Identity Exists Only in Its Modes:
The Flexible Subject and the Interpretative Mind Against Semi-Cognitive "Sciences"

Giovanni Bottiroli

Abstract • Though identity and narrative are the subjects of many discussions, the two terms are not usually accompanied by any adjective, as if *identity* necessarily meant "rigid identity", and *narrative* were synonymous of "linear, coherent narrative" (in the most reductive acceptation of *coherence*). Quite the contrary, it is necessary to rediscover the polysemy of the concept of identity, linking narrative theory to philosophies and theories of the subject. Identity exists only in its modes and in the conflict between coincidence and non-coincidence.

Keywords • Identity; Subject; Interpretation; Narrative Theory; Cognitive Sciences

Ledizioni

Identity Exists Only in Its Modes:
The Flexible Subject and the Interpretative Mind Against Semi-Cognitive "Sciences"

Giovanni Bottiroli

1. The interpretative gap of cognitivism

The debate regarding the Self, and especially the narrative Self, is extensive and varied; nevertheless—and I hope that such a categorical statement may be justified by what follows—it is in many ways an incomplete debate, tied down to age-old and stubbornly persistent simplifications that often rear their heads in new forms. How should we free ourselves from these limitations? How can we develop a truly new research programme that is suited to the complexity of what it studies? A first, and crucially important, decision that must be taken is the following: should a theory explain only normality or should it also explain rebellion against normality, in other words, the exception? I use here the term *exception* to indicate complex, statistically rare, entities, which, in the field of the arts, prompt aesthetic admiration.

It is worth observing that many scholars overlook this choice, or mistakenly believe they can skirt around it. The result of this is a banalisation, for the most part unintended, of all those texts that eschew an exclusively "standardising" analysis and demand rather to be subjected to that set of mental operations defined as *interpretation*. Indeed, one of the principle limits of cognitivism (and of cognitivist studies on narration) can be defined only as an *interpretative gap*, an overly restricted theory of the mind, that is, which is only capable of carrying out grammatical or pragmatic operations (in any case only acts of comprehension).

As regards the distinction between *understanding* and *interpreting*, I take my cue from one of Wittgenstein's reflections. "If someone asks me 'what time is it?', there is no inner process of laborious interpretation; I simply react to what I see and hear. If someone whips out a knife at me, I do not say 'I interpret that as a threat'" (*Philosophical Grammar* 461). This does not, however, rule out the possibility that contexts may be imagined in which whipping out a knife may be interpreted as a joke and so forth. We must not think that there are enunciations (symbols, images) that dictate the way they are to be understood, thus escaping any further semanticization. "What happens is not that this symbol cannot be further interpreted, but: I do no interpreting. I do not interpret, because I feel at home (*heimisch*) in the present picture" (Wittgenstein, *Zettel* 43).

I should like to put forward some considerations based on these passages.

(i) Despite what is argued by certain authors (Gadamer, but also Davidson), interpretation is not pervasive. We do not always interpret: in many cases, in fact in the majority of cases, we appropriate meaning on the basis of the mode of understanding we employ. Therefore, interpretation is statistically rare: does this authorise a theory of the mind to ignore interpretative processes?

(ii) Emphasizing the peculiarity of interpretation does not imply a simplistic vision of comprehension. Thanks to the development of pragmatics, it is now accepted that to *comprehend* is not the same as to decode. In very many cases to comprehend is to make inferences, to infer intentions, etc.

(iii) I believe that the distinction Wittgenstein proposed should be maintained, but also re-elaborated, by distinguishing between relatively simple inferences, which are rapidly exhausted within a specific context, and which we may call *pragmatic inferences* ("à-la-Grice", in other words), and difficult inferences, which require time, open up new perspectives, etc. Only the latter are *interpretative inferences*: they are directed towards a problematic implicitness, which is by nature inexhaustible.

Let me give some examples. In an episode of the Tv sitcom *Seinfeld*, a character called George Costanza is asked by the girl with whom he has been on a very pleasant date if he wants to come up for a coffee. He declines, explaining that caffeine keeps him up at night. Later he slaps his forehead and realizes, "*Coffee* doesn't mean 'coffee'! *Coffee* means 'sex'!" (Pinker 22). The protagonist of this episode, in other words, only belatedly realizes that language is not just a code, and that to understand an enunciation it is not sufficient to decode it (following Jakobson's model of communication): it is necessary to make inferences. George Costanza recognises that, if we limit ourselves to seeing language as a code, we risk looking like fools. I believe this is a good example of *exhaustible* implicitness.

Let us now consider another type of implicit meaning, the type generated by a technique known as *ellipsis*. When we read *King Lear*, we cannot avoid—that is, if we decide to use all the resources our mind has at its disposal—, to ask ourselves: "How are we to understand Lear's motivation in his opening scene? How Cordelia's? Is Gloucester's blinding dramatically justified? What is the relation between the Lear plot and the Gloucester subplot? What happens to the Fool? Why does Edgar delay before revealing himself to his father? Why does Gloucester set out for Dover? Why does France not return with Cordelia? Why must Cordelia die?" (Cavell 43).

It would be impossible to deal with these questions without paying careful attention to the text as an *object made of language*. For example, in the abdication scene, Cordelia's strange behaviour cannot be interpreted—indeed, cannot be comprehended!—unless one takes into consideration the rhetorical dimension.[1]

The *narrative turn* is opening up interesting new directions, but to oppose the *narrative turn* to the *linguistic turn*, to devalue, that is, the essentiality of the linguistic form, is equivalent, at least in the case of literary works, to an unpardonable regression. Literature has developed fascinating plots; but literature is not *storytelling*. Linguistically elaborate plots become insipid if one only looks at the narrative construction *per se*.

Therefore the interpretative mind, which analyses the inexhaustible implicitness of works of art—inexhaustible in that it generates new interpretations that expand the work (this should perhaps be specified because there also exists another type of inexhaustibility, that of vagueness, chatter and boredom)—, is much more than the cognitive mind (and more than the phenomenological mind). The interpretative mind is wider ranging because, while it forsakes none of the processes described by traditional logic, it also ventures into the territory of logical pluralism. Undeniably, the interpretative mind makes use of abductions; its superiority depends on the fact that it draws upon a wider logical conceptuality as well as a more extensive set of tools. One example may be taken up from Peirce (and moves from rhetorical ellipsis to geometrical ellipse): Kepler's abduction would not have been possible if he had not, in addition to the geometrical shape of the circle, had at his disposal the ellipse. In the same manner, our analysis of identity will be much impoverished if we only perceive one of its modes, that of coincidence.

We must therefore move on from the theory of the mind to ontology and logic.

---

[1] See Paolo Valesio's acute reading in *Ascoltare il silenzio*.

2. From identity to the modes of identity

In order to talk about the Self—Gallagher and Zahavi argue in *The Phenomenological Mind*—it is first of all necessary to know what the Self is, or at least what those who employ it mean when they say "the Self", an ambiguous term (the person? The I? The subject?) which is today extremely widespread in scholarly accounts of the narrative process. I prefer to speak of identity, or of the subject.

My own logico-ontological theory of identity is based on several theses, which, for obvious reasons of space, I must put forward with extreme conciseness.[2]

(i) Unlike what is held by a long tradition, still dominant today, there is no "one" logic: the activity of thought is always "modalised" through a particular style. Therefore, there does not exist "one" logic, there only exist *styles of thought*.

(ii) It is first of all necessary to distinguish between two paths, and this distinction is revealed to us not by the goddess of Parmenides (a philosopher of rigidity), but by another goddess, Metis, who represents flexible reason. The family of *disjunctive logics* (or *separative logics*) must therefore be distinguished from that of *conjunctive logics*; within the latter, it will be necessary to posit a difference between the distinctive style and the confusive style.[3]

(iii) The differences between styles of thought may be presented from several points of view. I should here like to stress first how logical pluralism obliges us to modify the traditional concept of identity. According to disjunctive logics (from Aristotle to Frege, to post-classical logics), identity is the relationship which an entity can have exclusively with itself: therefore, A = A. According to conjunctive logics, instead, an identity exists only thanks to its relationship with at least one other identity: therefore, A = A and not-A. More explicitly, the identity of A (or the subject *idem*) does not exist prior to its relationship to a subject *alter*.

It will not therefore be possible to speak of "identity" in general, that is, from the *zero stylistic* point of view. We have moved on from identity to modes of identity. Consistently with (a), (b), and (c), we may distinguish between identity in the mode of coincidence (A = A) and identity in the mode of non-coincidence (A = A and not-A).

3. Four different points of view on identity

The difference between modes must nevertheless be specified and developed further. Coincidence with oneself has usually been described by means of two conceptions, a property-based conception and a mereological conception.

---

[2] For a more extensive account, I refer readers to a selection of my essays, consultable at www.giovannibottiroli.it: "An Introduction to (Conjunctive) Scissional Logic" and "Bakhtin: the richness of theory. Against the poverty of 'contextual studies' (cultural studies etc.)." In Italian, a more systematic account of my research programme may be found in *La ragione flessibile. Modi d'essere e stili di pensiero*. See also my article "Identità come identificazione: nei film (e non negli spettatori)."

[3] Two families, and not just two styles: within every family there exist differences. As regards conjunctive logics, there is a fundamental difference which Heidegger helped to bring to light, and which is one of the principles that guide my research: the bond between opposites does not necessarily lead to synthesis, as laid down in Hegel's logic. It is not necessarily a relationship between *contraries* (synthesizable opposites), and can be a relationship between *correlatives*, that is non-synthesizable opposites. Heidegger's concept of co-belonging (*Zusammengehörigkeit*) corresponds to a logic of correlatives.

A. *Property-based conception*: an entity (an individual, it does not matter whether real or fictional) is defined by a more or less extensive set of properties. This is what Aristotle (man is a "rational animal", for example), and numerous other writers thought. This is common sense. The number of properties may remain undetermined; it depends on the degree of accuracy of our description.

Excessive accuracy can produce comic effects (voluntary or involuntary). This is what takes place, intentionally, in James Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, when Stephen lists his father's properties, the traits that distinguish him as a character:

> A medical student, an oarsman, a tenor, an amateur actor, a shouting politician, a small landlord, a small investor, a drinker, a good fellow, a story-teller, somebody's secretary, something in a distillery, a tax-gatherer, a bankrupt and at present a praiser of his own past. (241)

The list is patently derisive—its aim (to use a term Bakhtin deploys in his carnivalesque conception of the world) is to uncrown. It is worthwhile to note the importance of the *manner* of listing, because it changes our perception of an object, but not the (logico-formal) limits of any list of properties. However many properties I may be able to list, the individual I am speaking of continues to coincide with himself/herself: he or she, that is, remains within the logical space of coincidence (A = A): Stephen's father, despite his abundance of properties (and the list might be extended indefinitely), is an individual who does not surpass his limits, the borders of his self. He is in no way comparable to those characters Bakhtin had in mind—Dostoevskij's in particular—when he spoke of non-coincidence.

B. *Mereological conception*: an individual is defined by the parts of which he is composed (and which turn out to be more or fewer depending on our willingness to enumerate them). This is Hume's belief, for example. This idea, also—if properly understood—is common sense. Once again, the number of elements depends on subjective decisions: we may limit ourselves to the principal zones (systems, modules, etc.) or we may adopt a micrological approach, which emphasises multiplicity. There exists a centripetal version of this vision that preserves the unity of the subject, but there is also a centrifugal conception that tends to dissolve the subject (among contemporary philosophers Dennet and Metzinger should be mentioned here).

In any case, it must be observed that, even when multiplicity dissolves unity (or, if we prefer, even when unity is just another name for a multiplicity), one remains within the logical space of "A = A".

Let us turn now to the dimension of non-coincidence.

C. *Relational conception*: even though identity is always a relationship (and not a property), I think it is legitimate to define as *relational* only that conception according to which the relationship between *idem* and *alter* is constitutive of identity (the identity, that is, of at least one of the subjects).[4] This implies that the subject *idem* is in its essence "plastic", i.e. it is capable of acquiring a morphological configuration only through a form that it introjects, and by which it is consequently modelled. The plasticity of the subject was asserted by Nietzsche ("man is the still undetermined animal"; *Beyond Good and Evil* aphorism 62), and by Freud, as well as by other thinkers (for example, Heidegger).

---

[4] In disjunctive logic (and ontology), every entity is defined by its autonomy with respect to the relationships into which it may enter. Therefore the property-based and the mereological conception must be regarded as "non-relational".

It is, however, in psychoanalysis that we find for the first time a sufficiently systematic reworking of the relational conception. According to Freud—or more specifically, according to the author of *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (1921)—,[5] identity is identification: more precisely, identity consists in a set of identifications.

I propose this definition as a starting point: first and foremost, *identification* is a process through which the subject is modified—in a manner that is decisive and only partially controllable by conscience—by its relationship with another subject. The other here plays a modelling role. Thanks to identification, a subject for the first time acquires a form, or else is radically transformed and undergoes a metamorphosis. One example from Nietzsche is the spirit, which first becomes a camel, and then a lion and finally a child (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*).

Identification processes must be distinguished on the basis of different types and different modes. I can here make only a few points clearer in order to avoid the most common misunderstandings. I have mentioned identification in its most important sense, because there also exist ephemeral ("disposable") identifications, which, even when they totally capture the subject (in the terminology I am using, these are *confusive* identifications), do not modify its identity. Each of us may every day identify himself/herself with fictional characters (the protagonist of a news event, an advertisement, or a film), or with real people, without these processes leaving relevant traces on our personality: they probably confirm—and in no way dispute—what we are. Nothing prevents us from using the term *identification* also for this type of brief and unessential process. What counts is the ability to differentiate the different types and the different modes. I believe, however, that it would be opportune to translate the conceptual distinctions into terminological distinctions, and call *immedesimations* those identifications that are ephemeral (and irrelevant on the existential plane). The term *empathy*, for example, is often used to describe phenomena of immedesimation; but empathy has no metamorphic consequences.[6]

D. *Modal conception*: the modal point of view inspires and governs the entire theory I am putting forward here, in that identity is always modalised. The fourth point of view offers, however, a number of fundamentally important developments, which have repercussions on the preceding points of view, and most immediately on the third.

Let us return to psychoanalysis: Freud distinguished between the processes that modify the ego zone and those that modify the zone of the ego ideal. To give a few examples, Emma Bovary's identification with the romantic heroines transforms her ego, that of Don Quixote with the chivalric heroes modifies his ego ideal. Both processes are, however, *confusive*, and therefore different from Julien Sorel's identification with Napoleon or that of Raskol'nikov with superior men, which are instead *distinctive* identifications. A

[5] The second topography, which Freud put forward in 1922 (*The Ego and the Id*) is again a mereological model, and should conceptually be considered as one step behind the essay he had published the previous year. Such oscillations are not unusual with great innovators.

[6] I cannot delve more deeply into this point, so I shall only mention some critics of empathy: Bakhtin, Heidegger, and Lacan. In particular, *Seminar III* states that the presumption that psychosis can be understood through empathy is absurd. No less absurd, may we add, is this presumption if extended to neurotic and perverted subjects. However, because a clear-cut boundary does not exist (at least for psychoanalysis) between health and pathology, the presumption that the mind of other human beings can be penetrated through a simple act of immedesimation is unrealistic. Once again, in order to obtain true knowledge, interpretation is necessary.

conjunctive relationship can therefore assume different modes.[7] The modes indicated here may be understood also as a further development of Lacan's Symbolic, which is not just the register of the Law but first and foremost that of intellectual complexity.

These are the modes for the fourth point of view: Lacan's *registers* (Imaginary, Symbolic, Real) and the *styles of thought* that characterise them. In the Imaginary the confusive regime dominates; the Real is the dimension in which the distinction between the registers collapses; the Symbolic is the register of language-thought, and is the most complex of all.[8]

In the Symbolic, however, the separative style, the style of rigidity, is also at work: therefore, in my interpretation of Lacan, the Symbolic is the site of interminable conflicts between rigidity and flexibility.

The four conceptions of identity may be described by means of the following diagram:

Modes of identity

Coincidence
A = A
idem = idem
undivided subject
(though not without
internal distinctions)

Non-coincidence
A = A and not-A
idem = idem and *alter*
divided subject

Property-based
conception

Mereological
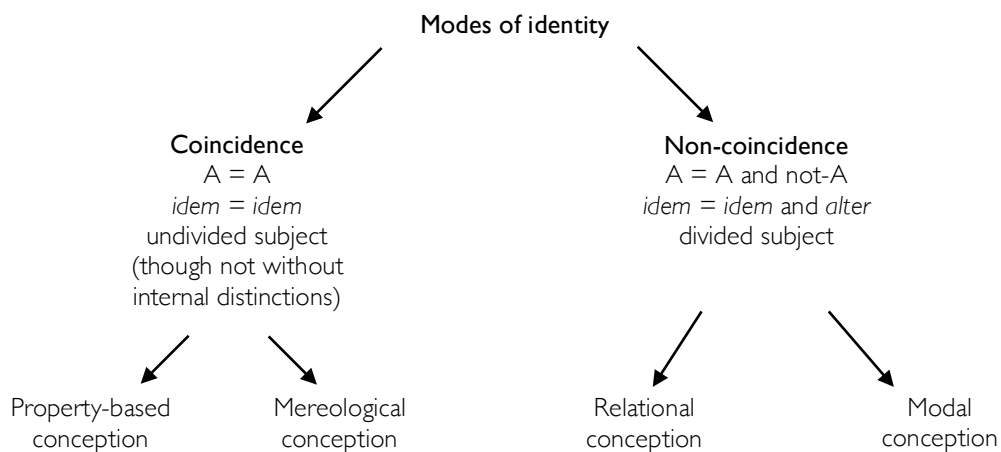conception

Relational
conception

Modal
conception

Fig. 1 – Four conceptions of identity.

I wish to remark once again, so as to avoid as far as possible any misunderstanding engendered by a graphic visualisation, that the modal point of view is not just simply placed next to the others: in addition to bringing precision and complexity to the relational conception, it also highlights the limits—as well as the dogmatism—of both the property-based and the mereological conception, that is identity as coincidence. It would be wrong, however, to think of the relationship between the two fundamental modes of identity as a clear-cut direct opposition. Disjunctive logics tend to disown the legitimacy of conjunctive

[7] These are not simply differences in "degree": the notion of "mode" is more complex, and invites further investigation; a simple empirical judgment is inadequate.
 The news frequently offers examples of *confusive identification*, with varying degrees of importance. In 2015, a Swedish woman, Pixee Fox, decided to undergo further surgery to take out six of her ribs so that she could complete her transformation into Jessica Rabbit, right down to the cartoon character's unlikely waist size. In June 2016 it was revealed that the author of a mass killing that took place in the USA was inspired by a model. Forms of criminal identification such as these also feature in fiction (I am thinking, for example, of Jon Amiel's 1995 film *Copycat*).
[8] In the transition from Freud to Lacan, the stress no longer falls on the *zones* of the psyche but rather on *registers*, which are modes of experience (in the case of the Imaginary and the Symbolic, ways of thinking and of looking).

logics, which they see as bizarre and incomprehensible. Instead, conjunctive logics do not aim to erase disjunctive logics, but rather to include them, to make them work to their own advantage.

Conjunctive logics lean on, are supported by—*Anlehnung* is a fundamental Freudian concept—disjunctive logics; not, however, in the same way as my computer is supported by my desk (this is a separative relationship), but in the way sexual drives, which are more flexible, lean inventively on the (more rigid) impulses of self-preservation.[9] If this were not so, if flexibility aimed to destroy rigidity (an objective that is in any case unattainable), the result would be a bad ductility, an inferior form of polytropia.

4. Lesser and greater flexibility—The logical difference between Spielberg and Shakespeare

We have moved on from identity to the modes of identity. This passage implies a revolution in logic, the end of the monopoly of rigid logics, an enterprise attempted (almost never explicitly) on various occasions by Heraclitus, Montaigne, Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger, etc. Each of these thinkers tried a different path in order to break down the dominion of rigidity over the human spirit.

Why is this enterprise so difficult? Why is the notion of flexibility so difficult to develop? It is evident empirically: there are flexible objects, flexible behaviours, etc. One frequently finds oneself in situations where one invites another person to be less rigid, that is more flexible, about something. In contemporary society, flexibility often appears as something positive, an asset, a resource. The extent to which the term *flexibility* can be applied appears to be even wider if one considers some of its synonyms: *ductility*, *elasticity*, *plasticity*. Brain plasticity was discovered a few decades ago.

The times seem ripe for a new philosophical paradigm: the old categories (one and multiple, property-based and mereological, for example) do not disappear, but come to occupy a lower rank. The primacy of flexibility implies the ascent of new categories, such as divided/undivided, dense/articulated. However, the paradigm of flexibility cannot come into existence nor can it affirm itself unless a *modal revolution* takes place. Logical pluralism—and the conflictual distinction between the modes of coincidence and of non-coincidence—is a decisive aspect of this revolution.[10]

I now wish to argue that this turn is necessary. What is flexibility, if we examine it from the conceptual point of view? Is it a property? It is not a property such as being yellow or weighing 2 kg; rather, it is a *dispositional property*. According to Ryle, "to possess a dispositional property is not to be in a particular state, or to undergo a particular change; it is to be bound or liable to be in a particular state, or to undergo a particular change, when a particular state is realised" (94). Fragility, for example, is not a property that glass possesses independently of the circumstances in which it actually manifests itself, but rather its predisposition to break under certain circumstances. As regards flexibility, can it be defined as a predisposition that manifests itself *only* under the circumstances that impose it? Our description must necessarily branch out: we may calculate the force through which a solid object (for example a bullet) will perforate or shatter a car window, but a much more complex (and to a certain extent aleatory) analysis will be necessary in order to judge whether a human being will persist in a certain attitude or will prove to be ductile, willing to change, negotiate, etc. We should furthermore distinguish between a prevalently

---

[9] See Freud's *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis*.
[10] For this part of my research, see again Bottiroli, *La ragione flessibile*.

defensive, or adaptive, ductility in which the subject is in any case forced to suffer someone else's initiatives, and an active ductility, which aims to transform a situation.

Flexibility therefore turns out to be related to the dimension of the possible: and because possibility is a modal category, it follows that flexibility ought to be examined from the same perspective. However, the classic theory of modality as it is expounded, for example, in the *Critique of Pure Reason,* appears to allow no room for flexibility. At least not unless we believe there is an equivalence between flexibility and possibility, which is false, in that we may multiply the possibilities of the rigid without leaving the field of rigidity itself. Let us imagine, as a simple and straightforward example, that a prisoner is allowed to change his cell every day. This individual will live in 365 different cells in the course of a year: has he therefore regained his freedom?

Therefore, the variations of the multiple do not guarantee the emergence of flexibility. Similarly, and this consideration regards aesthetic experience, we may infinitely vary a stereotype without it losing its hardness, its schematicity. It will nevertheless remain a stereotype, that is a potential vehicle for *bêtise.*

We are now in a position to understand why the theory of possible worlds has not constituted an authentic innovation on the conceptual plane, and also why, after an initial phase of enthusiasm, it has actually offered very few *stimuli* to literary analysis: this theory emphasizes multiplication of rigidity but offers no scope for flexibility. This happens because the notion of possibility remains the traditional one, that is subordinate to actuality and to separative logic.

Modal revolution is a philosophical programme (capable of producing extraordinary outcomes in the aesthetic dimension and in the field of textual analysis), which might well adopt, as one of its slogans, Heidegger's "Higher than actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) stands *possibility*" (34). It would, however, be wrong to believe that Heidegger's upturning consists simply in a hierarchical inversion that preserves the old concept of possibility.

Some examples are necessary at this point. I have selected them from a fairly recent neurocognitivist text, *Embodied Visions*, based on the fact that in these cases (as well as a number of other times elsewhere) the author explicitly refers to the notion of flexibility.

> When Indiana Jones confronts the Arab swordsman in *Raiders of the Lost Arc* [Steven Spielberg, 1981], he might have felt fear had he been unarmed, or vigilant self-assertion had he possessed a sword and been a good fighter, but in fact he ends up putting on a show of cool superiority because he has a pistol and is therefore able simply to shoot the Arab swordsman down. Thus, his cognitive evaluation of his possible actions provides flexibility, influencing his emotions in a top-down fashion and thereby determining his final choice of action. . . .Romeo and Juliet must choose between their mutual love and their attachment to their families and clans, and both love and attachment are supported by innate emotions, so that their choice of romantic love is a top-down decision. (Grodal 153)

These examples, naturally, serve only the purpose of teaching, so one should not be ironic about their obviously different degrees of complexity. Grodal, for one, would not deny this. But, equally undoubtedly, I myself would neither dream of juxtaposing these two examples, nor propose to view them as convergent. Why? Perhaps because I am still affectionately attached to the distinction between "high" literature and popular narratives? Or (and this is a hypothesis I should like to justify) such a juxtaposition is only plausible for those who move within that distorting oversimplification which I have called *semi-cognitivism*?

What I should like to draw attention to here is not the self-evident aesthetic difference between Spielberg's film and Shakespeare's play, but rather the *logical difference.* The two

texts are inspired by different styles of thought: in the first separative thought is predominant; in the second conjunctive logic. Conjunctive logic can be defined as *thought based on connections* that manifests itself in numerous processes, amongst which those of rhetoric: is not metaphor a relationship in which one term finds its identity only through another term? Now, if we were to see in the construction of Shakespeare's main characters a conjunctive logic, our evaluation of the role played by rhetorical processes would be diametrically opposite to that of Grodal. Far from slowing down and blocking narrative linearity through presumed lyrical-associative digressions, rhetorical techniques would impart the correct speed to the actions in the plot.

Later we shall try to develop these considerations further. Now I should like to focus attention on the difference in the logical (or logico-ontological) status of the characters: those in Spielberg's film are all property-based characters, describable, that is, in a satisfactory manner through the indication of the properties which characterise them; the protagonists of Shakespeare's play, on the other hand, require the relational and the modal point of view in order to be properly understood. Undoubtedly, nothing prevents us from describing Romeo's and Juliet's identities by listing their properties (youthful, handsome, from Verona, in love, etc.): the outcome of such an operation would not be a lie, but certainly a *fallacy*, where by *fallacy* I mean a truth that is either impoverished, or partially distorted (or both).

If the property-based and mereological models lack heuristic strength in relation to certain identities, this depends on logic: it is because they have been conceived as a function of identity in the mode of coincidence. One fundamental difference between the two texts we are examining here must therefore be the fact that it is only in Shakespeare that we find *limit-surpassing identities*, characters, that is, that do not perfectly adhere to, do not coincide with themselves. We could also call them *self-surpassing identities*.

This is true, or if we prefer, *greater* flexibility: not simply an adaptive flexibility, the choice of the best answer within a range of factual possibilities. How will Indiana Jones react to the arrogant Arab? The excessive show of martial arts, which feels like a quotation (Kung Fu movies, Bruce Lee), paves the way for a comic reaction. This is, undeniably, a very funny scene; but Indiana Jones is a character who coincides with himself, and is unaware of superior flexibility (of the "predisposition", in other words, not to coincide).

5. Limit-surpassing identities: the many modes of the desire to be

The picture is gradually becoming richer. We started by analysing processes of identification on the basis of the relationship between two subjects: thanks to its plasticity, *idem* allows itself to be transformed by *alter*. To the canonical examples mentioned above, many more may be added, such as the relationship of Woody Allen's character with Humphrey Bogart in *Play it again, Sam*. Freud's 1921 essay, however, placed equal importance on another type of identification, that with an object of desire. Love is the mysterious intertwining of the desire to have and the desire to be. All the great love stories describe an unbounded passion, the abolition—the impossible-possible abolition—of what is separative.

There is a third type of limit-surpassing, which apparently regards an individual character, and is therefore more difficult to bring into focus. One encounters it with great frequency in Greek tragedy, as well as in all those texts where the hero's identity is defined by a relationship between extremes. Oedipus, for example, has justly been described as a character void of essence, who oscillates between a superior extreme (he is a hero of knowledge, he who solved the enigma of the Sphinx, etc.: for his fellow citizens, at the

opening of Sophocles' narrative, he is the best of men) and an inferior extreme (he is guilty of parricide and incest, a being whose very presence contaminates the city, from which he must be expelled: he is the worst of men).[11] To the extent that he is composed of this oscillation between extremes, *Oedipus is a limit-surpassing character*: he steps beyond the mean condition in two directions, which, though opposite, do not exclude each other, but intertwine with one another. And what else is the mean condition, the life of the citizens in the polis, seen from the perspective of logic, if not the regime of identity as coincidence?[12]

This two-directional limit-surpassing which forms Oedipus' identity may be visualised through the following diagram:
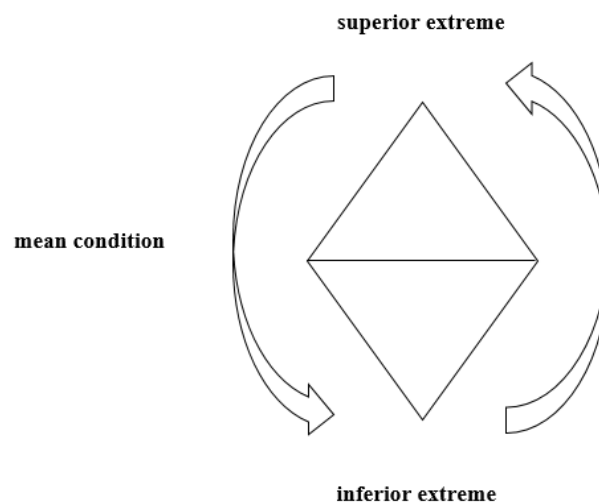

Fig. 2 – Oedipus as a limit-surpassing character.

A property-based description of Oedipus (Theban, son of Laius and Jocasta, parricide, incestuous) appears insufficient in that it does not allow us to understand the paradoxical status of his identity, which is *conjunctive*. Oedipus might have lived out his life in the mean condition in Corinth as the adoptive son of Polybus and Merope; he chose instead to investigate his possibilities, discovering that, to adopt Heidegger's terms, we are not made up of properties, but rather of modes of being (*Weisen zu Sein*), therefore of possibilities. Higher than properties (*Eigenschaften*) stand possibilities (*Möglichkeiten*). Oedipus is a modal character.

To go beyond, to surpass oneself means actuating a metamorphosis. However, in the light of logical pluralism, it is no longer possible to use this term ingenuously: there are many ways in which metamorphosis can take place; not all of these ways necessarily lead to the fulfilment of one's superior possibilities.

I now ought to delve deeper into an important aspect of my theory, which has so far remained implicit. Let us go back to the distinction between confusive and distinctive identifications. The latter always contribute to the growth of the subject, who appropriates certain traits belonging to the model, as well as to the model's perspective and to what

---

[11] See Vernant, "Ambiguity and Reversal."

[12] For this interpretation of the Greek tragedy see my "Liberatore e incatenato: le aporie di Dioniso (e del dionisiaco) da Euripide a Nietzsche."

might be called its *stylistic admixture*; it does not stop, however, once it has imitated and assimilated the model—it surpasses the model and invents itself. One need only think of how the great artists of the Renaissance frequented their master's workshop only for the length of time necessary for their own personalities to fully emerge.

Most probably, in distinctive processes the confusive also plays a part, though this part remains subordinate to the manifestation of complex structures of identity. What happens, instead, when the confusive process prevails? Undoubtedly, a process of alienation takes place: *idem* is absorbed by *alter*. In the first type of identification (subject-model) the model observably exerts a despotic dominance. Does this constitute an obstacle for the theory I am putting forward? A process of estrangement would seem to imply an impoverishment: how does one then explain the origin of complex characters such as Emma Bovary? Indeed one often associates estrangement not only with an impoverishment but also with a greater rigidity: in a confusive relationship, the individual who surpasses him/herself ends up coinciding with another individual. We may say that these individuals run aground, as it were, on another's identity.

This is, in fact, the case. This is not, however an objection to the relational point of view, quite the opposite: it simply confirms the need for a conception capable of describing all forms of subjectivity and not simply those that are property-based or mereological. It also confirms the need for the modal point of view, with the relative distinction between different regimes (separative, distinctive, confusive). As regards the above-mentioned matter of the creation of complex characters, which pivot on confusive relationships and are therefore destined to coincide, albeit with the *alter*, there can only be one correct answer: everything depends on style, that is on the quality of the elaboration a writer is capable of. An author with less stylistic prowess than Flaubert might have presented us with a story capable of deeply interesting us, but with fewer aesthetic virtues, and with a simple character. Think only of Stephen King's *Misery* and Bob Reiner's 1990 film adaptation, which was decidedly better than King's novel, also thanks to Kathy Bates' extraordinary performance. One should, of course, take note, *en passant*, that an actor's charisma is a fundamental ingredient in storytelling and that its stylistic valences carry deep import. What would a Clint Eastwood movie be without Clint Eastwood? Would it have the same force if based only on its plot? The following hypothesis should therefore be investigated: is an actor's charisma (whether in movies or theatre) a factor of non-coincidence? Is the personality of an actor not capable of surpassing the limits of the character?

Some further clarification is necessary. Literature is a form of knowledge; it is an investigation of the possibilities open to human beings, of what, with Montaigne, I like to call the *humaine condition*. In a modal perspective, the human condition must be thought of as a conflict between possibilities, those in which rigidity tends to prevail and those in which flexibility emerges. Interpretation—and this should by now be entirely clear—is an investigation of possibilities, which aims to determine what the superior or necessary possibilities are for a (real or fictional) subject. Such research shapes the drive towards extremes, prefiguring concrete actions.

Therefore, from Euripides down to Lars Von Trier, we encounter characters who surpass the mean condition, and who perform actions that arouse our immediate disapproval. We cannot approve of a mother killing her children, especially when this gesture expresses the desire for revenge of wounded narcissism (as in Euripides' *Medea*). We cannot approve of the behaviour of a wife, who agrees to have sexual relationships with other men in order to recount these to her paralized husband, who is capable of experiencing eros only in his imagination (as in Von Trier's 1996 *Breaking the Waves*).

These works lead us beyond the Law, understood as an imperative. Nevertheless, we are forced to recognise that the choices these women made were necessary choices,[13] in that—under the auspices of Nietzsche and of Lacan—we progress from an ethics of Law to an *ethics of form*.

In order to make this transition, an interpretative mind is needed, a mind capable of employing different theories of subjectivity and desire, and which has at its disposal a well-stocked tool box. The interpretative mind is capable of distinguishing the modes of identity as well as the different modes of coincidence and non-coincidence.

6. *Polytropos Odysseus* is not at all like a Swiss army knife—From Homer to Zelig

The interpretative mind distinguishes between greater and lesser flexibility, as well as between good and bad flexibility. The two distinctions cross paths. There evidently exist good forms of minor, adaptive, flexibility; this can be exemplified by certain objects, such as Grodal's Swiss army knife, which may serve various purposes. Nevertheless, a Swiss army knife will always coincide with itself. The same thing cannot be said for limit-surpassing subjects (both in social reality and in fiction).

So far we have considered three types of limit-surpassing identity, which regard the relationship between a subject and a model, that between a subject and its object of desire, and that which is spurred on towards two extremes. It is implicit in my theoretical perspective that limit-surpassing characters are complex characters—and that they acquire such complexity thanks to their flexibility (although in the tragic hero flexibility is joined to the other extreme, the space where irreversible decisions are made).

Do other types exist? Are we not forgetting—an unforgivable oversight—one of the characters that most fully represent strategic flexibility and intelligence? Odysseus, the hero of *metis*. In order to show more clearly how conjunctive logic works, it was necessary first to describe other types; however, our theory would remain incomplete if it were incapable of giving an account of *polytropos* Odysseus, the man "of many turns." It is at least necessary to state the terms of the issue.

It could be maintained that Odysseus himself has a model, that is the goddess who remains closest to him throughout his adventures; men are "divine" to the extent that they try to be like the gods.[14] It would, however, be restrictive to confine Odysseus within the first typology we have described, as it would mean focusing exclusively on the hero's cunning exploits. *Metis* is not merely cunning intelligence (*la ruse des Grecs*, in Detienne and Vernant's translation), but flexible reason. It is not merely an instrumental, or behavioural, intelligence, although it expresses itself through extremely effective actions.

Undoubtedly, the actions of the great strategists embody one of the highest forms of intelligence. The mind's flexibility is not a dispositional property like the fragility of glass or the solubility of sugar: it is not a simple property. Carl von Clausewitz described the combination of many abilities within the strategic mind as follows:

> Once it has been determined, from the political conditions, what a war is meant to achieve
> and what it can achieve, it is easy to chart the course. But great strength of character, as well

---

[13] For an interpretation centred on the possibilities of the character, see Eleonora Fracalanza's unpublished dissertation, "Il paradosso di Medea: una lettura modale della tragedia di Euripide."

[14] "Athena is a sort of divine double of Odysseus"; "The twinship of goddess and man" (Paduano 61-62).

as great lucidity and firmness of mind, is required in order to follow through steadily, to carry out the plan, and not to be thrown off course by thousands of diversions. Take any number of outstanding men, some noted for intellect, others for their acumen, still others for boldness or tenacity of will: not one may possess the combination of qualities needed to make him a greater than average commander. (134-35)

A compound of personal qualities—a heterogeneity, a happy and unrepeatable admixture: a particular virtue that is periodically unlearned; this happens to the greatest strategists.[15] Unmistakeably, this admixture is recognizable in the mind of Odysseus, especially in the episodes dealing with Polyphemos and with the enactment of his revenge against the Suitors. The ingenuity deployed by the Greek hero in finding a way to escape from the cave he and his comrades are trapped in, at the mercy of the Cyclops, was highlighted by Brian Boyd in his essay *On the Origin of Stories*; it is impossible not to agree with him in his evaluation of the Homeric mind as more complex than had been previously recognised by scholars such as Bruno Snell. Is there any reader of the *Odyssey* who has not admired the clarity of mind with which Odysseus decides not to kill Polyphemos but rather to blind him because he needs the Cyclops' strength to break out of the cave? And who doesn't remember his idea of lashing the rams together in threes and concealing his comrades under their bellies, so as to escape the notice of their fierce enemy? But all these acts of cunning would be useless, if Odysseus had not found the way to elude the retaliation of the other Cyclopes, who come running up on hearing Polyphemus' howls. Strategically, this is the decisive piece of cunning; its nature is linguistic, though Boyd simply adds it to the list of Odysseus' other ingenious actions. And yet, this affords an opportunity to take stock of how pointless it would be to set the mentalist turn against the linguistic turn, as language allows the human mind to perform a formidable leap forward and attain a level of much higher complexity.[16] Let us examine the narrative segments in which the cunning of Odysseus is most clearly visible.

When Polyphemus asks the hero his name, Odysseus, with prodigious intuition, almost as if the entire plan of his revenge were clearly outlined in his mind, tells the Cyclops that his name is Nobody (*Outis*). Later, when the other Cyclops come running to the cave, having heard the cries of Polyphemus, the following exchange takes place:

---

[15] I have always been struck by this particular episode in Plutarch's account of the war against Pompey in his *Life of Caesar*: during a skirmish before the enemy fortifications, Caesar's soldiers came off worst and their captain's life was put at risk. "Caesar saw his affairs that day in so bad a posture, that after Pompey, either through too much caution, or the caprice of fortune, instead of giving the finishing stroke to so great an action, stopped as soon as he had shut up the enemy within their entrenchments, and sounded a retreat, he said to his friends as he withdrew, 'this day victory would have declared for the enemy, if they had had a general who knew how to conquer.' He sought repose in his tent, but it proved the most melancholy night of his life; for he gave himself up to endless reflections on his own misconduct in the war. . . ." (*Plutarch's Lives* 509). How could such imprudence possibly have been committed? This is the thought that torments Caesar in his tent at night. It should be underscored that, unlike other techniques, which, once learned are never unlearned, military art—like all strategic art—is a type of knowledge that may be constantly unlearned. *No one is an absolute master of strategy*. The rareness of mistakes amongst great strategists is the fruit of a mixture of abilities, which a superior personality is capable of renewing with relative ease. But mistakes, even terrible ones, are far from unknown even amongst those who are most capable and experienced.

[16] The more lucid cognitivists do not, of course, fail to recognize this. One of their greatest limits, however, remains their conception of language as "undivided".

'What, Polyphemus, what in the world's the trouble?
Roaring out in the godsent night to rob us of our sleep.
Surely no one's rustling your flocks against your will—
surely no one's trying to kill you now by fraud or force!'

'*Nobody* [*Outis*], friends'—Polyphemus bellowed back from his cave—
'Nobody's killing me now by fraud and not by force!'

'If you're alone,' his friends boomed back at once,
'and nobody's [*mé tis*] trying to overpower you now—look,
it must be a plague sent here by mighty Zeus
and there's no escape from *that*.
You'd better pray to your father, Lord Poseidon.'

They lumbered off, but laughter filled my heart
to think how nobody's name—my great cunning stroke [*metis*]—
had duped them one and all. (*Odyssey* 9.450-63)

Odysseus' intelligence is described as *metis*: he embodies this ideal of cunning. Here, as Derrida observed, he is the Metis of Outis. Homer plays more than once on these words (*outis, mé tis, metis*). Should we see this as a delicate little exercise in intransitive aesthetics? No—or better—it is more than this: there can be no artistic beauty without intransitivity.[17] What counts the most, however, in this case, is the strategic aspect. "By presenting himself as Nobody, he at once names and effaces himself" (89). In Odysseus' cunning, therefore, there is something paradoxical, and paradoxes (unchained paradoxes) are expressions of the fecundity of conjunctive logic, as well as of non-coincidence in its essentially strategic sense, which is the capacity of not being where one is.

These are the two superior forms of flexibility as non-coincidence: the *not being where one is,* the ability to dodge your enemy's blows so that he lunges at a void, vainly exhausting his strength or even turning it against himself—this is the *strategic* version; and *not being what one is,* the vocation, that is (not merely the predisposition) not to coincide with oneself—this is non-coincidence in the *existential* sense.

What we have described as *greater* flexibility is not a simple matter. Moreover, as we have observed, it is a virtue one tends to lose, to unlearn, periodically. This is confirmed by Odysseus' lack of prudence, when he gives in to the temptation to "leave his signature," as it were, once he has achieved his aim, thus putting his own and his comrades' lives at risk. Twice he derides the Cyclops and twice his ship is almost hit by the great rocks Polyphemus hurls in the direction of his voice. Odysseus' love for his own name, for his own identity, is stronger than danger: "'Cyclops— / if any man on the face of the earth should ask you / who blinded you, shamed you so—say Odysseus, / raider of cities, *he* gouged out your eye, / Laertes' son who makes his home in Ithaca!'" (*Odyssey* 9.558-62). In these words we detect the emergence of identity as *object of desire*.

But is Odysseus the hero of strategic flexibility alone? It seems not: his *polytropia* extends also to the existential dimension, and it is this aspect that explains the inexhaustible fascination this character inspires, his virtualities, as it were, which are then fully displayed by scores of other writers, from Dante to Joyce. It is impossible to pretend that the *Odyssey* is not a voyage of return: it is not, however, a voyage of "restoration," as some rather hurriedly tend to believe. Odysseus' journey begins on the island of Ogygia, where he is held prisoner by a beautiful nymph, who wishes to give him the gift of immortality: *Ogygia represents the possibility of coincidence*, the possibility of remaining eternally with

---

[17] In his *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790) Kant spoke of "pleasure without self-interest."

oneself. The true plot of the *Odyssey,* therefore, from the point of view of logic, is the upturning of what we see from a naively narrative point of view: Odysseus sacrifices the *jouissance* of definitive coincidence and chooses to run the risk of losing himself; in doing so he also chooses, however, the possibility of once again putting his flexible mind to the test—he renounces immortality so as not to renounce his *metis*.

The *nostos* is not simply inspired by homesickness. Naturally, Odysseus does not know what situation awaits him at Ithaca; we, however,—because of the way *The Odyssey* was conceived by its author— know that the hero's agonistic talent will once more be called upon, and when we reach book 21 we fully understand that he is about to draw the bow of his mind and not merely the great bow that Penelope's wooers are unable to bend.

The praising of flexibility, the encomium of its unique admixture of intellectual and emotive components, must not induce us to minimise the possibilities of its inferior forms. I am not referring here to its minor, and in any case positive modality, but rather to its inferior modality, that which was condemned by Socrates and Plato. For centuries, the bad form of *polytropia* has dragged along with itself the good form. That excesses of flexibility are to be condemned, as they fuel cynicism, opportunism, the sterility of purely verbal art, etc., should appear obvious; but what exactly is an *excess* of flexibility? Should we not perhaps consider it a defect? A form of impoverished flexibility? A version of rigidity masquerading as multiplicity?

The connection between rigidity and the comic was acutely analysed by Bergson in his essay *Le rire*. Bergson believed that laughter punishes the increasing rigidity of those from whom society, as it perfects itself, requires "an ever-growing flexibility in adaptation" ("une souplesse d'adaptation de plus en plus grande"; 482). It is impossible not to detect a strong ambiguity in such a proposition, at least from our point of view: should we believe that society is entirely on the side of fluidity, of *élan vital*, and therefore that it encourages greater flexibility, non-coincidence? Or does society—which, moreover, also needs rigidity (disciplinary education, etc.)—only require a lesser flexibility? When Bergson states that the function of laughter is "to convert rigidity into plasticity, to readapt the individual to the whole, in short, to round off the corners wherever they are met with" ("de corriger la raideur en souplesse, de réadapter chacun à tous, enfin d'arrondir les angles"; 472), it is impossible not to see that the risk is the triumph of the mean course. In any case, humour does not only characterise rigidity, but also the excess of flexibility: one of the most convincing proofs of this is Woody Allen's *Zelig*. The protagonist is a chameleon individual, who with amazing rapidity takes on the ideas, the mentality and even the physical appearance of the person next to whom he happens to find himself: he is therefore a *reactive* subject, in Nietzsche's acceptation of the term. Zelig's relationship with alterity is figured as permanent estrangement: he is perpetually sucked up by the other, this is the confusive taken to its furthest possible extreme. Zelig's identity consists almost uniquely of identifications.

This is therefore a *relational* character par excellence; the comic version of Heidegger's statement that "Higher than actuality stands possibility." As a matter of fact, the drive towards the possible—Zelig can turn into anyone else—encounters its nemesis in the contingency of actuality, in what amounts to a compulsion towards otherness: Zelig *must* become anyone else. The most flexible of individuals thus becomes the most rigid—a fact that relaunches, or at least invites us to re-examine, Bergson's position. At any rate we should consider Woody Allen's film as an invitation to distinguish between good and bad flexibility.

7. Conclusions

The research programme I have presented here undoubtedly needs to be significantly developed. As this brief overview reaches its conclusion I will try to bring into better focus some of the ideas that have been put forward.

(i) In the absence of a modal conception of identity, debates on the narrative Self will continue to take place in a restricted space and will be able to account for only the simpler forms of subjectivity (the property-based and the mereological).

(ii) It is impossible to analyse complex identities—(and the most complex of all are *limit-surpassing identities*) if we do not deploy a logic of flexibility.

(iii) There is no complex narrative without complex characters. This does not imply that every technique that is apparently either property-based or mereological generates modest aesthetic outcomes. Everything depends on style. The modes through which a character is portrayed still deserve serious scholarly attention.

(iv) The distinction between simple and complex subjects (in reality and in fiction) is characterized by a high degree of plausibility, and may be said to be universally acknowledged; however, the attempts to give a truly satisfactory critical account of this distinction have always appeared inaccurate and inadequate. Certainly from E.M. Forster (*flat* and *round* characters) down to Paul Ricoeur (*idem* and *ipse*) some progress has been made in this direction. Even Ricoeur's theoretical proposal, however, remains too vague, because—although taking inspiration from Heidegger's distinction between *das Gleiche* ("the identical") and *das Selbe* ("the same")—he did not adequately develop the modal point of view, or, for that matter, the relational plane. Interdependence between subjects (*Soi-même comme un autre*, or *Oneself as Another*, is the title of a book he published in 1990) is seen by Ricoeur as an indispensable interaction, but there is no investigation of the processes of identification or crossing borders.

One of the recurrent mistakes in the construction of a typology derives from a caricature-like notion of rigidity, which is confused with immobility or in any case reduced to no more than that. The characters that Forster calls *flat* and Ricoeur defines as *idem* are in effect "completely given" characters right from the start (in a logico-ontological, not in a cognitive sense); characters that is, without any development, incapable of transformation. However, as we have seen, if a transformation only involves a replacement of properties or parts, it implies no surpassing of the self.

Ipse, on the other hand, is who remains faithful to the promise. What promise? That of not renouncing one's higher possibilities. Would not this, however, mean to desire non-coincidence? While to some extent Ricoeur may be said to wish for the route of modalities to be explored, he does not clearly point it out. Thus *idem* and *ipse* remain two versions of identity-coincidence.

(v) The theory of styles of thought allows us to put aside both the debates that disparagingly juxtapose "high" and "popular" literature, and the attempts to erase such a distinction:[18] it also allows us to understand why traditional narrative has not been destroyed by the extraordinary experimentation of the XXth century and indeed continues to produce engaging stories. The first step to take in order to set out properly the terms of the problem is to admit that our Ego (or our Self) is made up of numerous Egos (or Selves);

---

[18] An essential distinction that is in no way determined by class prejudice. Naturally, we are now capable of elaborating it in a new manner, both from the logical (see section 4), and from the aesthetic point of view. It seems to me very positive that there should be also amongst authors close to cognitivism, those who are willing to recognize different degrees of complexity in narrative texts: Jonathan Gottschal expresses his concerns for the future of "a world awash with junk story" (197).

and that the Ego that derives pleasure from linear and *mainstream* narratives is not the same Ego that gets excited when reading Proust, Joyce or Kafka. Nothing stands in the way of our *changing Ego,* of allowing, that is, one Ego to emerge in the place of another, from within the plurality that we ourselves are.

(vi) Why do linear narratives continue to be so successful with the reading public, and may be appreciated at certain times even by those who would never give up the dimension of non-coincidence? Why do simple characters—Dumas' heroes or Marvel's superheroes—continue to be loved? Isn't their identity too poor, as well as significantly rigid? Why do we prefer simplicity and rigidity to complexity and flexibility?

Which is a bit like asking: why is our mind prevalently separative? Why are our lives so rarely creative?

(vii) Our experience is a flux, and in order to exert proper control over it we must first of all introduce articulations (subdivisions, segmentations, etc.): and because the aim is to stabilise an unstable reality, to govern an unbearable changeability, human beings recur "mostly and for the most part" (to quote one of the ways in which Heidegger described quotidianity) to separative, that is rigid, articulations. They choose the principle of coincidence: every entity must necessarily be identical to itself. This does not exclude the possibility that it may evolve or transform, but it demands that they should be subjected to a style of logics. In order to live, men have had to impose the regime of identity-coincidence onto the flux of experience.

Such a genealogy of the mind derives from Nietzsche.

What is a *separative narrative*? It is a form of linear narration that is segmentable and restful. It corresponds only to *one* of our styles of thought (and is the only style studied by cognitivists—which is why we have renamed them *semi-cognitivists*): it is, however, statistically, the style we most commonly use. As we said at the beginning, we do not always interpret; in fact, most of the time our mental operations are standardised; the interpretative mind, thus, is *also* the standard mind, but at the same time it is intermingled with other styles of thought.

Works Cited

Bergson, Henri. *Le rire*. 1900. *Oeuvres*. Ed. André Robinet. Paris: PUF, 1970. 383-485. Print.

Bottiroli, Giovanni. "An Introduction to (Conjunctive) Scissional Logic." *Paradoxes*. Ed. Stefano Arduini. Roma: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2011. 15-60. Print.

---. "Bakhtin: the richness of theory. Against the poverty of 'contextual studies' (cultural studies etc.)." *Proceedings of the Fourteenth International Mikhail Bakhtin Conference: Bakhtin: Through the Test of Great Time*. 4-8 July 2011. Forthcoming.

---. "Identità come identificazione: nei film (e non negli spettatori)." Imago 2 (2010): 51-72. Print.

---. *La ragione flessibile. Modi d'essere e stili di pensiero*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2013. Print.

---. "Liberatore e incatenato: le aporie di Dioniso (e del dionisiaco) da Euripide a Nietzsche." *Enthymema* 14 (2016): 51-81. Web. 20 July 2016.

Boyd, Brian. *On the Origin of Stories: Evolution, Cognition and Fiction*. Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 2009. Print.

Cavell, Stanley. "The Avoidance of Love: A Reading of *King Lear*." 1967. *Disowning Knowledge In Seven Plays of Shakespeare*. Updated ed. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. 39-123. Print.

Clausewitz, Carl von. *On war*. 1832-34. Trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2007. Print.

Derrida, Jacques. *Memoires of the Blind: The Self-Portrait and Other Ruins*. 1990. Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993. Print.

Detienne, Marcel, and Jean-Pierre Vernant. *Cunning Intelligence in Greek Culture and Society*. 1974. Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978. Print.

Fracalanza, Eleonora. "Il paradosso di Medea: una lettura modale della tragedia di Euripide." Diss. Università degli Studi di Bergamo, 2016. Print.

Freud, Sigmund. *Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis (Part III)*. 1916-17. Standard Edition. Vol. 16. London: Hogarth, 1963. Print.

Gallagher, Shaun, and Dan Zahavi. *The Phenomenological Mind*. London: Routledge, 2008. Print.

Gottschall, Jonathan. *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2012. Print.

Grodal, Torben. *Embodied Visions*. New York: Oxford UP, 2009. Print.

Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. 1927. Trans. Joan Stambaugh. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996. Print.

Homer. *The Odyssey*. Trans. Robert Fagles. London: Penguin, 2006. Print.

Joyce, James. *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. 1916. London: Penguin, 1971. Print.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Beyond Good and Evil*. 1886. New York: Vintage, 1966. Print.

---. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. 1883-85. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006. Print.

Paduano, Guido. *La nascita dell'eroe. Achille, Odisseo, Enea: le origini della cultura occidental*e. Milano: Rizzoli, 2008. Print.

Pinker, Steven. *The Stuff of Thought*. New York: Viking, 2007. Print.

Plutarch's Lives. Trans. and ed. John Langhorne and William Langhorne. New York: Harper, 1859. Print.

Ryle, Gilbert. *The Concept of Mind*. 1949. New York: Routledge, 2009. Print.

Valesio, Paolo. *Ascoltare il silenzio*. Bologna: il Mulino, 1986. Print.

Vernant, Jean-Pierre. "Ambiguity and Reversal: On the Enigmatic Structure of Oedipus Rex." Jean-Pierre Vernant and Pierre Vidal-Naquet. *Myth and Tragedy in Ancient Greece*. Trans. Janet Lloyd. New York: Zone Books, 1990. 113-40. Print.

Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Philosophical Grammar*. 1931-34. Oxford: Blackwell, 1974. Print.

---. *Zettel*. 1930-48. Oxford: Blackwell, 1967. Print.