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Truth, Practice, and Philosophy of Culture

Abstract:

The paper offers a glimpse at the diversity of what is labelled Philosophy of Culture, and then brings out some important issues concerning culture (aristocratic vs democratic vision, genealogical unification vs respect of heterogeneity, relevance vs irrelevance of social and historical approach). The first section expounds etho-analysis as a way of doing philosophy of culture, introducing the notions of solicitor, sensance and ethos. It also gives an idea of how its program has been conducted with respect to love or truth. Etho-analysis describes the ideal part of culture, interpreting it as revealed by concrete practice. The second section discusses whether and how far etho-analysis embraces the cause of truth and validates the scholastic tradition which has provided tools for it. Etho-analysis claims to formulate true descriptions. It understands meaning as unfolding its complication thanks to traditional tools, and recognizes the ethical significance of the community of science.

Keywords:

Levinas, etho-analysis, truth, practice, culture, Frege, Husserl

We should not be surprised by the fact that there is no universal agreement about what philosophy of culture is about. After all, more generally, there is no transnational convergence about what philosophy should be, which method it should follow, which kind of truth it may uncover: what is more, not everybody would think that such convergence should be looked for. At any rate, the resulting diversity is of great interest and significance: whatever the original allergy may be, every scholar, in my opinion, should work at knowing that diversity and

understanding it better. Similar things could be said about the variety of conceptions in the field of philosophy of culture, which shows a specific face. It will be beneficial to us to begin our reflection by considerations about available approaches before tackling our main issues.

On the one hand, it is not perfectly clear that young analytic tradition aims at endorsing philosophy of culture. Some scholars understand the decision to consider culture as already showing that we have resigned from fighting for the truth: taking culture into account would entail regarding everything as relativized to culture, and therefore amount to deny the possibility of an objective truth. Still, some analytic philosophers wrote books, which are quite good examples of philosophy of culture: A. McIntyre's *After Virtue* and B. Williams' *Truth and Truthfulness*¹ come to mind. In their books they made their point by offering a global picture of culture in the context of which such and such conception of morality, or relation to truth, arises. Remarkably, they even considered they had to historicize their picture, making their claim and analysis narrative.

On the other hand, if one focuses on non-analytic philosophy, one has to acknowledge a strange heterogeneity. We usually qualify as philosophy of culture such varied contributions as Hegelian dialectical Encyclopædia, Gadamer's² or Ricœur's³ hermeneutical journey through human sciences and human experience, and so called "Critical Theory," whose identity did not remain stable in the evolution leading from Adorno and Horkheimer⁴ to Honneth⁵, going through Habermas.⁶ The very fact that we are ready to consider Critical Theory as philosophy of culture seems to suggest that we should do the same with Marxism, which would seriously complicate the global image.

Part of the difficulty arises from the hesitation invariably triggered by the phrase "philosophy of..." If we understand what comes after of as the object of philosophy, then a philosophy of culture is simply a philosophy working at building a coherent description of culture. However, if we understand the "of..." part as expressing what philosophy comes from, then the underlying idea is rather philosophy as determined by culture, or as governed by cultural necessity, or as expressing cultural contents. This second understanding makes it possible to reject in principle philosophy of culture as not interested in looking for truth, and, I mentioned it before, some analytical scholars tend to do so.

On the other hand, when reflecting about culture, one cannot escape acknowledging its internal diversity. Culture appears as divided into numerous regions or provinces, as well at the global level and at the detailed level. There is a distinction between science, art, law and economy, but there is also, inside the science branch, an incredibly rich division into numerous special sciences. I think that it is possible to philosophically react to such diversity in two distinctly different ways. We can either assume each part as such and ask ourselves how the general heterogeneity of culture lives, regarding it as an important and essential feature, and attempt to define a set of conceptions preventing us from neglecting such diversity. Or we can look for principles and causes that allow us to derive such structure, which means that we wish to exhibit a generative rationality of culture, being ready to understand parts of it as determined by other parts.

Let me give you a few hopefully helpful examples of what I mean.

Marx's conception of superstructure and infrastructure was a way to put some causal order upon culture, calling us to understand in which way economical stratum was determining other strata.

1) McIntyre, *After Virtue*; Williams, *Truth and Truthfulness*.

2) Gadamer, *Truth and Method*.

3) Ricœur, *Time and Narrative*.

4) See Adorno, Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

5) See Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition*.

6) See Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*.

Lyotard's vision of what he calls the dispute describes our culture as divided into mutually irreducible phrase regimes, entering the issues of also mutually irreducible genres.⁷ His perspective deters us from reducing some regime or genre to another: that would be cheating, which ultimately defines a fundamental facet of moral wrongness.

Here is another example, quite important to my eye. There is a traditional issue of querying whether mathematics is reducible to logic, or the other way round. Kant thought mathematics was the inventive and great thing, while logic was limited and achieved once for all. Frege launched analytic philosophy as dominated by the opposite claim that the content of mathematics was ultimately logical.⁸

The issue continues to matter greatly, having significant consequences for the way we understand knowledge and truth. It can be treated in the "Marxist-Fregean" way (we have to find out which discipline governs the other) or in the "Lyotardian" way (we should understand why and how mathematics and logic are two clearly different things).

At least, one point seems to be clear: such an issue cannot be only a technical one. From time to time, some philosophers claim to have decided it technically: Frege did so, thinking he had reduced arithmetic to logic; mathematicians sometimes do the same, showing that logical structures may be rewritten as mathematical possibilities inside such and such framework (of category theory for example). But there is always the pending question of whether what has been proven is sufficient for reducing the whole of logical or mathematical concern to mathematics or logic. We would have ascertained one reduction or the other if we had defined a way of reforming intellectual practice by making one activity in its whole range part of the other. Which stands beyond technics even if it could need a lot of technics to get accomplished. At the end of the day, the issue is not far from being political.

Another consideration cannot be avoided here. Going back to the Latin *colere*, one is tempted to understand culture as a general name for all ways of "growing" things between us. Still, in that case, it seems that every facet of human practice belongs to the collective *colere*, hence generates cultural items and relations. However, this contradicts other uses of the word: when we say that someone is cultivated, of that they show some culture, we mean that they know something or have abilities related to the higher level of human practice. We usually do not say that in order to comment on their talent or efficiency in cooking eggs. Even if we are ready to acknowledge that cooking in general has motivated a long history of sophisticated compositions which belong to culture, sometimes even regarded as esthetical achievements. At some point, it is true that we are able to consider any manifestation of human practice as part of culture, but doing so we know that we democratize what was supposed to be the higher level. On the whole, there is tension between a universal meaning of culture, making it refer to everything related to human practice and its expression, and an elitist meaning, according to which culture only refers to the documents of our shared pride.

As far as culture is seen as immediately arising from human practice, we are invited to read it against the background of two ontological dimensions: the social and the historical ones. Human practice always comes from some social context and makes sense inside this context. Human practice always gets affected by historical moves: both the typical style of what we do and the social relations connected with realizations of cultural objects evolve along historical change. The consequence is that any theoretical consideration of culture seems to have to be governed by historical and social rationality. Which is a problem for philosophy: would it not wish, according to its very essence, to be able to say something about culture beyond social and historical determination?

7) See Lyotard, *The Differend*.

8) See Frege, *The Foundations of Arithmetic*.

After this description of the problematic landscape of contemporary philosophy of culture, I shall now expound my personal approach, which I have called etho-analysis.

1. Etho-analysis as Philosophy of Culture

Etho-analysis is firstly related to what could be called a “philosophy of sense” or a “philosophy of meaning”⁹ rather than a philosophy of culture.¹⁰ It begins with finding, in Levinas’ philosophy, a way to depart from a conception of meaning (or sense) which seems to be shared by mainstream analytic philosophy and Husserlian phenomenology: meaning there is understood and defined as the presentation mode of the object.¹¹

In Frege, any nominal clause referring to A defines a mode of access to A or a way of presenting A (as “Plato’s pupil” does for Aristotle, suggesting an access through Plato and picturing Aristotle as a pupil). In Husserl, an object A is always correlated with a consciousness configuration triggering intentionality toward A. Such configuration is our only access mode to A and determines A’s figure for us. In the first case, meaning of A amounts to “linguistic expression referring to A as referring to A,” in the second case it amounts to “consciousness configuration aiming at A as aiming at A.” So indeed, in both frameworks, meaning is defined as the presentation mode.

How should we then conceptualize meaning share (share of meaning, share of sense)? We share some meaning when we share some presentation mode: we relate to some object through the same filter. For example, there is a meaning share of people looking at Aristotle as Plato’s pupil, and another rival meaning share of people looking at Aristotle as Alexander’s preceptor. According to Husserl, as human beings we share the basic meaning of time: we first relate to time as retained immediate past. Or we all share the meaning of the other person as an objective body animated by a hypothetized ego similar to ours.

Levinas’ philosophy rather sees the address as the leading circumstance of meaning: some message gets to us and asks from us that we understand it, by relaunching it as it asks to be relaunched.¹² Whether there is an actual entity behind the addresser does not count: the important feature is that we received the message and feel the tension it exerts on us, asking us to react in an appropriate way. A dialog is a genuine one when what I say appears as really connected with what my partner said to me: I relaunched it inside the gamut of expectations and requirements it enfolded. We could put the three conceptions of meaning in diagrams (cf. figure 1).

One point is fundamental here. The machinery of meaning requires that we have the ability to feel the received message as asking something: we have to be part of the general game of being asked and feeling as having to answer. We must belong to the community of answerability. In Levinas’ philosophy, such community arises from what he calls the ethical plot: we are able to feel answerable only insofar as we share the original emotion of standing in front of the face and feeling responsible for them. Levinas’ general perspective is therefore that the order of meaning is indebted to ethics. Which does not mean that you can get exonerated of ethical demand only by playing the game of meaning: there is much more in ethical responsibility than relaunching messages as they asked to be. Still the priority of ethics over meaning is unforgettable and fundamental.

How should we understand meaning share if we follow Levinas’ conception? The only possible answer is that we share some meaning when we share some request that we have to comply with. Hence there must be

9) I always hesitate between both ways of translating the French word “sens”. Certainly, “meaning” is a more standard word, but “sense” adds the proximity with sensation and feeling.

10) As a background for this whole section, cf. Salanskis, *Sens et philosophie du sens; Territoires du sens; Partages du sens*.

11) See Husserl, *Formal and Transcendental Logic*.

12) See Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* and *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*.

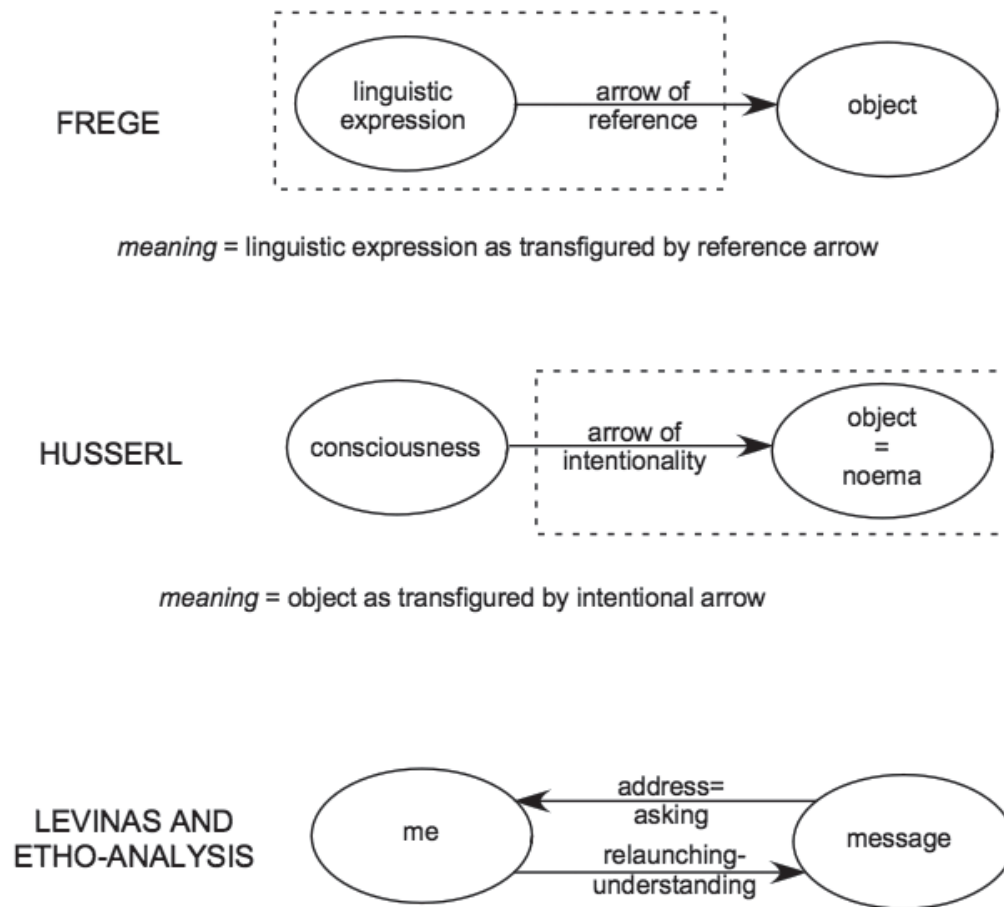


Figure 1. Three diagrams of meaning

ways for calls to reach a plurality of people, to “make sense” for a collective entity. According to etho-analysis, something like that happens thanks to the language we share. Some words of the shared language do not work or do not only work as conceptual terms finding instances in the world, but rather convey some kind of call. They remind us about stakes, they ask us to put ourselves to the level of those stakes, that is their way of sounding. My preferred example is the word love: we may try to construe love as covering a multiplicity of items (love objects, love episodes), but most often we use it in order to connect to the horizon of love, meaning that “love is the air.” A situation which allows for some people to try a love relationship, satisfying the demands of love. Such words, which appear as Ideality words rather than extensional words, I call solicitors (in order to express that they ask something from us).

Each time some word works as a solicitor in our shared language, we may define the collective instance of those for which the associated stakes hold: I could call them the followers of the solicitor (a way of speaking recently enhanced by Twitter). Their society I call the ethos of the solicitor. It does not have to be, in general, a genuine community: people who would acknowledge their concern for the stakes indicated by the solicitor do not have to entertain concrete and regular relations, there does not have to be given an actual network binding them together (although it may also be the case). One could say that they build a social entity only at the level of haunting: the followers are so to say co-haunted by the solicitor, its call and its stakes.

Still, my hypothesis is that sharing the meaning of love means a little more: it also means that we understand through which behavior we may satisfy the call of the solicitor. Hence for each solicitor, for each ethos,

there is an implicit table of the laws of corresponding ethos, telling us what we have to do if we wish to put our lives at the level of the call. Such a table can be made explicit by formulating requirements. We may find them in us, through introspection, as followers who have to know what should be done, whether we actually do it or not. Or we read them in the behavior of other followers, which we are able to decipher and understand at the deontic level (we see in others the rules they refer to, an ability which plays a great part in learning games). The list of prescriptions we may obtain in that way I call the *sensance* of the ethos (or of the solicitor). I have proposed a *sensance* of 7 injunctions in the case of the ethos of love.¹³ Each injunction has the following property: any follower may acknowledge that not obeying it means losing something of the stakes of love, means diminishing love. That is the criterion: we do not surmise in any way that the prescriptions of *sensance* are actually observed, even in a statistic way. Our capacity to make a *sensance* explicit testifies to our sharing the sense associated to the call of the solicitor. According to classical view of meaning, when we share a mode of presentation for an object, we suppose that our adjustments to that object as aimed agree (and that we can ascertain it). The situation is quite different in the etho-analytical view: what we share is that we all relate to a set of injunctions about which agreement could be reached in principle (even if these regulative prescriptions are unconscious, and usually not seen). The injunctions listed in the *sensance* should not be described as norms, because the word norm more or less inevitably suggests rules or laws that have been enacted by an official instance. Injunctions of the *sensance* are determined, but we discover that they make sense of our practice only when we trace back to them our concern for satisfying the call of the solicitor. I could say that the *sensance* axiomatizes what should be a faithful answer to the solicitor.

Ethoses have also a historical part (what precedes corresponded more or less to the geographical part). An ethos disappears when the call of the solicitor is not felt any more, which means that we have forgotten the prescriptions of *sensance*. Aldous Huxley's novel *Brave New World* imagines a (future) world where the ethos of love has been forgotten.¹⁴ It is not that people have stopped obeying the 7 injunctions, it is rather that they do not share anymore the vectorization toward their observance: as the novel explains, they live their sexuality as something not connected with any kind of "tension toward." Still, in the novel, the tradition of love resuscitates, through the behavior and existential mood of just one person, if I remember well.

As a matter of fact, any ethos tends to persist: we, as it were, recommend to the next generation behaving and feeling as followers. This may happen without words, simply because those coming after us understand and feel what is important for us (they read the injunctions of the *sensance* from us, through deontic empathy as I said). Considered in that way, each ethos is nothing but a contingent tradition: it was probably borne at some point of history, and it could perfectly well disappear as in Huxley's novel, which means it gets forgotten. It holds as long as some followers keep on relating to the stakes, understanding the prescriptions and living them as having to be obeyed. This could even be seen as a negative criterion for an ethos: something that we cannot lose cannot be an ethos.

In the case of the ethos of love, we know classical theories about its birth: many people say that it comes from the medieval troubadours, from their stories about *Dulcinea* and quest dedicated to their beloved. I am not quite sure of this origin, but who may claim to really know? Anyway, Huxley's novel expresses a largely shared feeling that the ethos of love is nowadays threatened, that it could be overcome by some social force. When we see things in that way, our figure of love is Jane Austen's rather than the one of the troubadours. What we fear we could be deprived of, if love disappears, is the positive ideological legacy of traditional middle class society rather than splendid mythical models like *Tristan and Isolde*.

13) See Salanskis, *Territoires du sens*, 75–190.

14) See Huxley, *Brave New World*.

What I call etho-analysis is the investigation which pinpoints the solicitators – listening to the words of language and hearing which of them have the calling property or value – and works at making corresponding sensances explicit. I think it was always understood as the task of philosophy to perceive and formulate which rules we recognized as being in force among us, whether we actually follow them or not. And my claim is that such philosophical investigation is precisely philosophy of culture; a point I am going to address now.

First of all, the calls described by etho-analysis amount to what could be called the “upper part” of culture. Etho-analysis helps us to understand that what we call culture is not only a set of actual skills and practices: we use the word in order to evoke the aiming part or the vectorized part of what we share. Our cultural skills or behaviors would not mean culture for us if we did not have the feeling that exerting them or manifesting them we keep on pursuing goals or horizons, fulfilling tasks, answering to calls. This leads to a kind of two-folded vision of culture: on the one hand, we have culture as a collection of effective things and acts, as a complex interconnection of regularities involving gestures, symbols, and so on; on the other hand, we have culture as sharing calls, going on along infinite paths answering to calls. We could call these two parts the ontological and the ideal or deontological facets of culture. Clearly, we cannot figure both parts as actual parts, determining a set-theoretical partition of one and the same enfolding space. Ontological culture is moved by deontological culture, which cannot get grasped in any other way than through the actual gestures, lived experiences or phrases it inspires us.

We understand now in which way our philosophy of culture deals with one of the problems we were considering in the beginning. We acknowledged that culture has both a universal meaning, allowing more or less any kind of practice to count as culture, and an aristocratic one, where culture cannot help referring to a kind of “higher level.” And we raised the issue of the authority of sociology and history, as the disciplines providing the good descriptions of what gets actually done in human groups.

Etho-analysis adds its perspective to the distinction between democratic and aristocratic meaning of culture, replacing it by the distinction between actual behavior and targets for aiming: it explains why culture may always be reduced to things and acts which actually appear, but nevertheless can never be separated from the level of demands beyond such data.

Furthermore, we win a better understanding of our intellectual relation to history and sociology. On the one hand, in order to decipher the deontological strata, we have to find out the sensances, and therefore must use introspection or deontic empathy, which, as I said, always were typical skills of philosophy (philosophical skill is very much about bearing some impregnation of the various rules we refer to in human experience). On the other hand, we cannot make sense of the prescriptions of the sensance without giving examples of ways of observing them, which requires a good descriptive language of current practices, and then forces us to use some social-historical information.

In the beginning of the paper, I also mentioned the fact that for a large collection of contemporary philosophers, embracing philosophy of culture was already a way of betraying truth and science, by implicitly or explicitly endorsing relativism: any claim should be considered in the context of its sheltering culture. What can we construe as the stance of etho-analysis with respect to such an issue?

2. The Issue of Truth

It is impossible to answer in a straightforward and simple way.

On the one hand, etho-analysis treats the word truth as a solicitor. I claim that truth has always been understood by philosophers as short for task of truth: as a matter of fact, it is rather difficult to consistently grant the word with some reference, and then to define the job of truth telling in a coherent foundational way. The corresponding issue is related with the paradoxical difficulties pinpointed by Kant and Frege.

Kant said, let us recall it, that truth was supposed to be the agreement of knowledge with reality, but as we only know reality through knowledge, it finally appears to be the agreement of knowledge with knowledge. According to Frege, truth should be the identity of representation and reality, but such identity cannot happen between two heterogeneous things; then he added something more radical, concerning any putative criterion of truth (that we should already know the secrets of truth in order to ascertain that the conditions of our criterion are met). The lesson to be drawn from such wise thoughts is perhaps that truth cannot be stabilized in the ontological and theoretical realm: truth is more of a call, an exigency, a demand than an object or a thing or a property. Or, at least, it has to be understood first as a call (and then we may understand how it also works as a property for statements).

In my 2014 book, I take truth as a solicitor and I propose a sense of the ethos of truth (the table of the law for followers of truth), made of six injunctions, which collectively tell what it means for us to stick to the task of truth. Then I try and analyze how basic scientific disciplines accommodate these requirements in their methodology: I am successively dealing with logic, mathematics, physics and sciences of interpretation (hermeneutics). I call this section “epistemology of truth”: it is about how sciences take up and reflect upon the exigencies of truth.¹⁵

Truth calls at a very large level: the ethos of truth (the “geographical” collection of followers of truth) is not limited to scientists, as we know well, for example when we formulate the importance of truth for politics. The word science itself is not a solicitor, it does not carry a call, but rather names an institution meant to organize the obedience to the call of truth “in the real world.” There are a lot of difficulties for building and regulating such an institution in the right way; to begin with because of the astonishing diversity of the multiple sciences which cannot accommodate the exigencies of truth in the same way; but also because social relations do not spontaneously work along the lines of the requirement of truth, as we quite harshly experience when we have to evaluate scholars. Still the institution of science is given, on the one hand as traditional organization of each specific science and, on the other hand, as a kind of loose federation of those organizations.

Is my analysis of the exigencies of truth a way of conciliating philosophy of culture and participation to the enterprise of truth? It shows at least that you do not need to ignore or deny the greatness of the task of truth in order to do philosophy of culture in the guise of etho-analysis. The long dedicated chapter of my 2014 book proves how highly I take truth and its exigencies. Especially, it shows that I do not subtract formal sciences from the task of truth: not only do they play the impressive part they are known to play as auxiliaries of empirical sciences, they also have their proper way of conceiving and defining truth, of always looking for new truths, and of winning them.

Nevertheless, it may be objected that I treat truth as only one of the values at hand, more or less in a Nietzschean way some readers will say. Which would not necessarily be a way of diminishing my conception, as Nietzsche, I think, without being in the position to correctly prove it, granted a huge importance to truthfulness (with his notion of probity perhaps).

The difficulty is that many philosophers would like truth to be conceptualized in such a way that it clearly appears as governing our field: is it the case in my setting?

Two things should be noted with respect to that question. First, etho-analysis itself claims to unravel truths. The sense of an ethos, as I understand it, is “objective”: each injunction occurring in it is supposed to be such that any follower of the ethos would recognize that by-passing it means accepting a lesser version of the stakes of the ethos (a diminished love or truth, for example). Sense is not objective as pertaining to some real object standing somewhere on the general map of ontology, but it is objective as being one and the same for

15) See Salanskis, *Partages du sens*, 109–245.

each follower of the ethos. This is what I mean by “sharing a sense” or “sharing a meaning”: we share a “mode of being called,” as in the Fregean-Husserlian view we share a presentation mode; that mode of being called is exactly what sense describes or identifies. Certainly, as I already explained, investigation of the sense cannot be an empirical one, and neither can it be carried out by formal deduction. It can only come from the procedure of making explicit: the prescriptions of the sense which are already between us, we may recover them either by looking inside of us or by considering our partners (other followers) and seeing through their behavior which rules they regard as mandatory for them.

Such a point is important because in my experience, after reading my definitions, many readers jump to the wrong conclusion that sense should be strictly indeterminate, should vary with individuals and circumstances. On the contrary, working at etho-analysis you keep on participating in the large enterprise of winning trans-subjective truths.

And yet, the following remark is probably even more important. In some sense, it is still true in my framework that truth is privileged among possible values. Even if the framework of etho-analysis, following Levinas, recognizes ethics as primary philosophy. Even if, according to our understanding of meaning, there is no priority to ontology and givenness of objects, because we prefer to underline the debt of meaning with respect to ethical plot.

Nevertheless, as I already formulated it in my 2001 book *Sens et philosophie du sens*,¹⁶ it has to be acknowledged that meaning always follows a path of composition and refinement: that it tends to get more complicated. Meaning does not end its career as trauma undergone by the addressee: typically it rather enters a series of relaunchings, which trigger a kind of collective elaboration leading to always more contents, relations, and forms.¹⁷ This happens essentially through language and the community of language, always presupposed.

Thus meaning clearly has a destiny of complication between us. Such complication gets elaborated at the “they” level, while meaning originally made sense at the “you” level. Aforementioned destiny deserves to be characterized as destiny toward infinity. We know that human treatment of fundamental meaning data always consists in indefinite and unlimited re-working, exploiting any way of raising questions or inventing structures. I attempted to show how such enrichment happened in the case of mathematics (e.g., in *L’herméneutique formelle*¹⁸), but I would say that the same may be observed inside each ethos. The tradition of love has produced a virtually unlimited amount of considerations deepening the mystery of love, just as contemporary mathematics has imagined an astonishing plurality of theories showing the mystery of continuum through various lenses and facets.

Therefore, it has to be recognized that at this level the machinery of truth works and makes the day. We need statements, structured perspectives, theories, proofs and organized texts, in order to develop and enrich shared meaning between us; to develop and enrich it as sharable. Certainly, meaning at the level of making sense is in its own way “perfect” already as message felt as asking: that does not prevent enrichment, digging and renewing to happen, being connected with social sharing of meaning.

The tradition of truth keeps for us the expressive tools for enrichment of meaning: to begin with, as Frege and Russell¹⁹ have seen and showed – but as Chomsky²⁰ perhaps underlined in a more general and stronger way

16) See Salanskis, *Sens et philosophie du sens*.

17) Here I should perhaps insist that such enrichment does not have to erase or delete anything, it may very well be confirmative, as it happens with mathematics since so many centuries.

18) See Salanskis, *L’herméneutique formelle*.

19) See Russell, *Logic and Knowledge: Essays 1901–1950*.

20) See Chomsky, *Syntactic Structures*.

– the syntactic tools allowing us to build well-formed sentences. It has to be added, though, that traditional subtleness and intricacy of literary comment is also an available tool for enriching and digging: it relies on the tradition of truth as well, commenting and interpreting were always about making explicit what is really said and thought, about looking for the true and correct comment or interpretation. Also, these comments and interpretations work on the structure of meaning content of sentences, grasping it in a more refined way, often beyond first order logical form, and possibly even beyond Chomskian grammatical reconstruction. They also meditate in all possible ways how sentences may refer to various worlds. In order to unfold meaning between us in the richest way, revealing every version and every structural content, we need, as a matter of fact, to go beyond basic logical syntax and logical semantics, we need to be ready to use literary tools and mathematical tools, at least. But quite clearly a lot of other tools could be mentioned, either partially linked to previous ones or not (e. g., juridical tools).

To put it simpler: sharing meaning, as providing avenues of infinitization, requires the scholar's concern for truth, demands intelligibility, clarity and patient work at both. Tradition of knowledge is fundamental for meaning share as it offers diverse adventures opening for infinitization. Even if, avoiding being a reductionist, we should not presuppose that all avenues for deepening meaning between us obey the same rules and answer to the same stakes, it is at the same time also essential to understand that the scholarly tradition of knowledge, intelligibility, clarity and precision supports the multifaceted network of the splendor of our shared meanings. And if we want to credit the good work of contemporary analytic philosophy, we may perhaps say that its scholars meant precisely that, and wished some new philosophy witnessing to it.

Surprisingly (or not) there is a third thing to say, according to me. It is closely related to following declaration of Levinas, in an interview he gave for *Le Monde* in 1978:

Despite all that may have been said against science, we must not forget that, amid the deterioration of so many human orders, scientific research remains one of the rare domains in which man controls himself, bows to reason, is not wordy or violent, but pure. These are moments of research, constantly interrupted by the banalities of everyday life, but moments that, conjoined, have their own duration. Is not the place of morality and loftiness henceforth the laboratory?²¹

Such declaration shows that even if theoretical care does not discharge us from ethical concern, even if the research of truth has to concede that answering the call of the other person comes first and before; still, the collective organization of such research in international science counts as an ethical achievement, perhaps the best one that human kind could present as proof of good intentions, at least until now. Hence sticking to the issue of truth is also a way of not falling too low with respect to moral demand. Keeping on observing the rules of investigation, discussion, assessment and proof helps us not to ignore radically what correctness and responsibility mean, what working at a collective task entails and what the value of it is.

Etho-analysis is not only part of the larger enterprise of describing trans-subjective data, nor does it only recognize as such the task of truth as corresponding to an ethos. It also wishes to help realizing the moral excellence of science inside the field of philosophy, as evoked by Levinas in the preceding quote. Because we need for that a deeper respect of the other's thought than logical clarity: we need a way of thinking that allows us to decipher and make explicit what kind of rules various ways of thinking, speaking, acting and experiencing refer to. Which is exactly what etho-analysis claims to provide.

21) Levinas, *Le Monde*, March 19/20, 1978. English translation is taken from David Hansel's page in the website of UMR 8119 of CNRS. I ignore if he did it. Anyway it sounds perfect to me.

3. Conclusion

Before closing that paper, I would like to make a last point, concerning culture as practice. As I pointed at the beginning, going back to the Latin *colere* suggests that we understand culture as quasi-synonymous with practice. Even if we do not go that far, we keep on considering culture mainly as practice, maybe as a way or a stratum of practice. We call for history and sociology in order to describe and discuss culture, because these disciplines are the relevant ones as far as practice is concerned.

As I already explained at the end of section 1, the etho-analytic approach considers culture differently: as a way of hearing calls and attempting at answering them. We grasp culture before practice unfolds, as it were, at the very instant when prescriptions reach us and motivate us. The general contention of etho-analysis is that our world is not just an actual describable world, constantly moved toward its future by explicable “vector fields” determining trajectories. Our world is that, and enfolds something beyond: our reality is always, so to say, corrupted by calls or demands, determining horizons to which we may stick (or not). Our human experience is so much concerned by this deontological part that probably nothing in it really reduces to its actuality: in Levinasian language we should not consider anything human as genuinely ontological (it could be claimed that this was the secret meaning of Terence’s verse *Nil humani a me alienum puto*: I regard anything human as enfolding calls I share). Etho-analysis inspires then a philosophy of culture working not on the historical-social world, but on its projective completion (in the mathematical sense), as it were: considering even cultural actualities from the point of view of what we feel as requested.

Are contemporary practitioners of philosophy ready to switch to such kind of evocations, discussions and reflections? In my view it depends very much on their ability to recover the strength and meaning of Idealism, understood as the recognition of the unavoidability of the Platonic objective notion of Idea, and of its fruitfulness. That is at least what I have been arguing in my recent book *La voie idéale*.²² Hopefully such philosophical orientation will get more and more perceived and felt as an available option in contemporary general debate.

22) See Salanskis, *La voie idéale*.

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