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IGNACE MEYERSON'S HISTORICAL METHOD IN PSYCHOLOGY. A LESSON OF PHILOLOGY (IN THE NIETZSCHEAN SENSE) FOR STUDYING HUMAN DIVERSITY ACROSS TIME AND CULTURE IN ITS PLURALITY

Introduction

A- *The Lack of Philology in Contemporary Psychology*

What has psychology become nowadays? On the one hand, there is neuroscience that follows an objective direction, in faithfulness to a cartesian and causalist approach, reducing the whole of human psyche, behaviour and

understanding to a sum of electro-chemical reactions occurring in the brain. Such a biological and positivist approach to psychology, focusing only on what can be measured in a quantifiable way, misses all the embedded, historical and cultural aspects of experience, for relations to the world and interpersonal life are not just external stimuli. Only evolutionary history is relevant for neuroscience since it shaped to the brain that can be observed now, and everything else – be it recent history or cultural and societal changes – is ignored and concealed. On the other hand, the second dominant contemporary school in psychology is psychoanalysis, inspired by Freud and further developed afterwards but still focusing mainly on the level of the individual, of their past experiences and traumas or defence mechanisms, with some recurring universal schemas (for example Oedipus' myth, understood not according to Greek culture but to Freud's interpretation that he generalises to all cultures as a universal, *a priori* structure) that leave almost no space for cultural specificities and variations. Therefore, neither contemporary school provides a satisfying account of the cultural and historical embeddedness of human psychology. Can these schools provide a full and satisfactory account of human psychology while overlooking its cultural dimension, or does psychology require a new paradigm that will integrate this dimension?

A possible approach to find an answer is to use Nietzsche's philological method. Nietzsche defines philology not simply as the method for studying written texts or languages but more generally as the method of interpretation of experience (understood in the most general sense, even as one's experience of the world, of reality and of others) that strives to be as faithful as possible. He summarises it under the formula: "the art of reading well" (Nietzsche, 1996, p.113). Thus, to be philological is to be faithful to the text of experience; it is this metaphor of experience as a text that allows Nietzsche to broaden the sense of philology and to apply it to any theoretical framework to evaluate its probity. Each culture or historical period proposes different interpretations of the world. Nonetheless, this does not lead

Nietzsche to posit a complete relativism, on the contrary he affirms that it is possible to distinguish between the interpretations according to their degree of faithfulness to the text (which he also calls probity or conscientiousness in intellectual matters). An interpretation becomes less and less philological as it removes or adds elements to the text. For example, adding elements that were not present, not indicated by any phenomena, can be done by adding a god or a world in itself, or a character of absoluteness, eternity or necessity to what is simply contingent, changing and relative. However, removing aspects of the text consists in denying any reality or effectiveness to things that are part of our experience, for example by dismissing the perception or the finite world we live in. Instead of completely denying them, the lack of philology can also consist in overlooking, concealing or reducing their importance and sphere of influence, making something subjective, internal, illusory and so on. Therefore, it is possible to be lacking in philology either by excess or by omission. By contrast, the recipe for interpreting with probity and intellectual honesty is to strive to neither add to nor remove anything from the text of experience. There is of course the problem of judging exactly what is part of the text itself and what is not since what we only ever have access to is always already an interpretation of the world. To truthfully and definitely decide, one would have to know the text itself, not through the intermediation of an interpretation. Nevertheless, this means that one should be completely devoid of any situation and bias, which is not possible since we are always attached to our situation, body, culture, history and we always know besides. The solution Nietzsche finds to escape this aporia is to apply another methodological principle, namely the principle of economy, also known as Occam's razor. This principle requires accounting for the whole experience with as few principles as possible. To apply this principle consists in shaving off everything that is not absolutely necessary. Hence, among two equivalent interpretations (equivalent in terms of what they allow to be understood), the one deemed more philological or economical will be the one that contains the least number of principles and ad hoc hypotheses, or hypotheses and

principles that are 'cheaper' in terms of theoretical and metaphysical costs. For instance, if two interpretations can produce the same result – the world, for example – the one that just posits this world as finite, changing and the result of randomness or self-organisation will be theoretically and metaphysically cheaper and less heavy than an hypothesis reaching the world too, but as created by an absolute God and determined from start to finish, in all its parts, aspects and steps of becoming. This means that the assumption of Nietzsche is that nature is economical, and that there is a strong probability that if an interpretation contains more principles, these are not imposed by nature but are human inventions, created by us and answering our own cultural needs and presuppositions. This is still not certain, and for all we know the 'truth in itself' might not be economical at all. Maybe our world rests on an expensive metaphysical principle. Moreover, it is not even clear how to exactly measure which hypothesis has a 'lesser amount' of principle, so Nietzsche's solution to use the principle of economy does not fully avoid criticism. However, I still think that adopting the philological method is a sound guideline to limit our biases and ethno- or anthropo-centrism as much as possible. Thus, even if one does not agree with Nietzsche's solution, I still think that adopting the philological method can be beneficial for researchers, as it spurs them to remain vigilant and to be as rigorous as possible, to try to overcome their own prejudices and biases. Therefore, the philological approach seems to be a reliable compass for one to become, not absolutely faithful to experience, but as faithful as possible. Now that this clarification has been made, we might dive back into the problem of contemporary psychology.

In this situation, both neuroscience and psychoanalysis try to use as few principles as possible, i.e. they attempt to be economical. However, trying to understand psychology without using a cultural principle seems to miss too much (as will be shown throughout this whole article), and thus lacks in probity, not because it was not economical enough, but because it tried to be too economical and

overlooked essential aspects of the psychological phenomena. Hence, according to Nietzsche's philological method, these two schools of psychology lack in probity since they dismiss some important aspects of experience (or subordinate them to other aspects, thus removing them from the text and adding undue prevalence or primacy to the aspects that they focus on, for instance the neurons and electro-chemical signals in neuroscience). Nevertheless, the fate of psychology is not set in stone; it does not have to remain limited to the alternatives of neuroscience and psychoanalysis. These two positions have not always been the only ones. If we delve into the past of the discipline we might find various attempts, approaches or methods that have failed to establish an enduring school (maybe because of the circumstances and not necessarily because of its theoretical relevance) but that are nonetheless more philological and contain the seeds needed to renew the scope of psychology by examining conscientiously the cultural dimension of human existence. Is there a method in psychology that could be more philological by taking the cultural and historical aspects of human life into account? What could this third way be, where could such a prism be found?

B- *Ignace Meyerson's Third Way for Psychology: Integrating the Cultural Dimension*

I believe that Ignace Meyerson's historical and cultural approach to psychology, which focuses heavily on the cultural and historical dimension of the human psyche, is a great candidate that could fill the gap present in contemporary research. Remarkably enough, Jerome Bruner, a founding father of cognitive science (which then developed into neuroscience) seems to agree since he ended up rejecting the absolute status of a positivist practice of psychology and instead turned towards a historical and cultural approach where he encountered Ignace Meyerson's method and even dedicated an article to him. In this relatively recent paper, Bruner affirms that psychology should not only measure objective and quantifiable variables in an impersonal and discarnate way but must also account for "how

people interpreted the world, how they made sense of it, and how they constructed meanings" (Bruner, 2004, p.402). Conceived in such a way, psychology's main problem or task is not to find the origin of our cognitions, but to trace an outline of the diverse psychological functions or mental categories of humans in their history and variations. This is the new goal Meyerson proposes for psychology. The starting point for such a psychology is to acknowledge that our mental categories are not universal but are deeply rooted in a time, place and culture. Indeed, human concepts are not ideas floating in a platonic sky, devoid of any links with our concrete reality and context, but they are always anchored to a situation, a language and a mental landscape specific to a kind of relation some humans had to the world. As Nietzsche wrote, "Everything has become; there are no eternal facts; and there are no absolute truths either" (2019, p.61). Thus, Meyerson implicitly accepts the premise of Nietzschean philology and perspectivism, namely that we all interpret the world in different ways. Nonetheless, the point of Meyerson's method is not to evaluate their probity but rather to describe all these different perspectives while maintaining a faithful approach himself, a probity that was previously lacking when other thinkers have contemplated human mental diversity. On a side note, the terms of history and culture will be mainly conceived as two sides of the same coin in this study, for every historical time has a different cultural interpretation of the world and every culture is also temporally situated and changes as time flows, which can produce new cultures. Thereby, both terms are converging and referring to the infinite variations in human mental categories that Meyerson wishes to describe and that other schools of psychology have ignored for the most part. What they have forgotten or underestimated is that words, notions and ideas have appeared historically; they are always embedded in a specific time, culture and situation, so they do not exist within themselves as separate and eternal entities. The situationality of our concepts also involves that their meaning is not transparent nor self-evident. Indeed, to be understood properly, they should be grasped in their becoming or emergence and be put into context (which is precisely what Meyerson

aims to do). Each worldview provides such a context for every signification that is uttered or has occurred to subjects. Hence, a worldview is the cultural dimension in which any given vision, object, concept, notion or knowledge is situated. Conversely, the entities of a given mental landscape are what constitute a culture; they are the common categories on which the forms and life of a society rests and pivots. These categories that vary from culture to culture are called by Meyerson the mental or 'psychological functions'. This term expresses that what is at stake is not simply a change of sign at the linguistic level, but a radical change in human psychology, a change in the mind itself, always attached to a time and place, embedded in a culture and displaying different ontological and epistemological categories to make sense of the world. Therefore, depending on the time and culture, the human spirit (or mind, to speak in a more contemporary language than Meyerson's) is confronted with different mental landscapes, filled with different entities. According to Frédéric Fruteau de Laclos, once we acknowledge such variation in human psychology:

> Then it should be possible to unfold a *social history*, or a *historical sociology*, so as to grasp the spirit of a time, the kind of 'common sense', 'conception' or 'world view', *Weltanschauung*, ideology in the broadest sense (pre-marxist), to which any person is confronted [1] (Fruteau de Laclos, 2012, p.22).

Indeed, since each culture has its own psychological landscape and entities (and even within a given culture there are individual variations of course, but we shall put this matter aside for the sake of the general understanding of the problem), it means that a history of these landscapes of the psychological functions could be drawn, just

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[1] These denominations that Frédéric Fruteau de Laclos uses (namely, history and sociology) to qualify such an undertaking already indicate that Meyerson's task is situated at the crossroads of multiple fields, which is further ascertained by the fact Meyerson edited, until his death in 1983, the *Journal de Psychologie Normale et Pathologique*, publishing articles from the most eminent researchers in all human and social sciences (not only in psychology as the title of the journal might suggest).

as can be done for art history. It is precisely an history of this kind that Meyerson tries to uncover.

C- Meyerson's Historical Method

However, how might one investigate the diversity of mental categories? The question is important, for it may raise the concern that a study of human symbolic significations would be solely subjective and has no way of being scientific. Yet Meyerson guarantees it is not the case and wants his study to be objective and empirical. His claim should not be dismissed too quickly, as the mental states do not stay internal but "tend to exteriorise themselves" (Meyerson[2], 1995, p.10) into works that the historical psychologist can examine in order to excavate other psychological functions and understandings of the world. Indeed, belonging to a cultural sense-system leaves its traces (or imprints) on any human output or creation: for instance, books, works of art, institutions, tools, architecture... all carry and express mental categories. This is what Meyerson calls the 'works' in the broadest sense. The spirit can be seen in any human production. All human output is seen as a trace, manifestation or sign of the spirit, thus expressing its state and available functions at a given time, culture and place. It is thanks to these 'traces' that Meyerson's method is not only situated in the subjective realm but also in the objective, trying to uncover the different subjectivities, informed by their own culture, through an inductive process starting from materials that anyone can observe. Thus, as these works can be documented and allow an exploration of human mental variation across time and culture, they become milestones and expressions of the spirit that can be consulted, in the same way as the variety of documents and testimonies allows a certain kind of objectivity in history's field of research. In this fashion, Meyerson could write "works are primarily a testimony.

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[2] To avoid confusion and for the sake of simplification, throughout this article the quotations referred to "Meyerson" mean they should be attributed to Ignace Meyerson, and the one mention of a book of his uncle, Emile Meyerson, will be referred as "E.Meyerson".

They fixate, summarise and preserve what men of a time have managed to do and express" (*ibid.*, p.195). Few – if any – human thoughts can escape the process of expression into works according to Meyerson because there is a human need for forms, to create forms and to express oneself in them. This whole process is what Meyerson calls 'objectivation', and it leads to the expression of a great diversity of psychological functions and mental categories into works. As noted by Françoise Parot, "in Meyerson's view, this world of works is to psychologists what natural facts are to physicists. Mental states thus become objects, which can be studied objectively" (Parot, 2000, p.116-117). Nevertheless, it should be stressed that Meyerson understands 'objectivity' in a different sense than absolute, substantialist thinkers do. Indeed, the latter posit a stable essence of the mind and of the world, consider objectivity as what is beyond, or, rather, anterior to any specific content, context and subjectivity. Conversely, Meyerson conceives objectivity as the external expression of the spirit that becomes empirical and accessible to anyone; it enters the public sphere thanks to a symbolic form, namely the work (even though it has to be interpreted by the historical psychologist in order to retrieve the mental category expressed through it). Hence, objectivity in Meyerson's writings refers more to an intersubjectivity (namely, the necessity for any subjective and mental category to be expressed externally, which allows an inspection, a communication and the possibility for any subject to take over the meaning in other works) than to an absence of subjectivity. By allowing mental categories to enter the intersubjective field of experience, to which they did not belong initially, works can be considered as bridges between different minds and cultural landscapes. Therefore, thanks to the study of the diversity of works through time and culture, we can hope to learn more about the changes in the human mind itself.

Some authors such as Noemi Pizarroso Lopez (2018 and 2013) and Françoise Parot (2000) have already brilliantly presented Meyerson's biography and his method, step by step, and they have also highlighted Meyerson's connections with

many of his contemporaries[3]. Nonetheless, so as to better grasp Meyerson's method and to provide enough context within this article alone (and in English, to make it accessible to non-French speakers), I shall briefly flesh out an example of how to uncover a mental category through an analysis of a work. A good example could be colour, to which Meyerson dedicated a whole conference and a course, even though notions such as personhood, memory or toil would be suitable too. In fact, any operative concept, notion or entity could be suitable because each of them has a date, a place, a history, and will express the spirit and mental categories of its time and culture. The variation in the psychological category of colour is clearly visible in Gladstone's famous book about Homer, in which he wrote an article – commented on by Guy Deutscher (2010) – about the use (or rather lack of consistent use) of colours in Homer's works. This statement is backed with empirical evidence, directly taken from Homer's works, highlighting that the same colour adjective is used to describe objects that we would not place under the same colour category; for instance, green for honey and grass, or wine-like for both oxen and the sea. Furthermore, the description of a same given object is unstable throughout Homer's works: in this way, "iron, for instance, is said to be 'violet' in one passage, 'gray' elsewhere, and in yet another place it is referred to as *aithôn*" (Deutscher, 2010, p.34). Gladstone's conclusion is that the whole Greek culture suffered from colour blindness (*ibid.*, p.37). If taken literally, this hypothesis seems highly unlikely. Indeed, the Greeks probably saw very similarly to us, anatomically speaking. Meyerson's paradigm provides a far more satisfactory interpretation, as it explains the discrepancy we notice in the works by virtue of a difference in mental categories and classifying concepts. In this framework, the key explanatory factor is not that the

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[3] Although, I firmly believe that more could be told about Meyerson than the current state of research. Indeed, my main motivation to write about him is to emphasise the philosophical and epistemological dimensions of his work, which are too often neglected in my opinion, or at least not unfolded in their full radicality. However, to be able to develop this theme, the method of Meyerson must be firstly presented and compared to other ones, which is the role of this present article, thus laying the foundations for a deeper analysis in a second time. Only then I will be able to show that Meyerson's insights could lead to an epistemological revolution that Meyerson himself did not suspect and that I will have to make explicit and develop in a second article.

Ancient Greeks were physiologically blind to some colours, but rather that they did not possess the operative concepts of colours in the same sense as us, namely as distinguished, precise, unchanging and independent entities, separate from the objects they colour. Such a psychological function was absent from the Ancient Greeks' mental universe. This is also what Michel Pastoureau implies when he writes:

> Color terms are not only adjectives; they are also nouns that designate categories of color in the absolute, as if it were a matter of ideas or concepts. In antiquity, that was not the case. Color was not a thing in and of itself, an autonomous abstraction. It was always linked to an object, a natural element, or a living being that it described, characterized, or individualized. A Roman could perfectly well say, "I like red togas; I hate blue flowers," but it was hard for him to declare, "I like red; I hate blue," without specifying something in particular. And for a Greek, Egyptian, or Israelite, it was even more difficult (Pastoureau, 2017, p.56).

Hence, it seems that colour understood as an abstract concept, independent of the objects, has not always been present in human psychological functions, at least not for all colours and not as we know them today. To dissociate the colours from the objects in which we see them is a cultural decision, it is a movement similar to Plato's dualism and world of ideas, by referring the sensible world and empirical beings to essences and ideas that precede them, existing outside of experience (like the concepts of "chair" or "blue") and each time incarnated in different empirical instances, for example in this empirical blue chair in front of me. A modern scientist referring (and reducing) the colours to light wavelengths is going in a similar cultural direction and is probably an heir of Plato in this regard. Indeed, it is not whether to talk about colours or wavelengths that matters here (although it is another cultural difference, between Plato and the modern scientists) but the common decision to generalise an attribute or aspect of a thing and to refer it to an objective and universal idea, a conceptual, general and discarnate entity instead of

grasping it always in a concrete and particular experience[4]. Therefore, it is thanks to works, in this case Homer's words, and to the contrast they provide to our own categories that we can empirically describe and compare the mental universe and psychological functions of a given culture (and reflect on ours). The same approach can be applied to any topic or notion and any kinds of works, as well as to any society, time or culture, thus opening a broad field for Meyerson's method and psychology, at the crossroads of multiple disciplines (for they are all culturally situated).

The decisive point made with the example of colour is that there is a broad diversity of mental landscapes. Indeed, the mental categories do not exist in the same way everywhere, at every time, and even when they do, they "do not [necessarily] overlap" (Meyerson, 1957, p.358). Because of this fact, our culturally situated notions cannot be assumed to be universal and should not be left unquestioned. The situatedness of any knowledge implies that our concepts with which we understand the world are always embedded in a context that is not clear for itself, that could be replaced by other contexts with other notions, structuring the field of our object of study in an entirely different way. Hence, just like ethnology and anthropology, Meyerson's documented history of mental categories allows us to make some of our biases visible and to offer other ones to adopt. Indeed, his method makes it possible to highlight biases in our categories, discover different categories about the same reality, not fully overlapping, and thus it shines a light on more aspects of the human experience thanks to these contrasts. To underline how Meyerson's method relates to anthropology, sociology and ethnology, we might

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[4] This is the logic of concepts according to Nietzsche, that he compares to mummies, in the sense that they are at first a living and empirical experience from which almost all aspects are stripped, reducing it to an empty skeleton in order to obtain generality. Hence, the concept of "chair" in general is produced by starting with any given empirical chair and removing most of the aspects of this experience, for example its size, its colour, its shape, its material and so on, until only what can apply to any chair remains. The cost of this operation is that concepts become as empty as required in order to apply to any particular case and thus they become unfaithful to experience, leaving too many aspects aside. For an explanation of this process, one might read, among many other texts of Nietzsche: *Truth and Lies In the Extra-Moral Sense* and the chapter "Reason in Philosophy" in *Twilight of Idols*.

compare it in the first part of this study to the method of sociologists who have also been interested in the psychological dimension of man, so that the contrast between the two methods can enrich our understanding of what a cultural approach really entails and what the psychological dimension adds to it. Doing so will not only specify Meyerson's method, but it will also justify it. Indeed, Meyerson's philological and critical reading of the sociologists who had ideas (or at least preconceptions) about human psychology will show that the psychological realm completely escaped their cultural and sociological approach. The cultural and historical dimensions of human psychology were missing in their thinking or were considered too superficially. By contrast, Meyerson will make it possible to properly highlight these dimensions of psychology, thanks to the application of a philological method. This will also allow to display, beyond simply Meyerson's person and themes, how to conduct a philological reading of several authors and theses, which is a method that could be brought to various fields outside sociology and psychology in order to limit the biases and radicalise the perspectives by checking carefully their probity. Moreover, an acknowledgement of the plurality and situatedness of all mental categories can lead to several consequences that Meyerson did not foresee himself but that we can nonetheless develop and explore. Indeed, since there is a great diversity of worldviews and ways to live, the question of a possible hierarchisation between different cultures can be asked and will be examined through a meditation on Lévy-Bruhl and Nietzsche. Furthermore, the diversity of mental landscapes might be so great that it could lead to a culture shock when two very different cultures meet, or maybe – even worse – it could reveal the impossibility to communicate and understand alterity at all. This problem, which is in fact the problem of cultural solipsism, is too big and important to be treated hastily in this already long study, so it will be tackled in a separate article where I will focus only on the epistemological and ontological implications of Meyerson's historical psychology. In fact, Meyerson himself (and even his disciples) wrote very little on epistemology and ontology, while their prism radically challenges the modern conceptions that are not

considered universal and self-evident anymore but have become one cultural option among many others. The representation, the dichotomy of subject-object, the in-itself could be replaced by other mental categories. Does this lead to complete relativism? If not, how does one articulate all the different mental landscapes and understand their differences and our relation to them? Meyerson's prism could lead to a whole new conception of truth, knowledge, ontology and relationship to the world if we break down its implications and follow through all its consequences. Though it would take us beyond the limited scope of this article, I aim to do so with the help of Merleau-Ponty. Indeed, in this present article my focus is to adopt the point of view of Nietzsche's philology to show how Meyerson's prism is methodologically superior to those who have tried to describe and understand the human psyche historically. Others have omitted or added aspects to the text of experience, to the human mental facts, while Meyerson has maintained a faithful account of them. Ironically, Meyerson might have an even greater probity than Nietzsche himself, thus turning his own philological method against Nietzsche as we will see at the end of this study. I hope it can be demonstrated in this article how a philological approach can benefit any research, on top of significantly broadening the field of psychology by fully integrating the cultural and historical dimensions of human (and probably all living beings') existence.

1- Durkheim and the Dogmatism of the Fixity of Human Mental Categories

So we shall begin this study in earnest by comparing Meyerson's method to the one of the sociologists and anthropologists (the distinction between the two was, in fact, negligible in France in the nineteenth century and up to the first half of the twentieth century). Meyerson himself did so in the third chapter of the only book he ever published, *Les Fonctions psychologiques et les oeuvres*, by providing an overview of his method and commenting on the approaches of Durkheim and Lévy-Bruhl. He starts with Durkheim, underlining that, along with his nephew Marcel Mauss, he

wanted to take historicity into account, even the historicity of the spirit (and thus psychology) since Durkheim and Mauss claimed that "actual forms of thought might not have always been as we know them now" (Meyerson, 1995, p.122). Unfortunately, Durkheim did not maintain this historical and comparative attitude during his inquiry, since he implicitly posited that conceptual thinking was consubstantial with humanity, meaning that no humanity was possible without conceptual thinking, and therefore that concepts cannot emerge in history, cannot be a cultural product or innovation. This led Durkheim to draw a strict boundary between psychology and sociology:

> The phenomena of the individual consciousness pertain to psychology, whereas the ones of the collective consciousness come under the authority of sociology, understood as a kind of natural history of man living in society, the most characteristic manifestations of the collective life (Pizarroso Lopez, 2018, p.40).

Psychoanalysis and (even more so) neuroscience still mainly practise psychology within this boundary delimited by Durkheim, leaving the historical and cultural approaches to sociology and anthropology, thus leaving out these dimensions of psychology. Conversely, Durkheim was studying the variety of social forms throughout human cultures, yet human psychological frames remained outside his research. This exclusion implies the "dogmatism of unity and permanence of logic" (Meyerson, 1995, p.123), which asserts that psychological functions and categories of humans are immutable, and that Durkheim presupposes as a universal and necessary truth. Nevertheless, according to Meyerson, the strength of this dogmatism relies solely on the fact that "the psychologist, the philosopher, the epistemologist [and the sociologist as well as the historian] have lived for a long time based on the fiction of the immutable man in front of the eternal nature, creating by an odd miracle diverse works" (Meyerson, 1987, p.77). This stance, instead of being posited as self-evident, should require an investigation on whether there is a universal and unchanging logic of the mind or not. Indeed, if there were

one, then it could be opposed to psychology, which would appear, in contrast, as a relative, empirical, *a posteriori* field, while logic would be a universal, *a priori* science that would be left unscathed by Meyerson's historical investigation and contextualisation. Such attempts, aligning with Durkheim's prejudice towards the fixity of human mental categories, have been numerous in philosophy. One may think for instance of Kant or Husserl and the latter's criticism of 'psychologism' in his early quest for a pure logic, supposed to uncover the formal categories and universal conditions of any signification. Such thinkers try to reach the primordial and independent matrix from which every spirit's experience follows. They hope to do so by looking for a universal grammar (or conditions) of the symbolical function, consisting in a core of unchanging categories. Therefore, once again, the question of the origin eclipses the examination of the concrete and specific psychological facts that constitute most of our daily experience. Nonetheless, there is no guarantee that there is only one logic or that it does not change through time. It is the systematic thinkers' prejudice to assume that such a universal logic exists. There is no reason to take their word for it and to accept this prejudice, especially since such thinkers "will not learn that man has become, that the power to know has also become" (Nietzsche, 2019, p.61). At the very least, the existence of a universal grammar of the mind should not be postulated before any exploration, but the question should be left open until it is investigated thoroughly and backed empirically thanks to a historical and ethnological approach. To implement such approaches in psychology is precisely what Meyerson's method consists of, so instead of being an argument against his method it rather seems that it is a justification for it, at least for a preliminary approach. Moreover, one might argue that this so-called 'psychological sphere' is in fact always already entangled with a particular ontology, epistemology and metaphysics. Language for example – which is often believed to partake in this psychological realm because it is specific to a time, place and culture – always involves an ontology through its very grammatical structure. Our logic and attitude to life are related to the structure of our language, that we are used to

considering as true. Therefore, it means that logic, ontology, epistemology and metaphysics are always culturally situated and particular, they are never universal. These domains might be able to apply extensively to everything, but only in certain ways, from a certain point of view and mapping of the world, namely according to a given mental landscape. Hence, one might accentuate some aspects of a language, turn it into a logic based on these aspects (for example some grammatical rules), make it 'purer' and then oppose it to the language (or to psychology), thus trying to depreciate the latter, despite their both sharing the same source. Thus, there is no radical distinction between psychology and logic, as if the latter could, starting from our language's structure, reach a purely objective and independent realm. As a result, those thinkers who want to attain a 'pure logic' would only ever manage to do so in relation to a particular language and mental or cultural landscape. Hence, the result would not be as universal as they think and, lacking in philology, they add to the text of experience when they claim that this logic is universal. Certainly, it could apply to all if everyone thought in the same way as they did; yet, wouldn't that deny the wealth of other ways to relate to the world and interpret our experience (this time removing aspects and elements from the text)? Are they not basing this 'pure logic' upon their own grammar, that they translate into a universal ontology, while it might rely on cultural preferences? Which is why, instead of this dogmatism – in reality, a blind ethnocentrism and reductionism – psychologists:

> must substitute a more objective and critical attitude. They must strive to look, through the change of the products of the human spirit, for the eventual changes of this spirit itself, their nature and their extent. They must be honest towards change and acknowledge the unchanging (as well as the mutations of course) only after proof, after standing the test. To the history of the civilisations' forms, the psychologists add a new domain whose importance will only grow: the history of their deep psychological contents, the history of the psychological functions (Meyerson, 1987, p.77).

A history of this nature blurs and overcomes the rigid distinction previously established by Durkheim between sociology and psychology. Indeed, in Meyerson's framework, any psychological content, notion or mental category within an individual consciousness is always already informed by its society and, conversely, can express or become the symbol of the whole culture it belongs to when this individual thought is externalised in a work and enters the public space. Therefore, there are no *a priori*, self-evident, universal psychological concepts that sociology could use to explain only socio-historical and physiological facts prior to any historico-psychological investigation. Even the categories of the researchers have a history, and the same goes for the humans they are studying. Thereby, to have an honest and faithful inquiry, the sociologist must question these mental categories and understand them in their history, both his own and the ones of the society he is investigating. Hence, while the traditional historian uses an implicit psychology (*i.e.* one from the language and common sense of their culture) and applies it to the diversity that appears before them, viewed only from those same specific mental categories, the historian of psychological facts has an even more difficult task to fulfil "because, on top of the already demanding research of historical nature, they must square the effort of interpretation" (Meyerson, 1995, pp.136-137). In other words, one needs to "diversify this first research, discern a multiplicity of patterns and of layers of signification [...], to find the functions behind, through or within the contents" (Meyerson, 1995, p.137). Hence, the psychological historian's added value is to consider that even the mental categories and functions are a historical product, that they appear as a variety with crucial change and mutations. This applies to the researcher too: the mental categories must be investigated not only in others but in oneself as well. Far from contemplating a multiplicity of cultures in front of them – as if the researchers were not situated and were above the cultural field, separated from it and objectively dominating it – the psychological historian is an integrating part of the cultural field and always apprehends other cultures from his or her own categories and mental, cultural landscape. Therefore, scientists need to examine

[18]

their own mental categories and psychological functions and to treat them as particular, situated and biased, based on their own preferences and choices. In this way, the psychological historian uses the diversity found by the historian, sociologist or ethnographer to question one's own language and culture, to contextualise it and make it appear as embedded in a historical situation. Another line of thought opened by Meyerson is to ask what other paths the spirit could have taken, what other logics are available to humans other than the conceptual or modern one. The key question that separates Meyerson from Durkheim is the following: are there any other forms of thought or mental categories than the ones we know and use today in Western societies? Thus, we should question even our own familiar conceptual thinking and analyse where this tendency comes from, what it allows, hides, means, involves and expresses. The fact that Durkheim did not consider these questions at all and took conceptual thinking for granted emphasises that the typical historian or sociologist observes historically a variety of facts and juxtaposes them all according to the researcher's own mental categories. These categories that are not examined, because they are implicitly considered universal and eternal, shared by all humans or thinking subjects. The practical consequence of such a prism and the lack of philology is that it excludes the psychological categories from the field of historical research, while they deserve their place there, as Meyerson have powerfully argued. Moreover, what is especially interesting here is that this dogmatism of permanence is not simply a mistake or a wrong interpretation, but it is an integral part of the psychological history, and as such it is a meaningful and interesting object of study for the psychological historian. Indeed, this assumption that our psychological categories are universal and unchanging is linked to the emergence of systematic thought, which is not the essence of man nor thought but is a certain option that has a history and must be considered a particular psychological function situated within a type of culture. Hence, Meyerson asserts that "this fixist prejudice was originally linked to the theologico-metaphysical reflections on man" (Meyerson, 1987, p.77) and pertains to a specific culture: this idea or way to conceive and relate to the world

is subject to becoming, it has a birth within human culture and also maybe a death or different future, as postmodernism and phenomenology have already underlined the shortcomings of this paradigm. As a result, it is not historical psychology that is explained by a universal matrix; it is the emergence of the latter as a particular historical idea and cultural mode of explanation that is included in the former[5]. Thus, thanks to Meyerson's observations, the distinction between the individual and the collective cannot be clearly affirmed anymore, therefore it cannot confine psychology to a small corner of knowledge. On the contrary, historical psychology is interested in the entirety of our human experience and is situated at the crossroads of all of its dimensions and of all the disciplines. Nevertheless, in order to conceive things likewise, one must consider their own logic historically instead of considering it as an objective truth, which Durkheim failed to do. Thereby, if even the human spirit (or its fundamental categories and its kind of logic) is subject to situation, culture and historical change, then it is the role of the psychologist (or psychological historian) to establish this history, to highlight the diversity of forms the mind has adopted and the directions it has explored. This is what the comparison with Durkheim teaches us.

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[5] The same kind of reintegration within the frame of historical psychology could be applied to any attempts that would try to explain the changes in culture and mental categories (namely, how they come in succession) by the means of an external entity or factor, for example society or biology, because this entity or factor is not a cause that exists previously to the mental categories but is precisely one of them; it is a situated, cultural option to shape and define reality while others are also available. Even the notion of 'in itself' might be a cultural invention, a situated option that has no right to discredit the world of experience, of perception and of the 'mind'. Therefore, any given 'cause' or explanatory factor of the change cannot be final nor explain alone the whole historical psychology, but this factor is a part of the history of the mental categories and other ones could be opposed to it. That is the reason why the aim of historical psychology is not to discover the origin of our cognition or of its changes but to describe these changes, this variety with which we are always already faced, that we use to try to make sense of the world, and that one can only acknowledge, receive and describe, not explain for it circumscribes our knowledge and have always encompassed us.

2- *Lévy-Bruhl and the Reduction of the Plurality of Human Mental Categories to a Dichotomy*

After Durkheim, Meyerson studied Lévy-Bruhl in his book. Lévy-Bruhl's superiority over Durkheim from the standpoint of historical psychology is that the former accepted the possibility of a plurality of humanity's mental categories and ways of thinking, on top of providing rich empirical descriptions of this diversity. However, according to Lévy-Bruhl, this plurality is only reduced to two modes of thinking: the rational, logical and scientific one that we know (*i.e.* conceptual thinking), and the other, its complete opposite, the pre-logical, mystical and primitive participation. Lévy-Bruhl wants to see an 'opposition of nature', which is a problem according to Meyerson. Indeed, Meyerson notes that "it is not only one modality of thinking different from ours, but it is *the other* modality of thinking, its reverse: [...] anything that is not 'scientific' is 'primitive'" (1995, p.128; original emphasis). There is no other alternative for Lévy-Bruhl, man either relies on conceptual thinking or on a logic that does not possess notions such as the principle of identity or causality, which are very important to modern humans. Meyerson opposes to Lévy-Bruhl a methodological criticism of his notion of 'mentality', as it is not an accurate category but rather an abstract idea, a huge drawer that can gather very dissimilar experiences of different psychological nature, hiding those discrepancies behind a common name. Lévy-Bruhl's study is, therefore, empirical and yet it is not philological. Lévy-Bruhl is not very faithful in his interpretation of the facts because he creates this category of 'primitive mentality' (thus he adds to the text) and he omits a lot of aspects and variations in the cases he presents, which removes from the text. He clearly displayed a bias of confirmation since he aimed at consolidating his theory of a unique pre-logical and mystical mentality above faithfulness to details. Meyerson shares the same interpretation:

> The functions are not studied for themselves and we have the feeling that it is not by
> chance nor by a lack of perceptiveness that Lévy-Bruhl proceeded in this way. He drew

from each function a particular aspect, namely the one thanks to which he could relate it to the rest in order to form the type he wanted to characterise: the prelogical and mystical mentality. He cared first and foremost about this whole (Meyerson, 1995, p.128).

Lévy-Bruhl did so to the detriment of the specificity of each distinct psychological function. It "resulted in a lack of precision in his study" (*ibid.*, 129) because Lévy-Bruhl concealed the internal diversity of all the facts and experiences he referred to. In fact, according to Meyerson, there is a multiplicity of different psychological functions behind the so-called 'primitive mentality', and they do not all pertain to the same logic. Indeed, they unfold within different dimensions of experience, represent different levels of culture, express different mental categories and functions that did not develop in the same society, at the same time, at the same pace and in the same direction or for the same purpose. Furthermore, even in our own culture, what Lévy-Bruhl calls the 'scientific mentality' is not as simple and monolithic as he thinks, but instead it unfolds across a number of layers and encroaches upon several systems of forms and series of mental activities at the same time. It is not even simply a mix of rational and primitive 'mentalities', as Lévy-Bruhl sometimes acknowledges, but our psychological life expresses a participation to countless psychological and axiological spheres and planes: we do not always adhere to scientific and rational reasoning, nor mystical thought, we engage with other logics (denied by Lévy-Bruhl) such as perceptual, emotional, artistic logic, to name a few. However, carefulness is needed here, and one should not go from the position of a dichotomy to a multiplicity within which the pure uniqueness of each element prevents making any comparison. Indeed, Meyerson's criticism of the concept of mentality does not imply that there are only particularities, that each culture's psychology is a separate island and that we should not be making any connections between different cultures, societies and psychological functions, for there are influences and a history of the psychological functions, with their continuities and discontinuities or breakthroughs that can be

retraced. He is simply warning that the connection must be based on probity (on all the facts) and include all aspects of the parts it is linking. The problem with Lévy-Bruhl is that he tried to reach directly, without intermediaries, the total man – namely, the totality encompassing all aspects – of 'primitive' cultures, while he did not spend enough time checking if there was even such a united, cohesive and relevant whole of 'primitive culture' in the first place. In short, Lévy-Bruhl has not studied these functions separately enough to check whether they converge on a single source or not. After examining such an attempt, which has led to the shortcomings I have underlined, Meyerson suspects that the direct "study of the mentality of the total man would lead to generalisations that threaten to cloud both the simultaneous diversity and the real successive variations" (Meyerson, 1995, p.134). That is why Meyerson favours a "study of the separate functions" (*ibid.*, 135) and emphasises the variation, the specificities of particular and delimited sectors of the mental activity. Meyerson does not look for the universal but for the wealth of nuances and variations (*i.e.* the differences, the contrasts and also the links). It is easier to avoid biased interpretations and arbitrariness when focusing on a given aspect rather than the whole. To study the functions allows one to focus on special differences and to elaborate an accurate, meticulous work instead of looking for a very general notion that would encompass a culture in its entirety, thus becoming too vague and too abstract. Hence, we need to be especially careful not to encompass and reduce the various psychological contents to a singular and imprecise category like 'mentality' that denies many aspects of the mental contents. First, we must look for a particular form of mental life, specify its aspects and circumscribe them; only then can we try to compare it to others: the "comparison would only be strengthened" (Meyerson, 1995, p.59) by such an approach and chronology. Therefore, underlining the common points – which is welcome too, because Meyerson does not only study the differences of human psychological variety but also their common points and mutual influences – should always come after having formerly strongly highlighted the differences, as they are too often overlooked.

[23]

Nevertheless, behind all these functions, we are always talking about the same human, the concrete human of a given time, place and culture, expressed in all these different fields, encroaching on all these numerous dimensions and series of the mental functions. That is why, instead of Lévy-Bruhl's conception of the total human, we should turn towards Marcel Mauss' as an approach to the interactions between the different functions that should, in his opinion, be examined, but in a way that must not be detrimental to the functions themselves (taken separately). Meyerson can agree on such a conception of the total human, whereas about Lévy-Bruhl's he wrote:

> Much as the analysis of relations between functions appears useful and even necessary when it is established on accurately developed and specified facts, a description of mentality that risks wiping off the aspects particular to each function seems unfavourable to the progress of historical analysis (Meyerson, 1995, p.134).

Therefore, to try to discern a type and coherence through the multiplicity and thus find the 'total human' of a time and place is an understandable endeavour and is legitimate but not to the detriment of the multiplicity: it is valid only insofar as it does not betray and falsify the text of the different functions and categories. In essence, such an endeavour must not overthrow a precise and rigorous study of the different functions themselves. Only by doing so can one notice and affirm a path followed in common by different cultures. This is what Lévy-Bruhl misses when he conceives his two 'mentalities' as radically opposite and exclusive: he can see common points within a 'mentality' (and even adds common points that do not exist, hence hiding the conflicts and specificities of the plurality of experiences he is examining), but his view does not tolerate any common points between the two 'mentalities' because he postulates their heterogeneity and opposition. Whereas, when we clarify the study of the different functions (for instance causality or the principle of identity) in the different societies that Lévy-Bruhl took as examples, "we notice not an absence of cause or reason, but a particular form of cause and reason"

(Meyerson, 1995, p.131). Certainly, they take on a different shape than the one we are used to, yet they are not invalid in their operations as a psychological function. This is also the conclusion of Frédéric Fruteau de Laclos who writes: "the psychologist will refrain from saying that the notions of causality and identity are present in us, absent in the others, but they will affirm that diverse forms of causality and identity have manifested here and there" (2012, p.59). To prove his point, he draws on Ignace Meyerson's uncle, Emile Meyerson, who strove (E.Meyerson, 1932) to demonstrate that the 'primitive' individual's association with a parrot for example is not so different from the physicist's association between a solid, a liquid and a gas (for instance the different states of water); it simply does not follow the same reasons – the physicist relies on a similarity of elements, whereas the 'primitive' relies on cosmological reasons for instance –, but it is the same psychological function of association and identity (or identification) that is at work in both cases. Thus, Lévy-Bruhl's claim of a radical heterogeneity between the two logics is undermined. The two 'mentalities' are not as heterogeneous as he thinks (not an absolute otherness) and each 'mentality' is not as homogeneous as he thinks either. Therefore, Lévy-Bruhl's concept of mentality is both saying too much (about the 'mentality', as if this hotchpotch of a poorly defined multiplicity was one of humanity's two exclusive modes of thinking) and too little because it excludes the possibility of yet other cohesive modalities of thinking (which, consequentially, rules out their accurate examination too). Hence, when we apply the philological method and pay attention to the details of the experiences he describes, we realise that "Lévy-Bruhl's analysis itself highlights not an opposition of two radically different conceptions but a complex history where, in each step, there have been particular textures, particular complexities" (Meyerson, 1995, p.131) that one can compare if they wish to, but only if they have made sure the individual specificities are respected and not denied.

3 - The Possibility of a Hierarchisation of Plurality: Towards Perspectivism?

Thus far, this study has established, thanks to the philological approach, that there is a plurality of mental categories and of ways to understand the world (with different mental landscapes). However, does this mean that, among this plurality, a given culture is epistemologically superior to the others, more adequate to reach 'the truth'? For example, it seems this was the case for the modern, rational logic according to Lévy-Bruhl. Indeed, he calls the other logic a 'pre'-logic, which strongly implies that it is nonsensical or that this form of thought is only beginning to make sense of the world and could only fulfil itself as a proper logic if it became, like ours, a conceptual logic. This consideration entails the notion of progress (already abundantly commented and criticised), understood as a universal march towards the only natural development (in this case, mental development) that different societies realise and develop more or less quickly without a single other option or direction: the destination has forever been set in stone, and, according to the ethnocentrist progressists, this apex of human evolution is the scientific, modern, rational man. Even if there are good reasons to claim that modern society has some advantages, a proponent of the idea of progress would not consider that a society, culture or logic is good *at* something particular, for specific purposes and according to given criteria and values – implying that other ones could be good too, and even better than ours, at other things and for other purposes – but they would claim it is simply the best *per se*. Everything else is not only different but also deemed to be an inferior step towards this best in itself (in most cases the modern, Western culture, conceived as the pinnacle of civilisation and universal model) that could not completely develop and stopped before reaching the goal. Thus, on the one hand, the core of the idea of progress is that there cannot be several and divergent lines of evolution but only one; and since Lévy-Bruhl declares that the other logic is 'primitive', then our rational logic would be the fully fledged one. Even the very term

of 'pre-logical' involves an ethnocentric bias: this 'logic' or mentality does not have a name of its own, which indicates that it is not considered for its own sake but only through the prism of modern logic. The anteriority implied by the term 'pre'logical shows that we are looking at this logic only negatively, seeking which parts of our logic are absent from it, as if our conceptual logic was the unique and complete picture. In this framework, any other logic will only ever be considered from our point of view and according to our criterion, namely the modern, occidental one. To treat our logic as the complete and unique one is adding to the text of experience because other alternatives are possible and valid, and to deny to other logics their autonomy and validity is to remove from the text, so the progressivist point of view lacks probity both by excess and by omission. Therefore, I do not think that such a way of differentiating and hierarchising between the different conceptions of the world is adequate or legitimate, since it imposes a unique perspective and its own prejudices on others while also not being philological enough and denying a lot of other aspects and considerations. On the other hand, the opposing line of thought – rejecting the idea of unilinear progress – acknowledges the cultural plurality and the fact that different cultures can be good at different things. Meyerson's perspective on psychology, which recognises plurality, seems more interesting to me than the alternative that consists in deeming any other way of thinking different to one's own as illusory beliefs, errors or mistakes, for the latter alternative rejects and denies the wealth of ways to understand the world.

This problem of comparing different logics is very much analogous to Nietzsche's problem of values, which is in his mind the fundamental problem of philosophy. Indeed, Nietzsche deals with the multiplicity of cultures as well. Each of them possesses its own values or moral compass that Nietzsche wants to evaluate in order to promote the ones that are the most favourable to living. Thus, in both cases, the problem is to hierarchise a plurality of options. In Nietzsche's framework, the question is formulated as follows: which culture, with its set of mental categories,

involves better values and promotes a better kind of life than another? It can be noted that the values are, in a sense, a specific case of mental categories. Indeed, the categories pertaining to Meyerson's inquiry can be criteria and purposes. Yet, they do not need to be so, since values in the Nietzschean sense – namely, criteria or purposes – are only a particular type of human mental category and psychological function among many others. In this specific sense, Meyerson's task is (quantitatively) broader than Nietzsche's, for the latter does not deal with all of our mental categories but only with the normative (or axiological) ones that grant values to the rest. When one looks at what cultures (understood as the organisation of human activities or as a general outlook and attitude to life) allow, it seems that they are not all equal regarding living or experience, and propose very different types of existence. Hence, in order to undertake the task of comparing and evaluating the worth of a culture's values, Nietzsche developed the method he named genealogy. Such a method aims at exploring the wealth of different human criteria, no longer according to a unique and universal truth or natural development but according to the kind of life they promote, which requires (according to Nietzsche) to look at the drives or values motivating any thought, action, judgement or culture. Frédric Fruteau de Laclos depicts the difference between genealogy and Meyerson's method by using a spatial metaphor. He does indeed describe genealogy as the examination, in the case of morality, of "what has an effect *under* the morality, at work since the origin of the moral conceptions and nevertheless hiding in the present, unrevealable through morality itself" (Fruteau de Laclos, 2012, p.3, my emphasis). This spatial metaphor is also present within the Nietzschean corpus, because the genealogical method is understood by Patrick Wotling – a French philosopher, eminent specialist and translator of Nietzsche – as the "thought of the underground" (Wotling, 2016). Nonetheless, Frédéric Fruteau de Laclos addresses a criticism to Nietzsche's practice of genealogy, as it simply finds the unconscious psycho-physiological foundation of our present under the guise of morality, but without considering other ways to live, other values, other relations to the world… I do not fully agree, as Nietzsche suggests

opposing the values of the weak – the ones that have dominated since the rise of Socratism and Christianism – the values of the strong, and this entails a whole other way to relate to the world and to others, for example with no pity or compassion, because this is understood as something that leads to becoming weak and ill from others' misfortune. However, Frédéric Fruteau de Laclos is right in the sense that Nietzsche is stuck in this opposition between weak and strong (or, equivalently, between slaves and masters), which becomes an idealised or artificial dichotomy and prevents Nietzsche from understanding the world and relation to others outside of the realm and limitations of Christian morality. Nietzsche shortly considered the historical diversity; however, he hastily erased the peculiar differences and idiosyncrasies by gathering them all under the term 'strong', 'noble' or 'master' values, in the same way as Lévy-Bruhl reduced all the diversity of the mental functions to two opposite 'mentalities'. Indeed, in the following extract from *Beyond Good and Evil*, is the resemblance to Lévy-Bruhl's frontal opposition of the two mentalities not striking?

> On a tour of the many finer and coarser moralities which have ruled on earth or still rule I found certain traits regularly recurring together and bound up with one another: until at length two basic types were revealed and a basic distinction emerged. There is *master morality* and *slave morality* (Nietzsche, 2014, p.241, Nietzsche's emphasis).

On top of that, right after this sentence, Nietzsche tries to explain the other cases, in fact most of them, by a blend of the two moralities, exactly just as Lévy-Bruhl tried to defend his model's lack of grasp on our experience by arguing that the two mentalities intermingle in most of our daily life. Nevertheless, such defence of a composition of the whole spectrum based on only two fundamental elements is an *ad hoc* way for these thinkers to safeguard their dichotomy and ignore the other cases (the moral and mental varieties) in their wealth and specificity, never considering them closely and in their own right. What Nietzsche is doing here is adding an *ad hoc* hypothesis to save a principle that starts to be visibly flawed

instead of rethinking the whole situation and providing a single principle that can account for it. This is a typical case of a lack of philology, something that Nietzsche has denounced on multiple occasions. Thus, Nietzsche does not discover many different values in other cultures but mostly sees in them the opposite of Christianity, its antithesis, not in a diversity of ways but as one: the values and morality of the strong. Nietzsche simply reverses Christian values, under the justification that they were the ones to proceed an inversion of the values in the first place: "what makes one ill is *good*; what comes from fulfilment, from overabundance, from powerfulness, is *bad*: this is how the believer feels" (1996, §52, p.113, Nietzsche's emphasis). Therefore, values must be inverted once again to be 'turned back on their feet', reverted to their original, healthy state. This process is called by Nietzsche the 'transvaluation' or 'revaluation' of all values[6]. However, by advocating for their reversal, he only acknowledges two opposite, 'antithetical', conflicting poles instead of an abundant diversity. Repeating the same approach as Lévy-Bruhl, Nietzsche thereby falls victim to the same methodological criticism of a lack of philology (which is ironical enough, given Nietzsche was the one to baptise this method and advocate for it, as well as for perspectivism, alas maybe only insofar as it allowed him to fight against his greatest enemy: Christianism, and not as an autonomous method). Whereas Meyerson's method seems more philological for it allows one to explore radically different values, in any culture, and even to propose new values and study their emergence as well as their implementation, to see when and where others have been possible. This is the method Frédéric Fruteau de Laclos contraposes to Nietzsche's genealogy, and which he calls 'anamnesis' (a reference to the works of Michel Serres and Isabelle Stengers). This method consists in:

> taking a present point of view and taking it back to the past to show it is only one point
> among others. What comes out is not something special *below* this point of view [in

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[6] See for example: "We must direct our hopes [...] towards spirits strong and original enough to make a start on antithetical evaluations and to *revalue* and *reverse* 'eternal values'" (Nietzsche, 2014, p.142, my emphasis).

contrast to the genealogical method of Nietzsche, where drives appear below the Christian morality, as its motivation and its true meaning], but, rather, *besides* it, other points, which are other possible positions (Fruteau de Laclos, 2012, p.3).

Therefore, Nietzsche's genealogical approach hides a historical, cultural and axiological wealth and complexity. If one wants to hierarchise, it has to be done in a way that respects the multiplicity in its diverse specificities, and not according to an arbitrary and artificial dichotomy, which is always a reduction, an impoverishment and an abstraction. This more philological approach to genealogy involves evaluating each value on its own ground, thus discerning precisely in what aspects this given value is good for living and in what other aspects it produces exhausted humans with no will or power to live and create. Hence, the values and cultures should not be treated from afar and as one or two broad categories, but they should be examined one by one, in their own terms, according to a type of perspectivism that respects each culture's and value's specificities. Such a broad and perspectivist typology (acknowledging more than two types of values and moralities) is not forbidden by Nietzsche's framework, and Nietzsche even describes very accurately the values of Christianism, Buddhism or science for instance, but he almost never goes into detail when writing about the values of the strong and the other cultures in general. Thus, even though he did not prohibit this kind of typology, Nietzsche did not fully advocate for it either and ended up favouring a dichotomy. He did so probably because the main purpose of his examination of cultural diversity was to oppose the Christian values. Nevertheless, it should not be underestimated that a pluralist approach to genealogy could radically change the way we live, by highlighting and proposing to adopt values other than either the Christian ones or their opposite. Nietzsche's dichotomist bias is not to blame unconditionally though, for he has at least tried to change our values and promote a more vigorous life; Meyerson, though, solely adopts a descriptive, philological and even somewhat disinterested stance in his work. Indeed, concerning human life and values,

[31]

Meyerson does not want to decide or maybe did not see there was something that could be decided on this axiological basis. Hence, his historical method does not aim to change our values, categories and way to live (unlike Nietzsche), but simply tries to describe what has already happened, fleshing out a history of human psychological functions. Even the term 'history', in opposition to genealogy or axiology, reveals that Meyerson's inquiry is oriented mostly from the present to the past, trying to understand it, while Nietzsche tries to see in the past or other cultures what could be useful for our present and future, to improve our existence. Meyerson's method does not help directly in hierarchising a multiplicity, although it prevents others from making absolute and reductionist statements since it requires from them to thoroughly study each culture according to its own terms and to not impose a single, unique perspective on them, eliminating what does not fit like a Procrustean bed and deeming what is different to be inferior (as Lévy-Bruhl did). As a result, I think that only through Meyerson's descriptive approach does it become possible to truly understand the variety of values that are different from our own and those of our society. Before bringing the insights of the past to the present in order to shape the future, one should first look philologically at the past because it could allow us to glean even more insights and hold a fairer judgement. Any attempt at hierarchising a diversity should first adopt Meyerson's method and meditate on its results in order to explore the variety and wealth of human knowledge in all its shapes, types and aspects. Maybe a normative stance could be attempted afterwards, after a rigorous examination of the diversity, giving a differentiated value to different perspectives and worldviews. Nevertheless, the criterion used must be specified and will always be only one way to look at it among others. Hence, a description of the various psychological functions through human history and culture can help us discern different values (in the sense of societies' or individuals' criteria and purposes) and thus could be a first step towards a broader genealogy. Although Meyerson himself did not practise or promote this additional step of evaluation, he has undoubtedly helped anyone who wished to do so when he sketched the history

of the psychological notion of work for example (understood in the more precise sense of labour or toil in this occurrence). Indeed, toil, which was initially a means towards an end, has sometimes become an end in itself in our contemporary societies, and that is precisely the status of a criterion or purpose. It is exactly these kinds of entities that Nietzsche evaluates genealogically. Thus, by outlining the history of a highly axiological notion (although there are many more such notions that should be investigated historically, such as merit or inheritance for instance, and with this we would only be staying within the frame of contemporary, modern societies; there are many more criteria and values that belong to other cultures or more specific spheres of action), Meyerson lays the ground – namely, the necessary knowledge – for a comparison and evaluation of these values-criteria. It is a necessary step any genealogist must make since firstly one has to understand each individual value itself before being able to compare several of them and evaluate them. Without this step, one may once again find a dichotomy instead of acknowledging a rich diversity. In short, understanding variety comes before evaluating it. Therefore, Ignace Meyerson's historical and comparative psychological method is not at odds with Nietzsche's. On the contrary, it is the necessary foundation for any genealogy, which simply emphasises the axiological dimension of the investigation once the description has been firmly and philologically elaborated on. Consequently, and to extend the spatial metaphor, one could very well look simultaneously or successively below and laterally, below the many different points of view that Meyerson's historical method discovers – in essence, finding the drives and values motivating them –, instead of mostly only Christianism (so only one cultural *topos*) in Nietzsche's framework, thus combining the methods and virtues of anamnesis and genealogy. This double approach is possible because each cultural landscape has its own drives and values, its own physio-psychological underground, and these cultural landscapes are numerous and varied. Hence, these two methods or prisms are not mutually exclusive; they can strengthen one another. Their collaboration leads to an acknowledgement of a manyfold diversity, so that all

thinkers that aim to hierarchise human cultural diversity (with their own criteria and perspective) will do so in a pluralistic way, adopting a perspectivist stance that implies sorting a diversity in a way that acknowledges all the specificities and does not reduce the diversity to a mere dichotomy.

Conclusion

Throughout this study, I have tried to illustrate how Meyerson's psychology differs from the prisms that dominate the field today, thanks to his historical approach to the psychological functions through a comparative examination of various human works. I have used Nietzsche's method of philology to distinguish Meyerson's method since he has emphasised a forgotten (or underestimated) aspect of psychology: its cultural and historical dimensions. Drawing some inspiration from his approach could probably help psychologists to renew their method and objects of interest thanks to a more radical consideration of the historicity of the human psyche and categories. An example has allowed me to better flesh out Meyerson's method at work, illustrating how psychologists could become interested in much more varied documents than the ones they usually refer to. To do so could broaden psychology's scope immensely, allowing an investigation of any human work (from any given time or culture) from a psychological standpoint. In such a framework, issues concerning language, social life and cultural organisation can formally enter the field of psychology, as they help discern the mental categories they form the background of and rely on. Moreover, I have also tried, still thanks to philology, to show how Meyerson's method is different from other historical approaches to psychology, namely those of Durkheim, Lévy-Bruhl and Nietzsche. Meyerson is philologically superior to these authors, for he has respected the wealth of variations we can notice in experience. Indeed, he thought that human psychological functions, organising concepts and spirit in general vary greatly through time and culture (contrary to Durkheim), not only in two opposite ways but in numerous diverse ways (contrary to Lévy-Bruhl and Nietzsche). Therefore, Meyerson's philological reading

of sociologists has shown that they were missing both the cultural and historical dimension of psychology (meaning that human logic and concepts are not always the same but are subject to change and variation) and the psychological dimension of culture and society (namely, the fact that a culture is also expressed in the mental categories that humans use to make sense of the world, speak and live). Furthermore, Meyerson's difference from Nietzsche also lies in the fact that Meyerson tries to observe and document the psychological variations through time and culture as widely and accurately as possible, thus adopting a descriptive stance, whereas Nietzsche wishes to evaluate and adopts a normative approach. Even though Meyerson has a superior probity over Nietzsche (for he really insists on the plurality and specificity of each culture, rejecting the reduction to a dichotomy), one could add another dimension to his inquiry: namely, the axiological dimension that Nietzsche has discovered and developed thanks to his genealogical method, which also applies to human cultural diversity. Indeed, the conclusion of Nietzsche that we should keep in mind is that our different cultural and mental landscapes express different values, affect our lives and can be evaluated and favoured on this basis. This is a very unique, interesting and useful approach that we tend to forget as researchers, absorbed in our theories, but that holds a concrete influence and impact on our lives and choices, which makes it complementary to any descriptive (or purely theoretical) approach. The benefit of the comparison with Meyerson's method is that it encourages genealogists to make sure that the attempts to compare, evaluate and hierarchise human cultural diversity are based on a philological outlook that respects the plurality and wealth of values, rather than imposing a single cultural view, preference or problem on the diversity. In this way, the comparison should not lead to an abandonment of genealogical method; on the contrary, it strengthens the undertaking by basing it on a more solid and philological ground. Thus, Meyerson does not undermine Nietzsche's originality and importance as the thinker who wants humans to take their fate into their hands as a species and

as a society by evaluating and choosing their way to live instead of leaving it to chance and blind historical tradition.

These several comparisons of Meyerson's method with other ones (resulting each time in a lesson of philology) show us that his method can be applied in many (if not any) field of knowledge. The key point always showcased by the comparison is that researchers should pay attention to the cultural and historical variations in order to make sure that scientists avoid ethnocentric biases and unnecessary hypotheses that are not simply more 'cost-heavy' theoretically but may even skew research by concealing many aspects of experience that might be vital and shape our results (or even questions and issues) differently if they were taken into account. Hence, researchers should or could adopt a pluridisciplinary approach instead of staying confined within the strict limits of a single field. Such limits lead to some aspects or dimensions of experience being overlooked (by leaving them to other fields), and we become blind to these influencing factors in our field, thus resulting in a lack of probity. Therefore, by bringing a philological, historical and cultural approach to psychology, Meyerson's approach spilled over the strict boundaries of the human sciences revealing that our concepts are always rooted in a culture and time, situated in a perspective that highlights some aspects of reality but conceals others. Thus, by acknowledging the diversity of human mental categories, Meyerson opened a whole new continent that could be investigated in a pluridisciplinary way, at the crossroads of all sciences, fields, methods and documents. By leaving our modern and western cultural comfort zone, we might discover alternative ways to think and concepts that could reshape all our findings and even our problems, values and perspectives. Furthermore, since our concepts or mental categories inform and determine what we know, the acknowledgement of their situationality and partiality should lead to an epistemological and ontological revolution. Indeed, is our knowledge only relative? What is our relation to the world? Maybe the dichotomy subject-object is merely a cultural invention so a whole continent of epistemological

and ontological interpretations could emerge and be open to exploration as a consequence or implication of Meyerson's prism. His inquiry would not then be simply confined to the scope of psychology or even to the human sciences anymore but would be the prerequisite (as the exploration of human cultural and historical diversity) to a philological ontology and epistemology, to a redefinition of truth and knowledge and, perhaps, even to a renewal of metaphysics. These important issues will be the subject of a second article.

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METODA HISTORYCZNA W PSYCHOLOGII W UJĘCIU IGNACE'A MEYERSONA. LEKCJA Z DUCHA NIETZSCEHAŃSKIEJ FILOLOGII DLA BADANIA LUDZKIEJ RÓŻNORODNOŚCI W CZASIE I KULTURZE

Abstrakt

W odróżnieniu od współcześnie dominujących szkół psychologicznych podejście Ignace'a Meyersona wnosi do psychologii podejście historyczne i kulturowe. Tym

samym oferuje alternatywny sposób rozumienia ludzkiej psychiki. Przyjmując za Nietzschem, że filologia jest sztuką i metodą dobrego interpretowania pokażę, jak Meyerson dokonuje filologiczno-krytycznej lektury prac kilku socjologów, którzy stosowali podejście historyczne i kulturowe, ale pozostawili psychologię poza obszarem swoich zainteresowań. Tak więc konfrontacja z Durkheimem, Lévy-Bruhlem i Nietzschem pozwoli wydobyć specyfikę metody historycznej Meyersona, a także uwypuklić jego koncepcję psychologii w opozycji do socjologii i genealogii. Uznanie kulturowego i historycznego wymiaru psychologii, ale też psychologicznego wymiaru kultury, musi prowadzić do interdyscyplinarności, gdyż wszystkie nasze koncepcje i pojęcia są usytuowane kulturowo i historycznie i muszą być rozpatrywane w sposób skontekstualizowany.

Słowa kluczowe: historia, socjologia, kultura, psychologia, interdyscyplinarność, wielodyscyplinarność, metodologia

Abstract

By contrast to the contemporary dominant schools in psychology, Ignace Meyerson's outlook is situated at the level of culture and brings a historical approach to psychology, thus offering an alternative prism for understanding human psyche. Following Nietzsche's definition of philology as the art and method of interpreting well, I will show that Meyerson undertakes a philological and critical reading of several sociologists who, while adopting a historical and cultural approach, have left psychology outside of their research. Thus, a confrontation with Durkheim, Lévy-Bruhl and Nietzsche will allow us to underline the specificities of Meyerson's historical method as well as to highlight his conception of psychology, in opposition to sociology and genealogy. Meyerson concludes that acknowledging both the cultural and historical dimension of psychology and the psychological dimension of culture leads towards interdisciplinarity because all our concepts and notions are culturally and historically situated and should be put into context to be effective and enlightening. Meyerson's emphasis on the plurality, wealth and diversity of human

mental categories through culture also opens a whole continent of divergent or complementary interpretations that could lead us, if we put the ethnocentric stance to the side, to radically modify our findings, prisms and questions.