion.

Zahavi [Brinck, Reddy, Zahavi 2017; León, Szanto, Zahavi 2017] has examined the formation of emotional experiences that are constitutively interdependent. In his view, such sharing is inseparable from basic consciousness and from a *minimal self*. In other words, the experience of shared emotions remains the experience of *single* individuals, who would otherwise blend into an 'englobing' collective subject. Schmid [2009] sets himself apart from Zahavi's theories and supports the so-called "*token-identity account*", which views emotions as an affective flow that is unique and equal for all members involved. Following a certain interpretation of Scheler, Cusinato [2015a] argues in favor of different levels of emotional sharing that trigger individuation processes within each single person and maintains that even the minimal self is *already constitutively relational*. More recently, Ciaunica [2017] and Ciaunica and Fotopoulou [2017] have identified an original emotional sharing experience based on the sense of touch, already within the mother's womb.

In this debate, a static perspective often prevails: the lived experiences (*Erlebnisse*) that are shared are either individualistic and private (otherwise we would witness the fusion into an englobing subject), or they are unique and equal for all the members involved. But a third interpretation could be proposed if we consider the issue from a

dynamic point of view: when sharing takes place, there is an initial moment in which a trans-subjective flow of lived experiences is neither individual nor collective. Whereas emotional sharing on the level of collective 'we' is a homogenizing process, on the trans-subjective level of the encounter with the Other it marks the beginning of a singularizing process. On this trans-subjective level, the *Erlebnis* constitutes itself neither in relation to an independent individual consciousness nor in relation to a collective 'we'. It is not what I, you or a 'we' experience. It rather becomes the *Erlebnis* of a trans-subject, that is, a set of subjects that go beyond the self-referential perspective in order to be re-born in the very encounter with the Other. At the beginning of this encounter, the *Erlebnis* is 'identical' for all the members involved in this transformation, as these members do not experience it separately in each single consciousness. They rather experience it on a trans-subjective register, one that founds the transformation of individual consciousness in each one of them.

However, this trans-subjective flow of experiences can later be metabolized by the single members—referring to one's own order of feeling in the first person singular ("*I-mode*")—into an individual and private experience. The latter process coincides with further individualization. Singularity is not at the beginning, but at the end of the process [Cusinato 2015a; 2017].

Furthermore, I should now clarify what I mean by "*we-mode*" and "*I-mode*". In this respect, one can use Scheler's distinction between the 'social self' and the 'personal self', and between the 'we of society' and the 'we of the personal community' [GW II, 1913-16]. Now, does the 'social self' truly correspond to the first person singular experience mode, and the 'we of society' to the first person plural one? Besides the social self, should the experience mode of a *personal singularity* (intended as an individual who is 'hungry for being born completely') not also be taken into consideration? Besides our 'social we' (which equates with the gregarious identity of the group), shouldn't we consider the experience mode of 'we as a personal community'—the trans-subjective modality of the encounter with the other, also including the stranger and the different? In this way, it would be possible to raise the issue of

emotional sharing not only with reference to social recognition, but also with reference to the importance of care relationships for the transformation of society and for an individual's formation process in terms of singularity [Cusinato 2015a, 2017].

Emotional sharing and social ontology

Scheler's theory that emotional sharing underlies social ontology, which was already presented in the first edition of *Sympathiebuch* in 1913, made a comeback in *Formalismus*. Sharing one's feelings and emotions is the reason behind various "forms of being-with-one-another [*Miteinandersein*] and co-living-with-one-another [*Miteinaderleben*], in which the corresponding forms of social unit constitute themselves" [*GW* II, 515, my translation]. Scheler thus lays the foundation for a general theory of social ontology:

> There is a theory of all the possible social essential units [*Wesenseinheiten*]. To develop it and to apply it for the comprehension of real, existing social units (marriage, family, people, nation etc.) constitutes the fundamental problem of a philosophical sociology and the premise of any social ethics [*GW* II, 515, my translation].

According to this hypothesis, we can outline four major correlations between forms of emotional sharing and forms of social unit:

1) "The social unit that constitutes itself (simultaneously) through so-called contagion without comprehension and involuntary imitation. It is called 'herd' for animals and 'mass' if it occurs with the human being." [*GW* II, 515, my translation];

2) "The social unit that constitutes itself in [...] co-experiencing [*Miterleben*] or re-experiencing [*Nacherleben*] (co-feeling [*Mitfühlen*], co-striving [*Mitstreben*], co-thinking [*Mitdenken*], co-judging [*Miturteilen*] etc.)" [*GW* II, 515, my translation]. This type of social unit is called "vital community" (*Lebensgemeinschaft*) [*GW* II, 516, my translation];

3) Society, unlike the vital community, is "a unit made up of adult and self-conscious single persons" [*GW* II, 518, my translation]. In society, individuals are not considered in relation to the difference of their irreplaceable singularity; in fact, "differences in society and differences in value between its elements come about only through different values

of accomplishment of the individuals in the value-direction of the agreeable and the useful, the value-correlates of society." [*GW* II, 519, my translation]. This efficientistic and individualistic logic entails an ability to share the Other's emotions *qua* emotions of the Other, based on the clear and conscious distinction between I and You. However, it also entails the absence of any form of "original co-responsibility [*Mitverantwortlichkeit*] since every form of responsibility that is assumed towards the Other is founded on a unilateral self-responsibility [*Selbstverantwortlichkeit*] instead" [*GW* II, 518, my translation].

4) The "personal community" is established according to a *solidaristic* form of sharing responsibility, or "co-responsibility" (*Mitverantwortlichkeit)*, based on the principle of "irreplaceable solidarity" [*GW* II, 523].

Already in the second edition of *Sympathiebuch* (1923), Scheler felt the need to offer a modified version of the four ways of sharing feelings and emotions: 1) Unconscious sharing through unipathy (*Einsfühlung*, "feeling as one", a term that appeared neither in the 1913 edition nor in *Formalismus*) or affective contamination (*Gefühlsanstekung*); 2) Sharing through empathy, which Scheler calls *Nachfühlung*, to distance himself from Lipps' theory of empathy (*Einfühlung*); 3) Conscious sharing through sympathy or "affective co-feeling" (*Mitgefühl*) according to the logic of social recognition; 4) Solidaristic sharing that leads to love or hate. Scheler also institutes a foundational law according to which unipathy is the foundation of empathy, empathy is that of sympathy, and sympathy is the basis of the forms of love and hate [*GW* VII, 105].

Collective intentionality and solidaristic intentionality

Scheler's considerations suggest that human beings are the result of certain solidaristic practices of emotional sharing. To a certain degree, we can find a similar hypothesis in Tomasello: "It is thus possible that sharing emotions and attitudes serves a kind of group identity function for humans and that this is a uniquely human function" [Tomasello, 2008, 212]. According to Tomasello,

> Great apes are all about cognition for competition. Human beings, in contrast, are all about (or mostly about) cooperation. Human social life is

much more cooperatively organized than that of other primates, and so, in the current hypothesis, it was these more complex forms of cooperative sociality that acted as the selective pressures that transformed great ape individual intentionality and thinking into human shared intentionality and thinking [Tomasello 2014, 31].

Therefore, it would not be far-fetched to trace our most selfish and aggressive instincts back to the competitive and individualistic behavior of gorillas or chimpanzees, but it is precisely this competitive and individualistic behavior that encapsulates and hinders human cultural development. Developing in a cooperative way, emotional sharing practices appear to have further strengthened human emotional bonds, thus leading to the creation of more complex social norms: "Pressure from the group for the individual to conform is the essence of social norms; the ultimate threat is being ostracized or even physically excluded from the group" [Tomasello 2009, 212].

Divisible goods and shareable goods

Tomasello's reconstruction seems to underestimate the role and importance both of cooperation in bonobos [de Waal 2013] and of individualistic and competitive logic in human society. Still, Tomasello does acknowledge that the human practices of emotional sharing might go hand in hand with ostracism and social exclusion. If bonobos already manifest a cooperative logic, then there has to be something much more complex than mere *cooperation* at the origin of the human emotional sharing that allows for the leap to symbolic thought. Could it be a solidarity-based logic striving towards the 'hunger to be born completely'?

If solidaristic logic does not exist thanks to a kind of "goodwill", where does it come from? To tackle that question, I propose to use the distinction between "divisible goods" and "shareable goods". My hypothesis is that solidaristic logic arises spontaneously in relation to the second type of goods, but can also be extended to the former under certain conditions [Cusinato 2017, 445-451]. The more a material resource, like petroleum (a *divisible* good), is consumed, the more it diminishes. It is evident that, following this logic, this (divisible) good

will rapidly and easily become a cause for—often militarized—dispute in relation to its distribution. But no one would ever cut up one of Van Gogh's paintings (a *shareable* good) in order to divide it. This is so not only because the painting would be destroyed in the process, but also because the pleasure of art can be non-oppositional: it can be enjoyed with a friend, in the sense that the more this friend is able to 'consume' the artwork, making me co-participate in his or her own interpretation, the more the artwork becomes accessible to me, too. If I go to an exhibit of Paul Cézanne with a friend of mine and, upon seeing the representation of *Mont Sainte-Victoire,* he or she feels something special and tells me about it, this metabolization will not take something away from me: on the contrary, it will make me richer. An individual's 'consumption' of an art piece does not take something away from other potential viewers, but it contributes to the multiplication of its value. As a result, thanks to the act of sharing, the more this type of good is 'consumed', the more it miraculously 'multiplies' [Cusinato 2017, 446-447]. A particular case of shareable good is, I wish to argue, the 'hunger to be born completely'. And this gives every care relationship its ultimate sense direction.

The more I share a good, the more my singularity takes shape, the more I aspire to further share that good. On the other hand, the more I divide a good—in order to split the booty or solve a dispute—, the more the oppositional logic of gregarious identity and self-reference asserts itself in my formation process. Hence, what shapes humans is more than the "collective intentionality" around which Tomasello's research revolves: it is a solidaristic logic that human beings first experience in their mother's care relationship.

Emotional sharing and the individuation process

Another issue to be considered in this context concerns the connection between emotional sharing practices and individuation processes. We might assume that the various emotional sharing practices *not only* lead to the constitution of different social units, *but also* to the various individuation processes of the social self and of personal singularity [Cusinato 2015a; 2017].

To this effect, I would suggest making the following two kinds of association: on the one hand, the emotional sharing practices that follow the logic of struggle for one's recognition are to be associated with the individuation processes that lead to the constitution of the *social self*; and, on the other hand, the sharing practices that follow the solidaristic principle are to be associated with the individualization process of one's *personal singularity*. While the individuation process connected to the first kind of emotional sharing practices aims to strengthen the self-referential subject, the second type of emotional sharing practices are not attributable to the subject's self-referential *cura sui*: when an individual experiences love, they experience their own utter non-self-sufficiency, they desire something that is outside the self-referential realm of their own 'small self', which they can only find in the encounter with the Other.

Organism, social self, person

Starting from an analysis of shame, Michael Lewis [1992] has outlined a set of primary emotions that do not require processes of self-consciousness ("*non-self-conscious-emotions*") nor a set of secondary emotions, such as shame or guilt, that involve the sense of self ("*self-conscious-emotions*"). In my opinion, the criterion suggested by Lewis is still too abstract: if it is not self-consciousness, but the 'hunger to be born completely' that characterizes a person as an ontologically new entity, then the affective structure of the person, their *ordo amoris*, needs to be rethought in relation to this 'hunger to be born completely'.

The logic that the organism's instinctual structure (*Triebstruktur*) follows must be distinguished from that of the social self, which in turn must be distinguished from the logic that a person's 'order of feeling' (*ordo amoris*) follows. In the first case, fear, disgust, pleasure and pain guide the organism in its interaction with the environment. Without these forms of emotional orientation and value-ception (*Wert-nehmung*), the lived-body would perceive all the possibilities of movement as meaningless, because they would be utterly indifferent. In the case of the social self, emotions like shame, pride, indignation, resentment and

envy follow a logic that aims to orientate the dynamics of social recognition. In both cases, the emotions follow the logic of response reaction (*Antwortsreaktion*).

This logic varies greatly according to how the personal center functions: love and hate, bliss and despair, repentance, modesty and respect no longer regulate the interaction with the environment (organism) or the struggle for social recognition (social self), but they mostly drive the care relationships through which the personal singularity takes shape in the further birth. Naturally, care relationships require the development and maturation of all the different affective classes. However, one can identify at least two specific prerequisites underlying all care relationships, which are the object of the next section.

Care, respect (Ehrfurcht) and lack of envy (aphthonos)

When emotional sharing involves the personal center, the direction of recognition is completely overturned: the intention is no longer to achieve self-recognition (*Anerkennung*), but the recognition of the Other. This reversal is made possible by the emotional disposition of respect or reverence (*Ehrfurcht*) for the value of the Other *qua* Other. What characterizes the human is not the technical ability to dominate nature, but the ability to feel profound respect (*Ehrfurcht*) for the other-than-self, and for the whole of nature. The feeling of respect clearly implies "self-transcendence", a term that I use here in the sense of transcendence in immanence, as it is not aimed at an otherworldly dimension, but rather intends to overcome the self-referential horizon of one's 'small Self'. With this reversal of perspectives, from *Anerkennung* to *Ehrfurcht,* the individual leaves the contingent self (*epoché* of the I or "ego") and becomes a "receptive center" (*Rezeptionszentrum*) [Scheler 1915, GW X, 236] that opens up to the encounter with the Other and ensures the conditions to further share birth. Once the recognition of one's social Self is obtained, the personal singularity realizes it wants to recognize the Other, because it is only in the encounter with the Other that it can find the space to satisfy its 'hunger to be born completely'.

When someone encounters someone else by sharing an act (*Mitvollzug*), an *Erlebnis*, etc., they place themselves in a trans-subjective dimension. What is nullified in this dimension is not each one's singularity, but one's resistance against trans-formation due to his or her egotism. In the trans-subjective dimension of the encounter with the Other, the person finds the space to be born further—a space that she did not find within the horizon of her self-referential integument. Every solidaristic experience of sharing an act, a lived experience or an emotion therefore corresponds to a further birth and implies a big or small step forward in the individuation process of all the people involved. In this way, the fourth form of emotional sharing, which involves the order of feeling of the personal center, is not exactly a simple sharing of emotions, but rather, it is a "sharing of the cultivation of emotions". What is actually shared in this case is *the very practice of caring for emotions*.

The emotional disposition of profound respect (*Ehrfurcht*) is connected to the ability to act without envy. It is not insignificant that one of the few characteristics that Plato attributes to the divine is the "lack of envy" (*aphthonos*) [*Tim.* 29e.]. Naturally, a "non-envious" (*aphthonos*) behavior is still not enough for emotional motivations to arise and for us to crave for care relationships. However, on closer inspection, it could be said to represent, at the very least, a necessary condition. Thanks to the lack of envy, something absolutely unexpected can occur in me: I can perceive a positive value outside of myself, namely not as a theft or robbery from my existence but as something worth recognizing, so that I no longer have to fear that this value outside of me might take something away from me and diminish my own value. If I water a rose plant on my windowsill, it is not because I expect something in exchange by taking something from the plant (unlike what might be the case with an aromatic plant): I will feel rewarded if my care helps it flourish. Realizing that my attention and care contribute to the rose's life and flourishing, I will feel more alive myself. This is why it is possible to go beyond the logic guided by Girard's mimetic desire and make the transition from self-recognition (*Anerkennung*) to other-recognition and respect for the Other as such (*Ehrfurcht*).

NOTES

¹ For one account of the distinction between *care* and *cure*, see Mortari [2006, 46]. On the concepts of *caring* and *care*, see Mayeroff [1971].

² I am referring for instance to Tronto [1993], Groenhout [2004] and in Italy to Pulcini [2013] and Mortari [2006].

³ In the 1960s, anthropologist Desmond Morris [1967] observed that at birth the brain of an ape has reached 70% of its future dimension, whereas that of a human only 23%.

⁴ For more on the concept of respect (*Ehrfurcht*) see the last paragraph.

⁵ On *Blombos cave* see Barnard [2011].

⁶ According to other studies, including Coolidge [2009], to the Blombos people should not be attributed fully developed language skills.

⁷ Cf. Barnard 2016, 67.

⁸ According to anthropologist Martin Edwardes, "if we want a plausible evolutionary explanation for grammar in language, we should concentrate our search on the social process of information sharing. The question of why we need grammar is tied to the question of how a social structure evolved requiring the exchange of complex informa-tion, and what that social structure was". [Edwardes 2010, 13, quoted here by Barnard 2016, 102.]

⁹ A non-human young usually only cries or whines when it is hurt, separated from its mother, or cannot suckle. A particular case is described in the 2003 docufilm *The Story of the Weeping Camel (Die Geschichte vom weinenden Kamel)*, directed by Luigi Falorni and Byambasuren Davaa.

¹⁰ See also Scheler *GW* VII, 437.

¹¹ In *Formalismus*, the fourth form of social unit is also referred to as "collective person" (*Gesamtperson*), a problematic term that does not appear in the second edition of *Sympathiebuch*, where it is replaced by the phrase "community of irreplaceable spir-itual persons" (*Gemeinschaft unersetzbarer geistiger Personen*) [Scheler, GW VII, 214)].

¹² On the importance of *Ehrfurcht* as an emotional disposition that opens up to the ethical dimension see Scheler [1913, GW III, 26-32].

¹³ Albert Schweitzer places the concept of "reverence for life" [*Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben*] at the centre of ethics. He describes how this intuition came to him: "The even-ing of the third day, at sunset, we were near the village of Igendja, and had to coast a small island, along a stretch of the river that was more than a kilometer wide. To our left, on a sandbank, there were four hippopotami with their young, moving in the same direction as us. At that very moment, despite my exhaustion and sense of dejection, I suddenly remembered the expression 'reverence for life' [...]. I realized straight away that this expression embodied the solution to the problem that was haunting me. I remembered that an ethics that only takes into consideration our relationship with other human beings is incomplete and partial, and therefore cannot have full power. [...] an ethics of the respect of life [...] not only puts us in contact with other human beings but with all the beings that appear on our horizon, entrusting us with the task of looking after their destiny in order not to cause them any harm; on the contrary, in order to help them as far as possible." [1991, 18, my translation].

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