

**Blanchot And Nancy: The translatability of these two
Voices,
Into the Same Point-of-View.**

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**Blanchot e Nancy: a tradutibilidade das duas vozes em
uma**

Resumo: No início do século XXI um diálogo entre literatura e filosofia assume bases mais flexíveis. Uma “escavação” nos limites da filosofia vem sendo feita por filósofos contemporâneos e críticos literários. Os nomes de Maurice Blanchot e Jean-Luc Nancy assumem alto patamar nestes estudos. Os dois estudiosos franceses assumem que só o conhecimento e a razão não bastam na empreitada para o elucidar do ser humano, e que o singular de cada indivíduo pode ser traduzido na percepção e no desvendar do que o ser possui de mais sensível em sua essência. Essa nova abordagem na compreensão do ser exige que várias antigas estruturas sejam quebradas e uma nova forma de ver, sentir, pensar e entender o indivíduo seja elaborada. Assim sendo, um mergulho nas águas da literatura levará a percebermos diferenças e pluralidades que segundo Blanchot e Nancy são a chave para um movimento na direção do desconhecido, do não velado, ou do subrepticamente dito. A voz de um outro se ouve através deste novo processo: é uma alteridade que se faz presente necessariamente quando ‘la pensée dérobée’ ou o pensamento que vem furtivamente é observado.

Palavras chave: não-saber, angústia, pensamento nu, alteridade, literatura, filosofia, singularidade, pluralidade, voz,

Key-words: unknown, anguish, unveiled thought, alterity, literature, philosophy, singularity, plurality, voice.

In the beginning of this Century, Literature and Philosophy have been demonstrating to have something in common. Philosophy – which historically assumed a place of an “absolute control” — has been now facing the moment of “non savoir”. Literature — that was being observed as a place of decontrol, instead, is now opened for Philosophy as a space for an adventure to the “*thinkable*”.

A side by side dialogue between Philosophy and Literature is susceptible of happening without moral supremacy, foregone conclusions and those old controversial disputes thanks to the readings of contemporary French authors, such as, for example, Jacques Derrida who brought about the perspective that Categories such as “the thinking”, “the silence”, “the sense”, “the neutral”, “the other”, “the anguish” and “the death” could now be seen through another perspective.

Various philosophers have been trying to show that Literature and Philosophy can be seen, nowadays, as sisters, and these researchers demonstrate to be interested on the “*excavation of the Philosophy limitations*”, eagerly desiring to prove that these two disciplines are related between themselves at the fertile soil of the Language, where the word demonstrates, inside any literary gender, possibilities of finding much knowledge. Medeiros de Carvalho (1997, p.78) brightens our mind saying that:

The Literature, in its autonomy of saying everything and of disturbing the resorts of control of the general interpretation, inspires the philosopher to question the Philosophy’s own limits. 1

To illustrate the dilemma that the contemporary Philosophy experiences, Medeiros de Carvalho mentions the thinking of the philosopher Jacques Derrida (1992, p.389), showing that Philosophy will have to learn how to overcome the limits without being possessive about itself.

The Philosophy is constantly invited to transgress the frontiers of its knowledge and to question itself about its own limits, but also about its own destination. Philosophy knows nothing and, therefore, from this point-of-view, it does not know its own destination either. This is the reason why, sometimes, it goes in a quest of other types of knowledge, speeches, lectures —*one would say— a bit blind*, although with plenty of freedom. Philosophy is, most of the time, trying to overcome its frontiers and having the opportunity to go beyond its own limits. 2

Due to the large number of ideas offered by Literature, it is believed that it would take Philosophy — through a different and peculiar *key*—, to observe the birth of a new laboratory, which would provide an opening to the understanding of several

philosophical questions such as ethic, moral and so forth... One could learn, then, that Literature, through its various genders, could well conduct us to appreciations that are the target of philosophical categories. In a tragedy, for instance, there is always a cathartic moment, and, due to it, the opening of a way to the philosophical understanding will happen in this space. Ricoeur (1991:193), in a chapter about *The Ethic Implications of the Narrative*, mentions Benjamin's thinking, where he writes about "*The Narrator*":

(...) W. Benjamin remembers that, in its most primitive way, still distinguishable on the epopee and ready to extinguish in the novel, the art of narrating is the art of exchanging experiences; by experiences he understands not the scientific observation but the popular exercise of the practical wisdom. Now, this wisdom does not skip from carrying appreciations, evaluations that are targets for teleological and deontological categories...3

In order to exemplify the possibility of thinking this measure between Literature and Philosophy, we will recall two modern essayists. One, Jean-Luc Nancy; the other, Maurice Blanchot. The latter has been considered by the most radical critics such as John Gregg, Professor of Princeton, as the great "*spokesman for the post-modern legacy*".

Blanchot comes intelligently to show us, most probably due to the friendship with his friend George Bataille, that the contact of opposite poles is essential for the access to a more profound knowledge. Jean-Luc Nancy as well as Maurice Blanchot are inserted in a very recent theoretical-narrative approach that shows a denial to the old philosophy and also to the prejudices the human beings were doomed to strive to accordingly to some philosophical teachings. This way, they are concerned about giving a rebirth to Philosophy, and they are willing to lead this discipline to something beyond what History had forseen, i.e., what was already known. Under this point-of-view, both Blanchot and Nancy are inviting Philosophy to cleanse itself in the waters of Literature, i.e., they ask for a break of order or, better saying yet, both authors display a refusal towards the platonic metaphysic. Their ideas sound as an appeal to a visit to this new world in which the Literature shares everything and does not monopolize anything. Lévinas (1975:47) mentions the thinking of the writer Françoise Collin, who studies Maurice Blanchot's works, as we can see below:

(...) l'exercice littéraire, parle Blanchot, est un exercice d'écriture dont Françoise Collin montre clairement la rupture avec l'ordre, avec le rassemblement, avec la collection des termes, avec leur synchronie, avec le logos (...) Françoise Collin, en exposant les thèses de Blanchot, laisse dans son espace inenglobable la littérature, comme s'isolant de toute philosophie. La signification que Blanchot prête à la littérature, met en question la superbe du discours philosophique — ce discours englobant— capable de tout dire jusqu'à son propre échec. 4

Nancy (1996:13), following Blanchot's perspective, does not feel ashamed to saying, in the *AVERTISSEMENT* of his book, that it is necessary to change the role the old Occidental Philosophy have been performing through the times, and will demonstrate that he wants to build new bases for this innovative philosophical approach, as we will see below:

(...) Ce text ne dissimule pas l'ambition de refaire toute la "philosophie première" en lui donnant pour fondation le "singulier pluriel" de l'être. Ce n'est pas une ambition de l'auteur, c'est la nécessité de la chose même, et de notre histoire. J'espère, au moins, faire sentir cette nécessité. 5

As a consequence of this study it was possible to perceive that the two philosophers have been sensitive to the need of a movement towards the unknown. Both Maurice Blanchot and Jean-Luc Nancy demonstrate the need to rethink the human existence, freeing it from prejudices that necessarily lead to the discrimination of the "other", "the different. This way, both French writers point out to the human beings' necessity of intimacy with the *difference* and the *plurality*. Nancy (2001:165) calls our attention to a new approach on how to think the existence, not based on the old thinking any longer, which is rooted upon a static knowledge. However; the existence should be seen from the point-of-view of the need of *communication*, which should come to surface through the understanding of an "unveiled thought", a kind of thought that would bring a renewed individuality:

(...) La pensée dérobée est identique à la communication, et l'identité des deux est la nuit du non-savoir la nudité et dans le désir de la nudité de l'être. 6

Maurice Blanchot and Jean-Luc Nancy offer amplitude to Literature when they leave the Occidental Philosophy aside because it does not work on its universality, throwing out what is different and singular. Both authors have been giving an emphasis to the rising of Literature, and they also want to bring about the possibility of thinking categories such as “the other”, “the different” and the “alterity”. It would become the starting point of an improvement to be given to the process of the knowledge of the humanity.

For Blanchot, the essential in Literature is the fact that it will be able to— all of a sudden and through a “*happening*” of no importance at all—, to become a kind of teaching without any need of philosophical analysis or interpretation. And this is the way the philosophical question ends by intruding itself within the literary narratives which, by themselves, they have their own answers, being an authentic and strong meditation. Blanchot believed that the action of writing was a radical act of creation, impregnated by the “*divine*”.

On the same way, Jean-Luc Nancy (2000:138) writes about the question of literature and the divine voice reaffirming, this way, what Blanchot had developed in his writings, i.e., stating that at this very moment, in which the author’s word is invaded by the scripture, one may observe that he is not the one to write but, instead, the divine being inside of him who is serving to a new existing inscription to be always renewed.

The “*subject of the sense*”, “*la pensée dérobée*”⁷ will be the important points of Nancy’s texts, that will say that the sense must have a resonance and this will be an experience that shall happen within the opened space of the possibility, in an inter-relation of engagement, where each individuality should communicate under a mutual understanding, according to the French writer,

L’écriture est le nom de cette résonance de la voix: l’appel la rencontre, et l’engagement que supposent l’appel et à la rencontre. En ce sens, toute écriture est l’engagée” en un sens qui précède la notion d’un engagement politique ou moral, au service d’une cause. Écrire est engager la voix dans la résonance qui la fait humaine: mais “humane” ne signifie dans ce cas rien d’autre que “ce qui se tient —ou ce qui arrive— dans la résonance. 8

Blanchot, as well, will not be concerned about what the literary or philosophical tradition had denied or left as practice. The author will show, definitively, that his attention was turned to the relationship between the subjectivity and the *other* or alterity. Blanchot was willing to know what it would bring of positive, i.e., what the inspiration for a poem could come to reveal from the *other* in ourselves.

The author would then be found involved with the concept of the alterity at this stage of the process. John Gregg (1994:433), who has read of “*L’attente l’oubli*,” a book which is part of *Maurice Blanchot’s* fictional works, notices—in relation to the narrative of the book mentioned—, that

...although the narrator is absolutely alone, his writing has the effect of filling his room with voices that belong to many different beings and implicates him in a rapport with alterity that is played out in the text of the direct dialogues between his alter ego, the male lead, also a writer, and a woman, the mysterious, unknowable, unseizeable figure of dehors. 9

Blanchot has ever said in his books on literary criticism that poetry is a large space where self knowledge might happen, because it is linked to the “*nonsavoir*”, to the silence and to the true act of creation. In other words, the poetry is for the French writer a channel to the pureness that is characteristic of the knowledge and it is also linked with the divine and the alterity represented by the voice that always keeps waiting to be heard, as we will read here:

THE POEM — the Literature — seems to be linked to a voice that cannot stop itself because it does not only speak, but it is, instead! The poem is not the voice, it is the beginning, and it will never — by itself — begin, but always say time after time the new and always begin once again. Nevertheless, the poet is the one who listened to this voice, the one who became its interpreter, the mediator, the one who imposed the silence by pronouncing the voice (...) The poet, the one who writes, the creator, would never be able to express his work from the essential stillness; the poet, alone, would never be able to evoke the pure word from the beginning, from where it lies – in the origin. That is the reason why the work can only be considered as a work only when it converts itself in the opened intimacy of someone who wrote it, and of someone who read it, the violently unveiled space by the mutual contestation of the “power of saying” and the “power of hearing”. And he who writes is equally the one who heard the ceaseless and the perpetual voice (...). 10

Blanchot wants to revert this proceeding of general acceptance of a literature that does not lead to discoveries. For this reason He pulls the classical concepts down in order to re-inscribe the poetry, exposing what must be a poetic language, – a place

of an intricate and ceaseless movement where the sound, the “*power of hearing*” and the sense, “*being the channel*”, should always be present at the moment of this new inspiration or I would say, the moment of the perception of an alterity.

We come to the conclusion that not only for Blanchot but also for Nancy, the role that the spirit or the divine perform in the writer’s thoughts is a poetic work without guarantees. It will be involved in the pureness and in the violence of a “*inner experience*”, essential to this process. This inner solitary literary space that aims the “communication” is the crucial point of the work of these two writers.

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Notes

1 Medeiros de Carvalho, L. F. A 1997 p. 78.

2 Derrida, J. Points de suspension. 1997, p. 79.

3 Benjamin, W. 1991, p. 193.

4 Trad. “ O exercício literário, fala Blanchot, é um exercício de escritura, com relação ao qual, Françoise Collin mostra claramente a ruptura com a ordem, com as terminologias semelhantes, com a sincronia, com o logos (...). Collin, ao expor as teses de Blanchot, deixa neste espaço claro que a literatura não engloba nada, se isolando de toda a filosofia . A significação que Blanchot presta a literatura, coloca em questão a soberba do discurso filosófico – esse discurso englobalizador – capaz de tudo dizer mesmo a contra golpe.” Levinas, E. 1975, p.47.

5 Trad. “ Esse texto não dissimula a ambição de refazer toda a ‘filosofia primeira’ lhe dando por fundação o ‘ singular plural ‘ do ser. Não é uma ambição do autor, é a necessidade da coisa mesma, e de nossa história. Eu espero, ao menos fazer sentir esta necessidade.” Nancy, J.L. 1996, p.13.

6 Trad. “ O pensamento furtivo é idêntico à comunicação, e a identidade dos dois é a noite do não saber da nudez e do desejo da nudez do ser. Nancy, J.L. 2001, p. 164.

7 Trad. “ pensamento furtivo, derrepente vindo à tona “.

8 Trad. “ A escritura é o nome desta ressonância da voz: O apelo ao reencontro, e ao compromisso que supõem o apelo e o reencontro. Nesse sentido, toda escritura é o ‘engajamento’ em um sentido que precede a noção de um engajamento político ou moral, ao serviço de uma causa . Escrever é engajar a voz dentro da ressonância que a faz humana: mas ‘humana’ não significa nesse caso coisa outra que ‘ o que se tem – ou o que ocorre – dentro da ressonância” Nancy, J.L. 2001, p. 169.

9 Gregg, J. 1994, p. 433.

10 Blanchot, M. 1987, p. 21-22.