

THE ENDS OF UNIVERSALISM

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ABSTRACT

This contribution focuses on the philosophical texture of Claudio Corradetti's pluralist and universalist theory of human rights. More precisely, the aim of these notes is to bring to light the *idealistic background* of Corradetti's defence of a pluralist universalism against epistemic-cognitive relativism. In his attempt to secure an appreciation of human rights as devices of the *Verwirklichung* of human ends, taking stock of the limitation of human experience, Corradetti finds himself facing a crucial question: that of the relation with the radical otherness of the *violent*, the figure that persistently refuses to acknowledge the existence of a wholly "revealed truth" – to quote Eric Weil's *Logique de la philosophie*. After the reconstruction of the theoretical terrain in which the book's arguments are carried out – referring, e.g., to the *impasse* affecting the Habermasian distinction between *Verständigung* and *Einverständnis* –, I offer a critical sounding of Corradetti's discourse. At the same time, I stress one of the fascinating philosophical challenges to which the author should now turn his attention, in order to further elaborate his elegant perspective: that of elucidating the relation between the "bodily" predetermination of the reflective dimension, and its projection towards the constitutively intersubjective domain of the "reason-giving".

KEYWORDS

Pluralism, universalism, Hegel, recognition, Habermas

Relativism and Human Rights. A Theory of Pluralist Universalism by Claudio Corradetti is a book that forces us to re-express in unusual ways the relation between man's end, his factual *limit*, and his ends. English, like French with its *fin*, structurally incorporates both concepts, while in Italian there is a doubling marked by a difference in the article ("la" and "il" *fine* respectively). A particularly concentrated expression of this is in one of the essays, *Les fins de l'homme*, that make up Jacques Derrida's *Margins of Philosophy*: "man is that which is in relation to his end, in the fundamentally equivocal sense of the word. And always has been. The transcendental end can appear to itself and be unfolded only on condition of mortality, of a relation to finitude as the origin of ideality".¹ Reason is the *telos* of a

¹ Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. by Alan Bass, University of Chicago Press, Chicago 1982, p. 123.

story, of those *stories* without which it would not even have the terrain to present itself as autonomous exigency i.e. as *ideality* that must be obtained in a difficult and variously arranged processing, in a vast concatenation, as Heidegger would say, of “theoretical behaviour” and “practical behaviour”. But the fact is that if, as the whole of the modern tradition (from Hobbes to Hegel) teaches, the end is the universal, the means must be in keeping with it, must “incorporate it” and, in this, *betraying* its status. The “middle” becomes “*die gebrochene Mitte*”,² something split internally, “the mediated”, “*das Vermittelte*”, since it is what the universal shines through, and the “mediating factor”, “*das Vermittelnde*”, what *negates* the universal as “simple determination”, containing it in a relation, because, says Hegel in the *Science of Logic*, it holds in it “itself and the immediate of which it is the negation within itself”.³

These dizzying speculations are not very different from what one experiences reading Corradetti’s book, as they have a similar aim: that of fixing the sequence that resituates the universal, the *unity* of humankind, outside its “simple determination” and inside its *Verwirklichung*, its “actualization”, which opens it to the relation with the other, the diverse, the alien. The “mediating factor”, “*das Vermittelnde*” are human rights, “bridgeheads” or, as Habermas would put it, a “Janus face”, as they give juridical form or, in the last part of the book, “constitutionalize”, the universalistic substance of the relation, “point to specific interpretive applications, taking into account both the political context of implementation as well as the specificities of the cases to which they are applied”.⁴ But I shall not be giving much attention to this last part. Corradetti’s book is not just a solid and subtly argued theory of human rights – one of the few available on the Italian market – but a sophisticated defence of *pluralist* universalism. The *complexio oppositorum* is evident and should be explained, its underlying philosophical structures brought out. And that is what the following notes intend to do, which will culminate in a problematization of the relation fixed by Corradetti between the “bodily” predetermination of the reflective dimension and its launching itself into discursive forms of recognition.

1 THE RELATION BETWEEN *VERSTÄNDIGUNG* AND *EINVERSTÄNDNIS*, BETWEEN HERMENEUTICS AND DISCURSIVISM

Corradetti begins by tackling immediately one of his main adversaries: epistemic-cognitive relativism. If pluralism has to act as an attribute of universalism it cannot

² See Jan van der Meulen, *Hegel. Die Gebrochene Mitte*, Felix Meiner, Hamburg 1958.

³ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. by George di Giovanni, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2010, pp. 745-746.

⁴ Claudio Corradetti, *Relativism and Human Rights. A Theory of Pluralist Universalism*, Springer, Dordrecht 2022 (2nd ed.), p. XV.

coincide with relativism, without the universal being lost. But how do we drive off the relativistic danger? And, above all, where is it lurking? Corradetti's first, and already crucial, response to this recalls the difference, set out by Habermas, between "reaching understanding" (*Verständigung*) and "mutual acceptance of a validity claim" (*Einverständnis*):

Any form of agreement must presuppose a pattern of mutual understanding which can either proceed to justification, or to a suspension of a process leading to agreement. In practical discourses, the possibility of rejecting contrasting beliefs depends upon the satisfaction of a preliminary condition oriented to the construction and definition of the cognitive context which validates judgments. In order to achieve an agreement on shared definitional context, agents must be capable to clarify and exchange their respective semantic frames of reference that are adopted for the justification of their beliefs. This implies that the option of an absolute form of cognitive incommensurability be ruled out.⁵

Corradetti thus accepts Habermas' distinction between *Verständigung* and *Einverständnis*, which enables us to understand, in a world full of rules, how we can share them. We can move from the relativity of judgments towards understanding through *reciprocal* acceptance of the validity claims contained in any argument. At the same time, he softens its sharp tip, the radicalization, which is present in some of Habermas' formulations. What are we talking about here? It concerns the two versions, one "weak" and the other "strong" (putting it in the terms of analytical philosophy) that Habermas offers of this distinction: in the "weak" version, reaching understanding is indeed connected to mutual acceptance of validity claims, but does not merge with it *entirely*, as in the "strong" version:

Reaching understanding [*Verständigung*] is considered to be a process of reaching agreement [*Einigung*] among speaking and acting subjects. Naturally, a group of persons can feel at one in a mood which is so diffuse that it is difficult to identify the propositional content or the intentional object to which it is directed. Such a collective like-mindedness [*Gleichgestimmtheit*] does not satisfy the conditions for the type of agreement [*Einverständnis*] in which attempts at reaching understanding terminate when they are successful. A communicatively achieved agreement, or one that is mutually presupposed in communicative action, is propositionally differentiated.⁶

Those taking part in the communication may thus concur on the validity of an expression without *necessarily* agreeing. But it is also true, for Habermas, that those taking part in the communication could not entirely understand the arguments if they did not appreciate, even when not sharing them, the validity claims (of truth, rightness, truthfulness) that are connected to them. According to this "strong" version of the distinction between *Verständigung* and *Einverständnis*, mutual

⁵ C. Corradetti, 2022, p. 3.

⁶ J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, trans. by Thomas McCarthy, Beacon Press, Boston 1984, vol. I, pp. 286-287.

acceptance of the validity claims is contained, as its immanent *telos*, in every communicative action in which meanings and beliefs are shared.⁷

Why this wavering? The point is delicate and pithy, as it goes right to the heart of Habermas' debate with Gadamerian hermeneutics. As is well known, in the period immediately before the publication of *Knowledge and Interests* (1968), Habermas examined Gadamer's philosophical theory in *Truth and Method* with great care. The proper non-objectivistic self-conception of the traditional human sciences, which makes them reject the general methodology of the experimental natural sciences, nevertheless led Gadamer, according to Habermas, to adopt an unduly restricted version of *Verständigung*. Understanding should be "*thought of less as a subjective act than as participating in an event of tradition*, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated. This is what must be validated by hermeneutic theory, which is far too dominated by the idea of a procedure, a method".⁸

Habermas sees at work here a "Burkean"-derived conservatism, the attempt to resist the "modernist" corrosion of the natural substance of the content transmitted by tradition. But the appropriation of tradition is inevitably like that: it is intrinsically connected with the exercise of "reflection":

aus der strukturellen Zugehörigkeit des Verstehens zu Traditionen, die es durch Aneignung auch fortbildet, folgt nicht, daß sich das Medium der Überlieferung durch wissenschaftliche Reflexion nicht tiefgreifend verwandelte. Auch in der ungebrochen wirksamen Tradition ist nicht bloß eine von Einsicht losgelöste Autorität am Werke, die blind sich durchsetzen könnte; jede Tradition muß weitmaschig genug gewebt sein, um Applikation, d. h. eine kluge Umsetzung mit Rücksicht auf veränderte Situationen, zu gestatten.⁹

Habermas, however, concedes a rather significant *atout* to Gadamer, when he claims that "und gewiß behält demgegenüber die hermeneutische Ansicht recht, daß ein noch so kontrolliertes Verstehen die traditionszusammenhänge des Interpretieren

7 J. Habermas, 1984, vol.I, p.297 "We understand a speech act when we know what makes it acceptable".

8 Hans Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. by Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Mars, Continuum, London-New York 2004, p. 291.

9 Jürgen Habermas, *Zu Gadamer's "Wahrheit und Methode"*, in Karl-Otto Apel *et al.*, *Hermeneutik und Ideologiekritik*, hrsg. von Karl-Otto Apel *et al.*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt a. M. 1971, pp. 47-48 [The fact that understanding belongs structurally to tradition, which it also contributes to developing by making them its own, it does not follow that the "medium" of transmission is not profoundly transformed by the work of scientific reflection. Even a tradition that has been operative without interruption does not consist only of an authority detached from intelligence, able to blindly impose itself; every tradition must have sufficiently broad holes in its mesh to allow for application that is, a transposition, when appropriate, that takes changed situations into account].

nicht schlicht überspringe kann”.¹⁰ In his long response to Habermas, Gadamer seized this opportunity, questioning further the reduction, effected through the appeal to critical-transformative “reflection”, of “all motives for action and their understood meaning. Indeed, the hermeneutical problem is so universal and so fundamental for all interpersonal experience, both of history and of the present, precisely because meaning can be experienced even where it was not the conscious intention of its author”.¹¹ We must avoid the “Enlightenment's abstract antithesis”¹² between reflection and tradition; if we did not, we would not understand why men accept the authority they accept, recognize reasons for obeying an authority.¹³

Habermas meditated deeply on this objection by Gadamer, which led him, in *The Theory of Communicative Action*, to define a new relation between semantics and pragmatics of language, including the concept, deriving from Husserl, of *Lebenswelt*, or “lifeworld”. By virtue of this approach, the partners in the communication are such – i.e. speakers who exchange arguments because they are oriented to reaching understanding, only because they start from a shared deposit of beliefs, ideas and expectations, whose value can only be *partly* suspended. Indeed, if the partners of the communication did not share a horizon of meaning they could not even have access to it. We must *presuppose* a tissue of shared beliefs so that we can call a “segment of lifeworld”¹⁴ into question, so that we can discursively problematize it. *Dissent*, with its risks, is such, then, only because in the act of expressing itself it presupposes a broader, *agreement* between the subjects capable of speaking and acting.

Gadamer's objection had its effect in this way, conferring a different interpretation of that “circle of reflection” in which Habermas was already implicated, wanting, at the level of *Knowledge and Human Interests*, to restate the young-Hegelian link between theory of knowledge and theory of society, between conditions of knowledge and practical commitments, without gaining a higher philosophical *Standpunkt*. Why is the reference in the *Diskurs* to *Lebenswelt* a “circle of reflection” no different from that in which much of neo- or post-Kantian philosophy has remained imprisoned?¹⁵ We need consider it theoretically: *Lebenswelt* is such, a *non*-problematic texture of notions and traditions, only

10 J. Habermas, 1971, p. 47 [Of course the hermeneutic point of view is right to believe [...] that even such a filtered understanding cannot wholly disregard the relations of the interpreter with tradition].

11 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Critic of Ideology: Metacritical Comments on Truth and Method*, in Kurt Mueller-Vollmer (ed. by), *The Hermeneutics Readers*, Continuum, London-New York 2006, p. 283.

12 H.-G. Gadamer, 2006, p. 285.

13 On the debate between Gadamer and Habermas, see Cristina Lafont, *The Linguistic Turn in Hermeneutic Philosophy*, Mit Press, Cambridge-London 1999.

14 J. Habermas, 1984, vol. II, p. 122.

15 On this point see Giorgio Cesarale, *Filosofia e capitalismo. Hegel, Marx e le teorie contemporanee*, manifestolibri, Rome 2012, pp. 49-53.

because the argumentative exchange refers to it while it restores it to its givenness. In short, it is a *given*, but insofar as it is *posited* by subjects capable of language and action, it is posited as a *non*-posited presupposition. The complex relation between transcendently socialized practical reason and objective spirit remains precisely that, despite all the adaptations and revisions, a fragile moment of discursivism, diagnosed in advance by the hermeneutic objections.

Verständigung is trapped in the very same circle: *Diskurs* would not be such if it did not project its cogent logic onto the communicative practice of everyday life. But what is an understanding that has always been an orientation to reaching agreement? Would not the latter become a prey to the very aporia that for so long affected the Aristotelian *intellectum agens*, in its relation with the potential intellect? Like all powers, being and at the same time *not being*, the potential intellect of men would never succeed in moving to the act, in actually understanding, if it had not always been *act*, and thus what has already always *removed* potentiality and, with its condition, itself. May *Verständigung* presuppose an *Einverständnis* that has always been actualized? Granted, it is not a very realistic assumption, not only because it would treat the misunderstanding, the mistake, the ambiguity, the dissimulation as having been already solved from the start,¹⁶ but also because it would prevent understanding from *carrying out* a *real* process of emancipation from what hermeneutics called “prejudice”, a content that has not been filtered cognitively.

2 THE UNIVERSAL AS INCORPORATED COGNITION AND RECOGNITION

Corradetti deserves praise for noticing this *impasse* of Habermas, and so avoids, as I said above, his theoretical radicalization, which without fail makes *Verständigung* pass into *Einverständnis*. A philosophically alert theory of human rights should be more circumspect and tackle the problem of “understanding” in its *autonomy*. On this path he encounters what Donald Davidson sees and Habermas does not: if we speak a certain, particular language, how can we understand another’s language? And above all: does a language come with its *related* conceptual scheme? Linguistic-cultural plurality should be taken seriously, or, once again, the attempt to build a more robust universalism on it will quickly become obsolete.

In *On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme*, however, Davidson has sought only to clarify how “that condition (i) concerning partial incommensurability¹⁷ is not

16 On the philosophy of communication in relation to ethical experiences that entail misunderstanding (love, etc.), see Emmanuel Lévinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. by Alphonso Lingis, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh 1998, pp. 118-121.

17 He refers here to the partial inter-translatability of languages, which is neither their incommensurability or complete translatability.

sufficient to demonstrate the existence of different conceptual schemes and of schemes in general”; while Corradetti wants to demonstrate “that, so far as the cognitive domain is concerned, this is due to the existence of universally shared conceptual schemes”.¹⁸ If translation is possible, “one must admit the presence of some universal experiential frameworks structuring the cognitive domain”.¹⁹ But how do we draw on these models? Corradetti excludes the hypothesis, due, incidentally, to “internal” realism, by which meanings are obtainable through internal inspection: they are ““experientially” based and cannot be conceived of beyond subjects’ interaction among themselves and with the environment, or in any individualistic way”.²⁰

In a move that I broadly share, meanings are, in short, collectively and experimentally achieved. Psychological process, mental causation or simple rational deliberation are insufficient to identify them. Rather, we must go back to the Hegelian “spirit”, penetrated by a strong functional-pragmatic claim.²¹ The Hegelianism is emphasized when he claims that, as regards the “construction”²² of meaning, the standard by which the object and the interpretive activity of the other subjects is *measured* does not escape the experience that the “community of speakers”²³ has of its surroundings. The “phenomenological” imprint is clear: does not Hegel actually say, at an extraordinarily important conceptual point, that if a consciousness knowing a content experiences its inadequacy of that content, then not only knowledge of the object must change, but also the object itself? Knowledge is always knowledge of an object, changing which, it too must change, “that is, the standard for the examination is altered when that for which it was supposed to be

18 C. Corradetti, 2022, p. 8.

19 C. Corradetti, 2022, p. 9.

20 C. Corradetti, 2022, p. 10.

21The interaction of “subjects between each other and with their environment” is, however too anthropological, and poorly defined socially and historically. Corradetti seems to forget the Marxian lesson here, by which history shows at every step “a material result, a sum of productive forces, a historically created relation to nature and of individuals to one another, which is handed down to each generation from its earlier forebears, a mass of productive forces, capital resources and circumstances which is modified to be sure, on the one hand, by the new generation, but also, on the other hand, {the mass of productive forces etc.} prescribes to it {every generation} its own conditions of life and gives to it a specific development, a special character – therefore that circumstances make men just as much as men make circumstances. This sum of productive forces, capital resources and social forms of interaction, which every individual and every generation given finds to hand, is the real ground of what the philosophers have represented as “substance” and “essence of man”, what they have apotheosised and attacked, a real ground which is not in the least disturbed in its effects and influences on the development of men by these philosophers, as “self-consciousness” and “ego”, revolting against it” Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, *“German Ideology” Manuscripts*, ed. by Terrell Carver and Daniel Blank, Palgrave Macmillan, New York 2014, pp. 132-134.

22 C. Corradetti, 2022, p. 10.

23 C. Corradetti, 2022, p. 11.

the standard itself fails the examination, and the examination is not only an examination of knowing but also an examination of the standard of knowing”.²⁴

The claim contained in *epistemic* relativism can, however, be defended by changing it into a relativism that is in some respects more clear-cut: *ontological* relativism. The axis is shifted: the objective that relativism is adjusting its aim to is no longer the theory of a truth-*condition* that is uniform in time and space, but the idea that, among the various possible interpretations of an utterance, there is one that deserves *greater* approval. For ontological relativism the various possible translations of an utterance are all, equally, under-determined. Corradetti responds to the procedure of sceptical-relativist reasoning by ratcheting up his experientialism. There are *general* conditions of correctness, linked to how, for example, our body assigns “negative or positive values to each of the orienting spatial vectors”.²⁵ On the basis of each person’s corporeal experience, the cultural variability that also characterizes it will be brought back to a “*framework of conceptual comparability*. This emerges clearly in cases of perceptive asymmetries which allow for an orientation choice that is reducible to front-back, above-under, raised-underlying”.²⁶ It is these concepts, Corradetti continues with a slightly ambiguous expression, “such bodily-constrained concepts”,²⁷ that enable us to identify “a common core of equivalent perceptions and beliefs shared inter-culturally which allow for the inception of translation activities”.²⁸

With that, the tensions caused by the problem of understanding are relieved. Does it follow that epistemic relativism is finally defeated? Corradetti, reasonably, doubts it. A further redoubt in which it can take refuge is that constituted by solipsism, by the presumption that purely first-person truths may exist. But Wittgenstein in par. 258 of his *Philosophical Investigations* has demonstrated that a private language is not possible, is no more than a *flatus vocis*: a private language is literally unthinkable, as, for it to be, it would have to reach some kind of stabilization of its meanings; which cannot be done as long as we remain between the walls of a private auscultation of ourselves.

The solution is certainly elegant and significant. But is it really victorious? Or was this adversary not so very difficult to defeat? There is no doubt: the net of language and its constraints is also thrown over those who want to formulate truth only for themselves, forcing them to invert their original intention. As soon as the solipsist wants to articulate himself, he enters the realm of the sayable. But for a universalist position, however it is represented, especially if one is seeking to create a foundation for human rights, perhaps the subtlest and most astute enemy is another: it is the

²⁴ G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. by Terry Pinkard, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2018, p. 57.

²⁵ C. Corradetti, 2022, p. 13.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

violent person, who may *also* speak, but *wholly as a means to some other end*, escaping, or perhaps in his heart deriding, any effort of understanding and coherence. In the words of an unjustly neglected great twentieth-century philosopher:

Pour le violent, l'idée même d'une cohérence absolue, d'une vérité totale totalement révélée, est dénuée de sens: il n'est pas là pour voir, il lutte ou il subit, et, luttant ou subissant, il s'exprime; mais il ne veut pas saisir dans sa vérité totale ce qu'il doit dominer ou subir, et ce n'est pas d'une compréhension et d'une saisie qu'il s'occupe, ni d'une possibilité à côté de laquelle il y aurait d'autres possibilités: il est négativité au milieu de ce qui le nie, il n'a pas des discours cohérent et ne cherche pas la cohérence, ne cherche même pas la non-contradiction la plus pauvre. Il n'est pas muet, certes, il peut crier son désespoir [...], il peut même développer toute une série de discours particuliers, des techniques, des sciences utiles, voire un discours cohérent; mais ce discours établira ses propres limites, et ni lui ni ce langage ni ces discours partiels et particuliers ne portent pour lui-même sur l'homme et ne visent pas ce qui en lui est l'essentiel pour lui-même, - ils ne *doivent* pas le faire.²⁹

This figure has obsessed Western culture - one recalls the Biblical “*dixit insipiens in corde suo: non est Deus*” - and philosophy, from Plato to Hobbes. Significantly, one might say, given that the powerful development of rationalism that there has been in the West has constantly been aware of the need to come to terms with it. This figure is its real *alter*; but much of present-day philosophy, for many different reasons that we cannot go into here for lack of space, has preferred to drive it out into oblivion, though often appealing to the all-pervasiveness of the linguisticity that only partly, in my view, as the reader will have intuited from this article, can be effective with such a fearsome enemy.

In the following part of the book, which in a sense concludes the argument, Corradetti advances by discussing hybrid positions half-way between relativism and anti-relativism. As their example he chooses the theories of MacIntyre, who, though he reduces “rationality to cultural patterns of justification”, underlines that “epistemological explanations attached to one tradition or another can be defeated and replaced not only by epistemic resources available in that tradition itself, but

²⁹ Eric Weil, *Logique de la philosophie*, Vrin, Paris 1996, p. 58 [For the violent man the very idea of absolute coherence, of a wholly revealed truth, has no meaning: he is not here to see, but rather fights or submits, and he expresses himself in fighting or submitting; but he does not want to accept in its total truth what he has to dominate or submit to, and is not involved in grasping and understanding, or of a possibility, alongside which there are other possibilities: he is negativity in the midst of what negates him, he has no coherent discourse and does not seek coherence, but nor does he seek even the poorest non-contradiction. He is not mute, of course, he can cry out his desperation [...], he can also develop a whole series of special discourses, as well as techniques, useful sciences, and even a coherent discourse; but this discourse will establish his limits, neither he and his language, nor his specific discourses concern, for him, the man and they do not aim at what in himself is essential for him - they must not do it].

also by epistemic explanations advanced by a different competing tradition”.³⁰ The “standard related” hypothesis that MacIntyre assumes is thus contradicted by the capacity of self-transcendence that he himself assigns to cultures. More: the reason that cultures transcend themselves is not defined in his position. That is why Corradetti believes that: in order to make sense of a supposedly more extensive explicative force of one tradition over another, it is important to understand that the very possibility of epistemological crises and their eventual resolution through the adoption of different standards cannot be understood if not on the basis of the *transcendental anticipation* of a trans-cultural notion of truth forcing culturally embedded subjects into a process of self-criticism and self-transcendence that can take the form of an intersubjective evaluation [...].³¹

What is a pragmatic-transcendental anticipation of truth? It is the disposition to propose in one’s situation,³² universals that transcend it, while continuing to be sensitive to it. How is this disposition achieved? For Corradetti the answer lies in revitalizing the Kantian idea of “reflective judgment”. As expounded by Corradetti, who is, among other things, a specialist in Kant’s thought, while the “determinant judgment” is limited to subsuming infinitely specified cases under laws, the “reflective judgment”, of which the aesthetic judgment and the teleological judgment are extensions, presupposes that our judgments are “exemplarily” able to call into existence an intersubjective world, *for* which (and here is the finalism of the position) the *objective* world itself is constituted. The universalism Corradetti bears witness to is, then, beyond not only relativism, but also objectivism. The truth is not “*out there*”; rather, it is the fruit of the production of a conversation in which the various standards of rationality give proof of “extending” to others, give proof of what Kant himself called, in the third *Critique*, a “broadened way of thinking”. The counterfactual ideal is indeed operative, but only in the forms of *sensus communis*, i.e. in the forms of *a priori* agreement that are manifested by a reflective condition that is exercised *a posteriori*. In this way the *sensus communis* frees a man from those “prejudices” that, according to Gadamer’s hermeneutics, are deeply rooted in his condition. Because “it is connected to the free play of imagination and intellect, produces a pleasure that is detached from specific interests and is independent from personal aims. Thanks to the public status of such feeling of pleasure, the judgment demands a form of validity which, although subjective, is nonetheless universally communicable. This position is strictly connected to the acknowledgement that the subject’s capacity to grasp different points of view depends on her capacity to endorse a second-person perspective”.³³

³⁰ C. Corradetti, 2022, p. 18.

³¹ C. Corradetti, 2022, pp. 18-19.

³² To define the geographic and historical-cultural specificity of a viewpoint Corradetti uses the notion of “culture”, which may be prejudiced by a jumble of heterogenous meanings.

³³ C. Corradetti, 2022, p.33.

In the second chapter Corradetti's argument against relativism continues coherently onto the moral terrain, further specifying the conditions for reaching understanding, once again re-read in the light of a more powerful and "Hegelian" negative-dialectical claim.

3 CONCLUSIONS

What we must now provide is an overall evaluation of this first phase of Corradetti's philosophical argument. It closes with a reference to the need to recognize the other, which can free the individual through the free play of the imagination and intellect from the limitations, specific interests and personal goals that always characterize him. The sign that an individual's horizons have been extended, that he has been resituated in a broader context, is the feeling of pleasure that accompanies the formulation of the "reflective judgment". The "determinant judgment" cannot produce this feeling. It is brought into existence only by an activity that makes universality and particularity, transcendence and immanence, ideality and corporality coincide. But it is precisely here, paradoxically, after so much effort to "incorporate" reason, that Corradetti's argument has an idealistic flourish: he says that the capacity to sustain a second-person perspective requires the "*emotional recognition* of the other to be a priori to capacity of *cognition* in general"³⁴. How do we reconcile this position, which detaches recognition of the other from cognitive capacity in general, with the need continually and abundantly insisted on in the previous pages to carry out a cognitivist semantics, by which "our bodies, our innate capacities, motivate what is significant in human thought on the basis of a structure that is inherent in our experience, making a conceptual understanding possible"³⁵? More generally still: what relation is there between this cognitivist semantics and the exercise of *discursive* recognition, even if it is reflected in the light of negative-dialectic claim we have just mentioned? Why is the Kantian "feeling of pleasure and displeasure" not more widely used as a run-off channel between cognition and an "exemplar" discursiveness, based on the centrality of the *sensus communis* as a *priori* carried out in a variety of geographic and historical circumstances? Here, it seems to me, Corradetti risks setting up an unstable relation between the "bodily" predetermination of the reflective dimension and its launching itself into the practice of "reason-giving", to echo Sellars and Brandom, which is constitutively intersubjective. In some respects, it is the same block that paralyzed Fichte's idea of "recognition" in his *Foundations of Natural Right* (1796), constantly in tension between the presupposition of an individual self-reflective dimension and its actual realization through what he called the "*Aufforderung*", the "summons" that each

³⁴ C. Corradetti, 2022, p. 33.

³⁵ C. Corradetti, 2022, p. 24.

subject makes to the other so that it may determine itself. And it is these difficult, but fascinating, conceptual cruces that Corradetti's complex philosophical thinking should now turn to.