

Truth-Drive or Killing the Killing of the Father

In his essay "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense", Friedrich Nietzsche utilizes the metaphor of a colombarium, a tower of science to which scientific investigators feed from like bees out of an artificial flower, a flower of flowers, being at the same time the field, the flower and the bee hive. In a more contemporary metaphorical way of thinking, this tower can be compared to a refrigerator of specialties, that the bee-investigator, incapable of processing his food autonomously, relays on. It is then an artificially sustained platform, even more so as this structure may entirely collapse and its food go rotten and its bees starve to death, if the refrigerator is unplugged. Nietzsche's "phobia" is further accentuated today when viewing the constructions of truth from the outside, while in the inside, the social enslavement might keep the human investigators dormant and unaware. In this sense, one may also start to reason where, in this refrigerated preservations of truths the center lays, as Jacques Derrida claims criticizing Claude Levi-Strauss and affirming that there is no structure without a center. Michel Foucault himself would probably agree that it is difficult to discern a center, or at least the author of such artificial construction, this in vogue with a decentralizing trend.

The work of the ants progresses systematically in the erection of a mound facing on one side a strip of forest where the bear population has increased with the prohibition of hunting, and on the other a highway with speeding cars. If on top of these mounds there are spiders like Levi-Strauss making their webs (this also recalling the Nietzschean metaphor on the fragility of such human constructions), Derrida is the cricket going from mound to mound and announcing, with his irritating buzz, the vanity of all this. And yet here again, we might refer to a passage found in Slavoy Zizek's essay "From Symptom to Sinthome", or in many of the essays discussing the changing of meaning of the Saint Paul's dictum "noli alta sapere" which throughout the Middle ages has hindered intellectual daring out of the social mound, as monkey out the jungle prior their more or less voluntary departure and consequent evolution to humans. In these passages, we find a 17th century acknowledgment of the fact that there is a laying falsity of the truth construction in which these "libertini" lived but on the other hand there is a strong acknowledgement that this base, should not be criticized. It is the case of Blaise Pascal but it is also the case of René Decartes, as presented in Zizek's aforementioned essay. Both French authors invite to embrace one single faith and do not question it as we do not question the preceding into an unknown forest, following one direction rather than being hesitant and reaching no where. It is then an acknowledgement of a necessary determinism to be certain of, which Derrida seems, on

the contrary, to criticize with a certain certainty, providing that all structural attempts are facing this uncertainty.

Biblically speaking, as Derrida was himself interested in Judaism and was himself of Jewish origins, we can return to Nietzsche's metaphorical example of this tower of science and find a straight comparison with the Babel tower, a tower which is artificially constructed in a "sapere aude" fashion, in a daring of the "noli alta sapere" in its Medieval connotation. Perhaps are such towers citadels of citadels, skyscrapers of metropolis doomed to fall, despite all the precautions. Ironically, more are the precautions and higher becomes the chances of collapse. Precarious towers instead, seem those which have a better chance to survive. It is necessary then here to bring forward a dichotomy between the tower of establishment, the Babel tower erected with a certain ambition, doomed to fall and generate even more chaos and disorder (i.e. the European Union and any other empire in the macro and micro historical sense), or the more precarious conditions of Noah's ark. The latter can be then compared with Žižek further example on the predictable sinking of the Titanic. The Noah ark is rather a Kon-Tiki vessel, solely built on what is there available to be found, it is a very precarious enterprise, it is in fact a bricolage and in this respect defers from the establishment which Derrida, in his critic to Levi-Strauss, fails to point out. This precarious enterprise is probably due to succeed, unless it gets established. Social establishment is probably at the base of failure of such structural attempts. It is the case of, for instance, August Sander's attempt to exhaustively portrait German society Face of Our Time, the enterprise fails as soon as it gets established and recognized, as some sort of premature reaching of the other coast where attentive observers, like Walter Benjamin with his telescope like glasses, keep monitoring the horizon and anticipate what is to come.

In this respect, connecting to Žižek's article, Noah's ark, the cultural artifact, is possibly not a construction of truth, but a precarious construction of potentials of truth, which persons like Sander are driven to construct in a symptom that something is going to happen and this truth will be destroyed (or will self-destroyed). It is in fact a symptom of imminent death which drives certain people to compulsively, as Sigmund Freud would put it, repeat themselves in the gathering of such potentials in a state of imminent calamity, which in Sander's case has been the Second World War and the annihilation of the German folk he had tried to photograph and portrait before this event. In this respect, we can see in psychoanalysis another aspect of the construction of truth which is not aimed to discuss the artificial construction of truth sense by Nietzsche and later much criticized and deconstructed by anti-establishment and anti-panopticism Foucault-like philosophy, but rather construction as a very natural and base symptom to gather

up fragments of truth before an imminent collapse of the establishment.

We can here figure a sort of scavenging happening. On one side we have the established and power looking structure, refrigerator-like sky-scrapers piercing the celestial vault yet very much carrying the seed of crisis from within and doomed to fall, and on the other we have the informal, unofficial scavengers, collectors of the first fragments falling off these constructions and making constructions of their own, all that is going to survive out of the former ambition. The tower then becomes a tree doomed to fall, rotten and disappear while the precarious gathering of its potentials are the actual cones, which are also doomed to fall and give a rise to other trees with an inherited resemblance from the mother tree. It is perhaps here the problem that Nietzsche points out, this impossibility of renewal perhaps due to the artificial refrigeration of truth possible today. It is here that a human instinct, possibly that of the death drive, comes into play as some sort of willing to die, not to be interpreted as a willing to disappear, but rather a willing to reborn, which can be then readjusted to the renew-drive. The polemic context can here be reduced to a truth that is hindered from a possibility to renew and all the effects and symptoms, the psychosis deriving from such impossibility. It is then not an “archive fever”, as Derrida would put it, but an archive as a symptom of a fever affecting the surrounding of the archivist.

Narcissus and Goldmund, the dual characters of one of Herman Hesse's books, are excellent examples of this ambiguous construction, on the one hand Narcissus in the institution of the church and on the other Goldmund, a nomad. Perhaps this very dualism laid conflicting in the German writer who finds himself both close to Nietzsche and to Freud (having also moved from Germany to Switzerland in the meantime). By means of example, the once emancipated field of Gender studies, may be seen as having shifted from a marginal state, to an established position allocating to itself an artificial refrigerator to preserve additively the gender truth. In this respect, the Nietzschean metaphor of historical avalanche, can be turned rather into an overshadowing, a being emancipated from underground and surviving under the constant gravity of so many a fridge towers of claimed truths. Unless one is to be, tactically in one or several of these fridges, one ought to act as a small scale dictator of his own discipline and, as Žižek puts it, like a Caesar, sacrifice himself in order to establish Caesarism, or like a Feminist sacrificing herself to the establishment of Feminism.

One may ask here again what is this drive towards this residual collection of truth, this precarious construction rising aside and hidden from the more established one. The connection between the drive to this precarious construction of truth and truth can be

seized here by again Derrida in his reading of Sigmund Freud enterprise. In "archive Fever", the French philosopher compares the life long enterprise of Freud to that of an archivist, this probably inspired by the fact that Freud's house was turned at his death into a museum, thus institutionalized. As such, Derrida is keen to demonstrate that the world "archive" comes in fact from the world "house" and more specifically the house of the magistrate who has, in Derrida way of thinking, three tasks. The obvious one of protecting the archive, the less obvious one of issuing the laws that generates it and at last the hermetic function of interpreting it. Derrida sees Freud enterprise symbolized by the very house-museum, as such of this kind. Here as well Derrida does not fail to "unpack" the Freudian operation, the metaphorical construction of the constructing of truth which has found Freud particularly constructive until a crucial shift, commonly identified in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" essay. Here the father of psychoanalysis, for the first time, after an admitted first reluctance, announces the death-drive a drive towards deconstruction. To this respect then his constructive enterprise can be compared to that of the Senator Buddenbrook, who, after much ambitious struggle, when the house is constructed, goes on to die. Derrida points out the implicit deconstruction of any archive, any ultimated construction of truth, which in some way may justify why, in certain cultures, perfection is only aspired but never fully accomplished as Japanese temples always having an unfinished column, or Japanese traditional bridges by the construction of a new bridge as soon as the former are accomplished (even here the secret of construction is archived secretly by one family).

However, Derrida is not fully deconstructive and pessimistic about attempts to build and construct. He sees, in parallel with Freud and his compulsive repetition to construct, the implicit one of deconstructing, of killing the creation but he also sees exceptions in which these knowledge archival attempt can survive, namely by archiving within also the causes of its destruction. In this Derrida is very helpful as it is possible then to view critic itself as the ultimate attempt to maintain an establishment doomed to self-destruct. He does not make, however, any distinction between precarious constructions and ambitious constructions which wants control and establishment. He does not make, in his metaphorical way of thinking, he does not make any separation between the archive as a sedentary dwelling where the archivist reside as a Buddenbrook wishing to expand his domain, and the archive as an arch meant to set sails on a precarious trip, as the distinction made above. Herman Hesse makes such distinction, again with the character Narcissus and Goldmund, Narcissus representing rather a drive to preserve, to live in an academic like monastery and Goldmund totally exposed to the world, going straight to death like an Amadeus Mozart constructing his ultimate work, his requiem. Bringing back Derrida's argument one is tempted to think of the archive not only as a

sedentary establishment, but also as a more precarious enterprise, a vessel which however cannot leave, probably explaining the origin to madness. While the first enterprise then is meant to destroy itself from within, we may acknowledge a further distinction of the second type of enterprise which finds rather its threats in the unstable surrounding, in its exposure to the world to the ever engulfing sea more in the line with a Greek hero bringing his bounty home rather than a Jew collecting the money of its usury in his very place (this to just again bring forward another metaphorical dichotomy which any Derriderian can easily unpack) making the first enterprise a natural one and the second artificial (is this then only a question of natural exposure?).

We may in this sense also revise the “sapere aude” motif, so ambivalent with its counter motif “nohli alta sapere”, much of a block throughout the higher medieval time. In this respect one can revise what are intellectuals, or better the sensitive humanists, what is that they aspire to dare for. Daring to cross the unknown seas perhaps rather than daring to pursue any sedentary colonization, colonialism then, being also one of such attempts with not only a self deconstructing element, as Derriderian would put it, but also a project with a counter colonialism compensating the offense, as Tolstoy would have more banally and simplistically argue. What is the death-drive then under the perspective of this further, more or less sustained, distinction? In both cases we see a preparation, in the case of the hero attempting to set sail back after his audacious daring at sea, we can identify a preparation to actually leave while for the other a preparation to stay and be immortal. This is then a fundamental distinction that can applied to distinguish constructions of truth based on the underlying ambition and the means with which such a construction is accomplished whether in a bricolage fashion or in a more reliable engineering fashion, the latter again being a most artificial approach which is doomed to collapse.

To conclude this excursion on the construction of truth and its implicit drive to self-destruction, as partially addressed by Freud, Derida and Zizek, we can attempt to briefly bring up the discussion to one of today's hot topic, “autonomism”. A battle against precariousness here is the winning horse for theorists like Maurizio Lazzarato, who has quickly turned popular with his critic on neoliberal politics. In this respect, the logic of this essay arguing for precariousness may seem absurd, yet it is confined to a restricted group of immaterial workers, that of intellectuals having a deeper sense of truth in precarious circumstances, such as a sick Nietzsche in a Turin hostel but also as the very father of Autonomia, Antonio Negri, writing in a prison cell. Deconstruction then, psychoanalytically speaking, may be viewed as a killing-of-the-father complex, a killing of the previous establishment while the regeneration of truth can be viewed as a

resurrection of a father, a father who has been however living in a precarious conditions and marginally if not persecuted or tragically going against his own death without any assumptions to immortality. It is in fact a recovery of what is disappearing and it is worth to be remembered as the etymology of truth, aletheia suggests. The conventional construction of truth is here only a maintenance of the fridges.