

A comment to Adilson Feiler's paper *AMOR FATI: UM DEBATE ENTRE HEGEL E NIETZSCHE A PARTIR DOS CONCEITOS DE "DESTINO" E "AMOR"*

Michaela Bordignon¹

Feiler's paper presents a comparative analysis of Hegel's and Nietzsche's conceptions of love and fate. The investigation of the role that these notions play in these two different conceptual backgrounds allows Feiler to thematise a crucial problem, that is the clash between the dogmatism and formalism of religion and moral laws on the one hand and the self-determining freedom through which the human being realises what it really is on the other. With respect to this problem, the philosophy of the young Hegel in the *Spirit of Christianity and its Fate* and the thoughts that Nietzsche presents in his *Antichrist* end up crossing one another. This is testified by the strong criticisms through which both philosophers attack the alienation arising from Christian morality. Moreover, what underlies both their philosophical approaches is an effort to find a *Versöhnung*, i.e. a movement towards a reconciliation of human being with itself and with its own concrete existence.

Nietzsche's notion of *amor fati* [the love of fate] plays of course a fundamental role in this discussion. *Amor fati* implies an attitude to live our life by embracing our fate. One does not face one's concrete existence under the guide of given and simply assumed rules, dogmas, or laws. The driving force accompanying *amor fati* is an immanent movement of self-affirmation. This self-affirmation does not consist simply in the tautological persistence of someone against everything he or she faces in his or her concrete life, or, it is not their abstract identity with themselves. This self-affirmation is the human being's self-determination through which he or she becomes one with his or her own existence. He or she follows the movement of this existence, both in its positive and negative sides.

Feiler highlights this point when he claims:

A análise que Hegel faz do Destino no *Espírito do Cristianismo e seu destino* nos permite ver a vida com otimismo e consolação. Por mais que se apresente obstáculos causadores de inúmeros sofrimentos estes não subjugam. Pois, todas estas forças que fazem sofrer não são estranhas àqueles que as experimentam. Fazendo com que estes que atravessam as mesmas sejam capazes de ultrapassá-las. Encarada desta maneira, a dor já não é considerada estrangeira. Mas, como algo com que o homem se relaciona com conhecimento, já que faz parte de sua singularidade de vida. A sua postura neste sentido é a do enfrentamento como em Nietzsche ao apresentar o seu conceito de amor, o amor ao destino: *amor fati*, que é a sua ética. A acolhida jubilosa à vida tal como se me apresenta e, assim afirmando o si mesmo.

In the few considerations I am going to present, I want to focus on this particular aspect of Feiler's contribution. More specifically, I will try to further develop the relationship between

¹ Bolsista PNPd pelo PPG de Filosofia da PUCRS. Email: michelabordignon81@yahoo.it

Nietzsche's notion of *amor fati* and Hegel's conception of life as a self-determining process that necessarily involves a constitutive negativity within itself.

On both sides, a paradoxical structure arises. On the one hand, the notion of *amor fati* requires us to love potentially repellent objects.² The paradox comes to light when we consider that love consists of a positive attachment towards something, while the object of love – fate – includes necessarily the suffering and unhappiness that unavoidably affects everyone's life: «we feel the pain that attaches to such experiences but find ourselves able to love them *nevertheless*, without holding them as objection to life».³ On the other hand, Hegel conceives of life as something that feeds upon a constitutive contradiction:

Something is therefore alive only in so far as it contains contradiction within it, and moreover it is this power to hold and endure the contradiction within it. But if an existent in its positive determination is at the same time incapable of reaching beyond its negative determination and holding the one firmly in the other, is incapable of containing contradiction within it, then it is not the living unity itself, not ground, but in the contradiction falls to the ground.⁴

Only what is able to bear the weight of negativity and contradiction is really alive. Hegel clearly explains the interaction between life and negativity within the section on the logical idea of life in the *Science of Logic*.

This negativity articulates itself in the two essential moments of the living process, whose core is need.

(1) Firstly, need is *the relation of individual to its other*. The living being «relates itself to an *other* to it»⁵, relates itself to what it misses. In this sense, the living being «posits itself as denied»⁶, namely it is the not being of what it needs. In feeling what it misses the organism has in itself its not-being. In this first moment of the need the organism seems simply to lose itself. It seems to be simply denied.

(2) Secondly, need is not simply the relation of the individual to its other. The feeling of the other as something missing is also a relation to itself of the living individual. Actually, in its intrinsic negativity the living being is concretely at home with itself:

it is not lost in this loss of itself but maintains itself therein and remain the identity of the self-similar Notion; thus it is the urge to posit this *other* world *as its own*, as similar to itself, to sublimate it and to objectify *itself*.⁷

² For an analysis of this paradox, see HAN-PILE, B., *Nietzsche and Amor Fati*, in «European Journal of Philosophy» 19 (2011), n. 2, pp. 224-261.

³ HAN-PILE, B., *Nietzsche and Amor Fati*, in «European Journal of Philosophy» 19 (2011), n. 2, pp. 224-261. p. 240.

⁴ G.W.F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, A.V. Miller, Humanity Books, New York 1998 (from now on *WdL*), p. 440.

⁵ *WdL*, p. 770.

⁶ *WdL*, p. 770.

⁷ *WdL*, p. 770.

The individual is not simply the not-being of what it needs, namely the not-being of its other. It is not simply denied, or, more explicitly, it is not lost in this negation. Need is also a negation where living being realises itself. In needing its other living being is essentially this other by having it in itself as what he misses.

In need the objectivity is constitutively inherent in the living being, and it is inherent in its radical otherness, because it subsists as negated, namely as what the individual is missing and therefore as what is other than the individual itself. In need the other is the presence of absence. In need the other is not simply in a relation with the individual, because it lies within it.

Yet, need is not only the presence of the absence. Need is also what moves the living individual toward its other in order to assimilate it. Hence, need is what guides the self-determining process through which the organism turns the presence of the absence into a real presence. In fact, need is embodied in the individual's urge to get what he misses and make it its own. In the process raised by need, the living being becomes concretely identical with its other in the appropriation of the object. They are one and the same thing. The being one and the same thing of the living being and its other is the contradiction at the core of life, which takes its strongest form in pain: «it is said that contradiction is unthinkable; but the fact is that in the pain of a living being it is even an actual existence».⁸

Therefore the negativity and contradiction in Hegel's notion of life is not something abstract and formal, because it is nothing but the needs and sufferings that moves life itself in its immanent process of self-realisation. This is why Hegel claims that «the sentient creature [...] feels *pain*, and it is the privilege of the sentient nature to feel pain».⁹ Pains and sufferings, therefore, far from representing an obstacle for the living being's self-realisation, constitute its innermost nature. They pervade life itself, that persists only in so far as the individual is able to feel and face the negativity inherent in its concrete existence.

In front of these negative components of existence the individual has two choices. On the one hand, the individual can reject this negativity and take distance from it. Nevertheless, since this negativity is part of its own existence, taking distance from it implies taking distance from itself, from its reality, from its concrete existence, in order to take refuge in another reality not affected by these negative tensions. Such reality would be a self-identical one deprived of any kind of struggle. Developing Nietzsche's terminology, this attitude could be called *horror fati*. On the other hand, the individual can choose the *amor fati* and embrace the negativity of life, namely life with all its sufferings, struggles, pains, tensions that drives the way in which each of us determines him or herself and realise who he or she really is. P. Van Tongeren clarifies this point as follows:

reality is the will to power, as is the human being who has to affirm reality. The morality that is being criticized by Nietzsche does not affirm reality as it is, but tries to transcend it and arrive at another more true reality, one in which there is no

⁸ *WdL*, p. 770.

⁹ *WdL*, p. 15.

change but eternity, in which there is no struggle but only peace. Where this morality rules as if it were the only one, reality is being petrified into one interpretation. Reality that is not a conflict of interpretations is like a battle that is settled by only one of the parties. On the behalf of life, Nietzsche commits himself to the struggle.¹⁰

In this sense, Nietzsche, together with Hegel, could be considered a philosopher that develops a conception of negativity as something that has also a positive value. For example, he claims that «a full and powerful soul not only copes with painful, even terrible losses, deprivation, [...]; it emerges from such hells with a greater fullness and powerfulness; and the most essential of all, with a new increase in the blissfulness of love».¹¹ In these words it is clear how pain holds an essential value for human being. Only the ones who are able to see this value, that is, only the ones who are able to love pain, or, to love fate as a whole, can reach a full realisations of their potentials. This is precisely the reason why Nietzsche describes *amor fati* as the «formula for greatness in a human being».¹²

Hence, what both Hegel and Nietzsche are suggesting, is to embrace life in its completeness, in its positive but foremost in its negative side, because the latter will drive the self-determining dynamic along which every change in our life will occur and through which we will become who we really are.

The contradictions that are incorporated in each tension and pain of our life do not have to be escaped, but they need to be embraced, incorporated, loved. Only if we will try to bear the weight of these contradictions we will open for us the chance not to escape our concrete existence, but to fully develop it, and to fully develop – with it – ourselves. This is another crucial point in Feiler's contribution:

pela reflexão se supera e guarda, num nível superior, as contradições vividas no momento anterior; assim, tais contradições vividas, longe de serem negadas, se elevam a um nível superior, pelo reconhecimento e auto-reflexão. Se atinge um patamar superior em direção à plenitude, pelo alcance geral em uma unidade composta de contradições.

The self-reflection that allows the sublation (*Aufhebung*) of contradictions is nothing but the dynamic through which life determines itself by incorporating in itself the contradictions that it unavoidably faces. Only what endures the contradictions is really alive, or, only what is open to the contradictions of pains, struggles and suffering is also open to what Feiler calls *plenitude vital* (*Lebensfülle*).

We can look towards this horizon of completeness only if the reconciliation we aim at includes alienations, tensions, struggles within itself. If these negative moments of life are kept aside, life itself misses its crucial dynamics and its pretence of completeness falls apart. The incorporation and the

¹⁰ P. Van Tongeren, *Nietzsche and Ethics*, in K.A. Pearson (ed.), *A Companion to Nietzsche*, Blackwell, Oxford GB - Malden Ma 2006, p. 398.

¹¹ F. Nietzsche, *The Will to Power I*, trans. by W Kaufmann, Vintage, New York 1968, § 352.

¹² F. Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, trans. by W Kaufmann, Vintage, New York 1990, p. 258.

recognition of negativity as an immanent part of life turns this very negativity into the strong point of life itself.

In this sense, the path followed by Hegel and Nietzsche is the same. It is the path of tensions, conflicts and sufferings that are a fight that we have to face even if it can beat us, because it is the only way for us to be what we really are.