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THE EDENIC EARTHLINESS IN MORETTI-COSTANZI: ENVIRONMENTALITY AND ASCESIS OF CONSCIOUSNESS¹

Sommario

In questo saggio viene presa in considerazione la dimensione dell'ambientalità della coscienza sviluppata da Moretti-Costanzi. Partendo dall'idea carabelliana di "Coscienza-ambiente" ed intersecando questa con lo heideggeriano "esser-nel-mondo", recuperato in una positività e autenticità esperienziale nell'ottica di un cristianesimo sapienziale, Moretti-Costanzi sviluppa la sua idea di "terrenità edenica", mettendo in luce il pregiudizio "spiritualistico" e quindi "astratto" della concezione ellenica dell'uomo nel suo rapporto con una natura estranea in cui gli individui risultano soltanto nella loro dimensione "fantasmatica". A partire da questo confronto critico, fondato sulla riscoperta di un cristianesimo "concreto" nella sua esplicitazione di un mondo "abitabile" e "impersonabile" da coloro che relazionalmente lo vivono nella pienezza di una verità che non conosce morte e distruzione, la "terrenità edenica" viene a presentarsi come un concetto chiave. Esso, infatti, dischiude a Moretti-Costanzi la possibilità di quell'"ascesi di Coscienza" intesa come "recupero" e "redenzione" del mondo, piuttosto che come sua negazione, aprendo così le porte a quel "neo-bonaventurismo" che caratterizzerà una parte significativa del suo percorso filosofico.

Parole chiave: Terrenità edenica, Ambientalità, Ascesi, Coscienza, Cristianesimo-filosofia, San Bonaventura

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¹ This essay is the full draft of the presentation delivered at the Society for Italian Philosophy conference, held in Toronto in June 2023. The contribution was part of a panel organized by John Caruana (Metropolitan University, Toronto) titled *Returning to the Earth: Francis in Contemporary Italian Philosophy*. I chose not to translate it into Italian to preserve the memory of that occasion, where Moretti-Costanzi's thought was shared in a North American context. I am especially grateful to John Caruana for providing me with this opportunity.

Abstract

This essay examines the environmental dimension of consciousness as developed by Moretti-Costanzi. Drawing from Carabellese's idea of "Consciousness-environment" and intersecting it with Heidegger's "being-in-the-world", which he reinterprets in a positive and experientially authentic way within the perspective of a sapiential Christianity, Moretti-Costanzi formulates his concept of "Edenic earthliness". He highlights the "spiritualist" – and therefore "abstract" – bias in the Hellenic conception of man in his relationship with a nature that remains foreign to him, where individuals exist only in their "phantasmatic" dimension. Starting from this critical confrontation, grounded in the rediscovery of a "concrete" Christianity that unfolds as an articulation of a world that is "habitable" and "impersonable" by those who relationally experience it in the fullness of a truth that knows neither death nor destruction, "Edenic earthliness" emerges as a key concept. It grants Moretti-Costanzi the possibility of that "ascesis of Consciousness" understood as a "recovery" and "redemption" of the world rather than its negation, thus opening the way to the "neo-Bonaventurism" that would characterize a significant part of his philosophical journey.

Keywords: Edenic Earthliness, Environmentalism, Ascesis, Consciousness, Christianity-as-Philosophy, St. Bonaventure.

Introduction

The idea of an "environmentality of consciousness" that prepares the Moretti-Costanzi's notion of Edenic earthliness was presented for the first time by Pantaleo Carabellese in a short essay titled *Consciousness (La coscienza)* published in 1944 in a collective volume edited by Michele Federico Sciacca and dedicated to Italian contemporary philosophy (*Filosofi italiani contemporanei*).

In this essay Carabellese presents one of his main themes dedicated to the concrete consciousness and here, for the first time, he indicates the concreteness of consciousness by associating it with an environmental dimension. The essay begins with an analysis of the concept of environment, trying to define the possibility of a general environment that lies beyond the single determinations that this world can have in relationship with the single "ontic" situations such as the national, cultural or working environment in which the individual acts and exists.

For Carabellese «the environment is consciousness and consciousness is the environment»² because there is nothing “outside” of consciousness because there is nothing “outside” of the environment: the “outside” is always “in” the environment because the environmentality of consciousness cannot be overcome. This statement is based on the radical change introduced by Carabellese in the idea of consciousness itself by virtue of which consciousness is not a property of man but rather the contrary: man is a possession of consciousness. A sort of radical inversion that is very similar to many Heideggerian statements such as those regarding freedom and language: in both cases Heidegger affirms that man is not the owner of freedom and language, on the contrary man is owned by freedom and language.³

Even if Carabellese never had a positive relationship with the Heideggerian thought, assimilated by the Italian thinker in the ranks of the German nihilistic existential thought, this agreement of the two thinkers on this kind of radical change in the use of the philosophical lexicon makes it possible to understand the difference introduced by Carabellese himself in the semantic of the term “consciousness” and its relative “environmentality”.

In this sense “consciousness” cannot be identified with “subjectivity” as the philosophical tradition of modernity usually did. Carabellese is thus the rediscoverer of a concrete sense of consciousness in which the priority of subjectivity is criticized up to the point that not the subject, but the Object, is the principle and the fundament of subjectivity itself. That means that the Object is conceived as a “pure” and “unique” Object which is the fundament of the being of the multiple subjects that are related to each other due to their connection with the pure object. That does not mean a mere return to a form of metaphysical “realism”, but rather the affirmation of a reality that is environmentally posed in the relationship between the “pure Object” (that for Carabellese is undoubtedly God) and the “multiple subjects” conceived as the “terms”

² P. CARABELLESE, *La coscienza*, in M. F. SCIACCA (ed.), *Filosofi italiani contemporanei*, Marzorati, Como 1944, p. 208. All the translations from the Italian texts are mine.

³ «The essence of freedom is the freedom of the essence» (M. HEIDEGGER, *On the Essence of Truth*, in Id., *Pathmarks*, ed. by W. MCNEILL, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1998). «The essence of language is the language of the essence» (M. HEIDEGGER, *The essence of Language*, in Id., *On the Way to Language*, ed. by P.D. HERTZ, Harper&Row, New York 1971).

to which the Object is referred to and without which there cannot be a manifestation of the Object itself.⁴

Thus, the environmentalism of consciousness is for Carabellese the place where consciousness itself appears as a place of relationship in which is given a different level of individualization that can be “pure” or “empirical”. In Carabellese’s ontocoscientism, in which the being is always a “being of consciousness” – in the sense that being manifests itself in the concreteness of consciousness – the concrete relationship between object and subjects makes it possible to find a possibility to define the plural dimension of subjectivity beyond its finitude: «we can, and we must, thus, speak of singular individuals – states Carabellese – without making them particular and finite; we can and we must speak of high genres without thinking of them opposed each other».⁵ In this sense for Carabellese the relationship is something ontological, founded in the concreteness of the environmental consciousness beyond the conflictual constitution of the ended consciousnesses as proposed by German idealism, particularly by Hegel in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. As Carabellese states: «Me and you are, inasmuch as we permeate each other as a pure consciousness: in our being there is no internal and external; me and you should not be reduced to a sort of inaccessibility that kills both and offers nothing instead: the otherness inside the being (and not different from the being) is the most enlightened discovery».⁶

As we will soon see this is a very important aspect of Carabellese’s philosophy that will be confirmed and expanded upon by Moretti-Costanzi. There is in fact a level of consciousness in which intersubjectivity is given beyond the humanistic limits of the empirical determination of the singularity. There is a level of consciousness in which personality is “concretely pure”, in relationship with the others in a world that is the propitious environment for the encounter more than for conflict. However, in Carabellesian thought the expression I already used of a consciousness that is “concretely pure” remains a metaphysical oxymoron that puts the pure object with the plural subjects in a circular relationship in which one cannot exist without the other: a sort of return of the Cartesian circle between I and God. In this sense the aim of Moretti-Costanzi will be to overcome the circle by affirming Christ as that

⁴ Here, one can clearly appreciate the evident Spinozian influence in Carabellese’s philosophy—an aspect that will significantly shape Moretti-Costanzi’s thought. On this, see in particular T. MORETTI-COSTANZI, *Spinoza*, in *Id., Opere*, edited by E. MIRRI and M. MOSCHINI, Bompiani, Milan 2009.

⁵ P. CARABELLESE, *La coscienza*, cit., p. 218.

⁶ Ivi, p. 219.

criterion who allows the concrete pureness of consciousness to be what it is: a redeemed world in which a relationship is possible between persons no more affected by their finitude as the prevalent gnoseological look makes us mistakenly see.⁷

1. *From Environmental Consciousness towards Edenic Earthliness: the Mediation of the Heideggerian Being-in-the-World*

As we have already seen the Carabellesian concept of the environmentality of consciousness is functional to the determination of the concreteness of consciousness as it is given in the relationship between the pure Object (God) and the plural subjects related to it. This connection gives Carabellese the possibility to rediscover the intersubjective relationship in a metaphysical sense that goes beyond the oppositive dialectic typical of the German idealism, which is still present in its Italian counterpart. But even as Carabellese pushes towards an overcoming of metaphysics he remains tied to it as he repeats, on a different level, the circle between subjects and God in his reprise of the ontological argument.

This limit of the Carabellesian concept of consciousness is, for Moretti-Costanzi, due to the absence of a third term inside the concreteness of consciousness: the world. For Moretti-Costanzi the world is the place where the being of consciousness manifests itself in its pure concreteness. As he states at the beginning of the essay on the Edenic earthliness: «The world, in its objectivity, is an environment of Consciousness (*Cum-scientia*) resulting only within those who dwell in it; and these are “egos” precisely insofar as they constitute and define themselves as an experience in the situational objectivity of that determined environment: inconceivable without it».⁸

⁷ On this see in particular the introductions by E. MIRRI and M. MOSCHINI to the Opus Majus of Moretti-Costanzi: E. MIRRI, *Teodorico Moretti-Costanzi: un profilo* e M. MOSCHINI, *Fede sapiente e intellectus fidelis*, both in T. MORETTI-COSTANZI, *Opere*, cit., pp. V-LXVV and LXIX-CXXI.

⁸ T. MORETTI-COSTANZI, *La terrenità edenica del cristianesimo e la contaminazione spiritualistica*, in *Opere*, cit., p. 251. Moretti-Costanzi was one of the first Italian thinkers to take an interest in Heidegger's philosophy. In 1949, he published an essay titled *L'ascetica di Heidegger* (now in *Opere*, cit., pp. 2565-2600), in which he established a connection between Heidegger and a mystical element that finds its most eminent predecessor in Schopenhauer. One year later, Heidegger privately responded to Moretti-Costanzi through the German consul in Rome, Martin von Bruch, giving the Italian philosopher the opportunity to revisit the topic in his article *Circa un giudizio dello Heidegger sulla mia «ascetica di Heidegger»*, «Teoresi», III, 1951, pp. 1-9. For further details on the relationship between Moretti-Costanzi and Heidegger, see in particular: E. MIRRI, *La resurrezione estetica del pensare (tra*

In this sense the world is that environment of consciousness in which the plurality of subjects can dwell and experience themselves in a suitable atmosphere in which they can find the sense of a concrete relationship. For Moretti-Costanzi this is the sense of a being-in-the-world purified by the phenomenological element that still insists on a gnoseological wave by virtue of which the existential experience takes place in a general idea of a mankind that remains impersonal. In this sense the Heideggerian concept of mundanity as showed in *Being and Time* should be revisited and rediscovered in a dimension that makes it possible for the person to emerge in a world reestablished in its authenticity beyond the anxiety that brings everything to nothingness and the lack of foundation. This is precisely the result of the metaphysics that Heidegger tries to overcome by falling into the same presuppositions that give us a world as a manifestation of beings at hand that remain in a distance that cannot be bridged: «The existentialistic ego – states Moretti-Costanzi – is an ego conceived in the exclusive experience of the deficit that makes it an atom. Thus it is impossible, to speak of that as a true experience of the world, but rather as an experience of the extraneity of the world (and of the plural subjects)».⁹

This critique of the Heideggerian being in the world, however does not appear to be a condemnation of it, because Moretti-Costanzi at the same time, in individuating the limits of this concept, borrows it as the basis of a rediscovery of a world that can be an environment of consciousness where it becomes possible to experience a different level of quality of mundanity itself: a “*mundus mundus*” as it would be stated in Latin, and as medieval thinkers already affirmed: a pure world as it emerges beyond the “spiritualistic contamination of Greek metaphysics” in the original word pronounced in the book of Genesis. In this sense Heidegger experiences a struggle as he, on one hand, wanted to purify philosophy in a fundamental ontology, restored to the pure original Hellenic element, trying to find the phenomenological light and the essence of the manifestation and, on the other hand, he rediscovers the possibility of an authentic, poetic, being in the world. In this perspective the path covered by Heidegger remains in a sort of constitutive ambiguity stretched between phenomenological/gnoseological prejudice and the access to a world sensified in a presence that can never be confused with

Heidegger e Moretti-Costanzi), Ed. Bulzoni, Roma 1976; M. CASUCCI, *Teodorico Moretti-Costanzi: l'esistenza e il suo oltrepassamento*, in Aa. Vv., *Voci dal Novecento I*, ed. by I. POZZONI, Limina Mentis, Milano 2010, pp. 451-480; Id., *The Ascesis of Thought: Heidegger and St. Bonaventure in the Light of Teodorico Moretti-Costanzi's "Christianity-as-Philosophy"*, in T.J. JOHNSON, K. WRISLEY-SHELBY, M.K. ZAMORA (eds.), *Saint Bonaventure. Friar, Teacher, Minister, Bishop. A Celebration of the Eight Centenary of His Birth*, Franciscan Institute Publications, St. Bonaventure University (NY) 2021, pp. 647-662.

⁹ T. MORETTI-COSTANZI, *La terrenità edenica del cristianesimo e la contaminazione spiritualistica*, cit., p. 252.

the representation. But this is only possible if the person, as the place where the environmentality of consciousness can reveal itself, is given as part of the rediscovery of an authentic sense of being.

Facing this ambiguity, Moretti-Costanzi aims at rediscovering the presupposition of a world given in its original clarity where individuals can dwell in an authentic way with a proper face and name, as happened at the beginning to Adam and Eve.

But, before moving towards this outcome, it is necessary to analyze the premises that leads to such ambiguity in Heidegger's thought.

2. The Critique of the Abstractness of Hellenic Spiritualism

Thus, contrary to many contemporary thinkers (not only Heidegger, but also Nietzsche and Schopenhauer) who individuated in the Greek world an alternative to the dominant Christian metaphysics and morality, Moretti-Costanzi moves his critique to Hellenic spiritualism in order to uncover the hidden gnoseological and gnostic error that lies behind Greek thought. In this sense Moretti-Costanzi does not simply invert the direction of the critique of metaphysics proposed by Nietzsche and Heidegger through Greek thought, but he wants to develop it by bringing to light the true need that lies behind this rediscovery of the origins of metaphysics: the restoration of a truest idea of Christianity as the sophic origin of every philo-sophical attempt.

The critique of Moretti-Costanzi moves from the idea that Greek spiritualism is rooted in a naturalism which provides the foundation of every metaphysical dualism. In the archaic Greek and Homeric world there is already a distinction between the psyche and a somatic world conceived in its heterogeneity to the psyche itself. With this in mind, the Umbrian thinker recalls the Homeric verses in which Ulysses visits Hades where the psyches of the dead show themselves as shadows just like the soul of Darius in Aeschylus' *Persians*: a weak eidolon evoked by sacrificial smoke and blood. For Moretti-Costanzi the simple fact that in these narrations the realm of the dead is figuratively "underground" means the submission of subjectivity to a speculatively intended heterogeneous nature. Thus, in this perspective, the path towards the speculative subject is open, and opposed to a reality that lies in front of it as an object. In this sense for Moretti-Costanzi «the spiritualism itself lies and develops on the raw fundament of the naturalism, dualistic in itself, and for which the immature representation of a massive physical world is relative,

established as a being in the bodies in front of which fly about a sort of mental ungraspable lookalike: a type of weakened bodies».¹⁰

On this same wavelength it is possible to evaluate the naturalistic conception of death which is an insurmountable data in the Greek conception of mankind and nature:

For the Greeks death itself is original and essential inasmuch as the Nature (corporeal) which gives the law. So original and essential is death, that towards it is defined, in a subordinated way, not only the life of privileged men, brought with soul and body in the Elysian fields or in the blissful islands, but also the life of the gods that are immortal. Clearly deprived of *eternity* (that would involve a qualitative elevation of life and time), they live forever on the same level on which the other individuals die.¹¹

Thus, for Moretti-Costanzi there is no possibility to compare the biblical myth of Eden with that of the Hesiodic golden age. In the latter all the quality of being is linked to a biological wellbeing that does not admit a qualitative different level of experience, and it is from that kind of continuity that both physics and metaphysics are proposed, in which the latter is no more than that “world beyond the world” that Nietzsche attacks in his works.

It is thus from this kind of naturalism that Hellenic spiritualism is generated by the admittance in the naturalism itself of a hidden esoteric source descending from the Dionysian cult. Moretti-Costanzi admits the existence in Greek culture of a radical alternative to the original naturalism of the archaic religion and mythology and recognizes it in the epiphanies of Dionysus that can be considered as an eruption of a desire for resurrection inside the deadly scenery previously outlined.

Dionysism is the clear testimony of the need of a qualitative overcoming of the naturalist level towards a reinstatement of the singularity in its capability of being connected with a no longer threatening world. The possessed maenads beating the terrain and making milk and honey gushing from the earth mean a reconquest of the earth itself that is no more limited in its degenerated status as an external object.

The fact that Dionysus is considered as a “foreigner” god by the Greeks implicates the extraneity of this kind of religion and mythology from the Hellenic world. The epiphanies of Dionysus are “pandemic” and the state of possession as it is described for example in Euripides’ *Bacchae* means at the same time the profound need of a religious renovation and the tragical risk to which the follower of Bacchus is exposed to loose

¹⁰ Ivi, p. 266.

¹¹ Ibidem.

contact with that solid reality that is established as the limit and the consistency of consciousness itself (that's why maenads looks mad and irrational – as is Dionysism itself).¹²

This polarization of the Greek experience is for Moretti-Costanzi at the same time Plato's philosophical drama – and then the drama of metaphysics itself. Passing through the Orphic and Pythagoric mediation, the Dionysian striving towards resurrection loses its contact with the earth and becomes a “problem” of the soul, of the psyche. And this is the main internal debate of the Platonic philosophy in which we can find at the same time an undeniable quest for eternity, intended as a need of a resurrection of the world in its integrity, particularly appreciable in the aesthetic dialogues of Plato, and on the other hand a strongly residual gnostic element by virtue of which the body and the physical world are condemned as something that must be abandoned according to the well known formula “*soma-sema*”. How Moretti-Costanzi states:

Plato experienced the need for concreteness, and there is no doubt that he was aware of the substantiality of feeling as something ineliminable from the Consciousness and gradually liftable in it (just recall the beautiful pages of the *Philebus*); but this clear acknowledgement, along with the comprehension of the Dionysian experience as a real deepening and elevation of life, did not happen outside the terrain of Greek gnoseologism, that is dualistic in itself.¹³

This is why the psyche was charged by Plato with a task and a potential absent in the Homeric and Hesiodic horizon. In Plato the psyche finally became the headquarter of the Consciousness itself and the origin of every gnoseological dualism confirmed by Aristotle and then translated into the Christian metaphysics as a spurious element, as it was widely criticized at first by Kant and later more radically by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche.

Thus it is no coincidence if Nietzsche will try to find in Dionysism an alternative to metaphysics and it is no coincidence if he sometimes

¹² Cfr. *ivi*, pp. 272-273. Regarding this interpretation of Dionysism and, more generally, the “irrational element” in Greek culture, Moretti-Costanzi refers to Erwin Rohde's masterpiece *Psyche. Seelenkult und Unsterblichkeitsglaube der Griechen* (Tübingen, Mohr 1890), in its Italian translation by E. CODIGNOLA and A. OBERDORFER (Laterza, Bari 1914). In this context, an essential reference is Nietzsche and his rediscovery of the Dionysian cult—particularly the need for resurrection, which guides Moretti-Costanzi's analysis of this aspect of Greek culture.

¹³ T. MORETTI-COSTANZI, *La terrenità edenica del cristianesimo e la contaminazione spiritualistica*, cit., p. 276.

identifies Dionysus with Christ.¹⁴ For Moretti-Costanzi this lies in the deep need Nietzsche had to find a sapience that can affirm as a fulfillment of every dualism beyond thegnoseological prejudice by virtue of which we have fallen in a hostile world where the others represent only a menace to our integrity and survival.

In this sense, if life is not a fall but rather a gift, is there the possibility to rediscover the original sense of a being-in-the-world disclosed in a transfiguring light that finally permits meaningful talk of resurrection?

3. Edenic Earthliness as an Aesthetic Resurrection of Thinking

If the resurrection is the need and the end of a consciousness intended in its environmentalty for Moretti-Costanzi, then there should be a presupposition that makes it possible. Moreover, if the lexicon of Christianity insists so much on the prefix re- (resurrection, redemption, revelation – just to recall a few important recurrent terms) that means a repetition and a return to a pristine status that should be restored. This is the proper status described in *Genesis* that Moretti-Costanzi rediscovers as the guarantee of a fundamental experience and not merely as a mere mythology that needs to be clarified with the instruments of a critical philology. As in Ricoeur, but from a different point of view, the symbol of *Genesis* leads us to consider, in an alternative way, the consolidated basis of a thought that finds a world extrinsic to the consciousness and vice versa.¹⁵

For Moretti-Costanzi philosophy can only be found in its sapiential basis, as the *sophia* that informs the *philia tes sophias* itself:

The sapience (*sōfia*) to which philosophy is tied, has nothing to do with an extrinsic knowledge of things and principles (that would make us remain as we are) but, in the etymological sense of the word it is *sapor* (taste) that gives the criterion of its research, in the living person of the researcher, qualified

¹⁴ In a brief foot note Moretti-Costanzi underlines that «it is well known that in the oldest iconography Christ is represented as Orpheus» (ivi, p. 275) who is no more than a Dionysiac figure.

¹⁵ See, in this regard, Ricoeur's work *The Symbolism of Evil* (tr. by E. BUCHANAN, Beacon Press, Boston 1986), in which the French philosopher analyzes the myth of Genesis within the broader context of the symbolism of the fall from humanity's original Edenic state. Ricoeur's approach in this book is predominantly phenomenological, emphasizing the aspects of loss and fall that permeate the biblical narrative. In contrast, Moretti-Costanzi interprets the myth of *Genesis* as a positive premise for historical development, one that foreshadows the ultimate restoration of meaning to the world in its concrete dimension.

as such. With this intention I have spoken for some time now of a qualitative and cogitative logos that can be a direct *testimony* of a kind of experience that is valid in itself, and that is actual, compared with the one that does not possess, on other levels, the same titles, and distinguishable from it by the criterion of the qualitative *rarity* or of the *ascesis* (Ascesis of Consciousness; inside the Consciousness).¹⁶

In this sense philosophizing is an experience much like the Edenic earthliness in which the criterion that leads the inner tension of the experiencing itself is given. Here in the text Moretti-Costanzi highlights the great tradition of thought that tries to renew the sense of philosophizing intended as an experience. This is the case not only of Carabellese in whom he traces the lines of an experience of thought in which metaphysics is transvalued in a wider horizon of concreteness. In this essay Moretti-Costanzi insists on north American pragmatism quoting William James, John Dewey, Hocking and Whitehead who tried to overcome the impasses of western philosophy and its problematic dualisms.¹⁷ For those thinkers, experiencing means opening the possibilities of thought by bypassing the scientific prejudice by virtue of which the experience remains tied to an empirical and ended dimension in which the subject is always opposed to the object of knowledge. Experiencing rather means to integrate in thinking other kinds of extra methodic relationships with the world and the environment that allows to rediscover extra theoretical and extra speculative aspects of thinking itself, reintegrating aesthetical and ethical aspects that were banned from the “toolbox” of the philosophical access to reality.

This is merely to underline how the need for a philosophy that is no longer demonstrative of reality but moreover a testimony of a level of consciousness is not only tied to a singular idea of Moretti-Costanzi, but is strongly rooted in a way of thinking that has its proper kind of universality which is able to recall different thinkers in different cultural environments around a common “object” that is no more the “objectivity” of modern science, but something that radically involves persons so that they are qualified to meet each other in a Consciousness that is a *cum-scire*,

¹⁶ T. MORETTI-COSTANZI, *La terrenità edenica del cristianesimo e la contaminazione spiritualistica*, cit., p. 253.

¹⁷ Cfr. Ivi, pp. 255-256. For an in-depth analysis of the close relationship and affinity between Moretti-Costanzi's thought and North American pragmatism, see in particular T. MANFREDINI, *Studi sul pensiero americano*, Edizioni Alfa, Bologna 1960.

“despite” and at the same time “in grace of” the differences between everyone.

The basis of that kind of *cum-scire* pertains for Moretti-Costanzi to a story of something concealed and hidden, like a karstic river that sometimes gushes to light just to return quickly to its underground course. That kind of sapience appears for example in the mythologic figure of Hermes Trismegistus, in whose esoteric writings it is possible to find a first testimony of a concrete unity of experiencing on different qualitative levels in which «the Being itself became measurable in intensity and depth better and more than in its extension; and its last degree of depth, personally achieved, presented itself with a sapiential word that, on its own level, does not have substantial variants».¹⁸

However, the radical fundament of the earthliness that constitutes the horizon in which every expression of the sapience can take place is for Moretti-Costanzi the book of *Genesis*. Here the hidden sapience truly manifests itself in a kind of Being that is of Consciousness in the sense that it shows the uninterrupted relationship as the fundament of a being-in-the-world that is not affected by the finitude and loneliness of the isolated subject of knowledge. Moretti-Costanzi summarizes the essential sense of *Genesis* in six points that I will briefly outline here:

A) «Being is not something unrelated to nor preceding the Consciousness, but rather belongs to it, and presumes its law in itself (God) since the abstract moment of a generic possibility».¹⁹ In this sense Moretti-Costanzi's interpretation of the creation out of nothing intends the nihil as a lack of concreteness in which the Being of Consciousness finds the conditions that eternally determine it. The divine *ruah* is the corresponding presence of God that continuously gives life in the becoming of being.

B) «In its reality and concreteness, Being involves the conscious persons that acknowledge it and is what it is only with them: it is world, it is *earth* (*Aadama*) which for Adam and along with Adam reaches its summit and realizes itself as a Paradise».²⁰ So, there is no earth without a man that is made of earth itself. That kind of earthliness is an environment of Consciousness where being manifests itself in a fundamentally Edenic experience. For Moretti-Costanzi this cannot be reduced to a sort of anthropocentrism, but it is a concrete and perennial conscientialism in

¹⁸ T. MORETTI-COSTANZI, *La terrenità edenica del cristianesimo e la contaminazione spiritualistica*, cit., p. 258.

¹⁹ *Ivi*, p. 260

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

which the sapience of Being is always given in a wider form of experience and not merely in a subject-object relationship.

C) «By requesting persons, Being is, literally, in its essential mundanity, of Consciousness (*cum-scientia*), namely it is *being-together* (coessere) of an experiencing where the different centers require each other (*non est bonum esse hominem solum*).²¹ The environment of consciousness is not for a lonely man but always a relational space where it is possible to interfere with each other without the negative aspect of conflict inside the principle of a universal criterion that is the unique God.

D) In this sense, for Moretti-Costanzi there is a «primary and essential sociability» in which the differences of the multiplicity (in particular the sexual difference) should not be considered as oppositions. The reality of Consciousness in which the differences themselves are rooted is the guarantee of the non-conflictual being of the persons and of the creatures in general.

E) «Being, Nature, World, inasmuch as they are the environment of Consciousness fitting to its Principle (the God who made everything and admired it as *valde bona* [very good]), are absolutely positive and immune from corruption and death which mark a sort of undernature or underworld; that is the physical and material world».²² This does not mean that creatures in paradise are immortal (just like in the Greek mentality, signed by the sin) but rather that finitude is not experienced as an unavoidable limit. Just like St. Francis who sang the “sister corporal death” in his canticle of creatures, showing a radical tournament that makes it possible to achieve a different qualitative level of being and living.

F) In this sense the physical and material world are the result of a loss and of a decadence from the original condition of Consciousness, in which the world is given as a positive environment in which it is possible to experience a different “status”: «Paradise – states Moretti-Costanzi – results in the status of innocence; that is in the spontaneity of a concrete and natural understanding; the physical world results in the cognitive status that is the original *sim*».²³

Christianity represents the possibility to regain that paradise just renewing the possibility to “be” authentically in the status that is required to be in an Edenic environment. The Christian resurrection can be considered as a true and living experience of the Consciousness in its concrete mundanity that on the one hand becomes the full denial of the

²¹ Ivi, p. 261.

²² Ibidem.

²³ Ibidem.

gnoseological dualism, and on the other expresses itself with an appropriate logos of a fully authenticated and profound reasoning.

For Moretti-Costanzi it is thus impossible to speak of a Christian philosophy because it contradicts the previously discussed presupposition. A philosophy that aims at investigating Christianity without the adequate experiential titles will always remain a victim of the Greek prejudice by virtue of which Christianity is lost in its proper essence. This is why, for the Umbrian thinker, more than a Christian philosophy, it is necessary to speak of Christianity-as-philosophy (*Cristianesimo-filosofia*) in which Christianity itself gives the sophic and sapiential premises to every philosophical attempt.²⁴

From this point of view for Moretti-Costanzi Tertullian is better than Origen and in general all the medieval Augustinism widely overcomes the Aristotelian scholastic and Thomism, because both in Tertullian and the Augustine heritage there is no space for that kind of Gnosticism, that easily shifts into a gnoseology, for which Christianity should be intended by an exterior and neutral reason, deprived of those “pathic” and “sensitive” elements that make it possible to authentically understand it.

Hence – writes Moretti-Costanzi – Tertullian’s words are a spontaneous expression of an involved Christianity, and are the premises of the admirable acknowledgement, even if not clearly explicit, that will make it possible for the medieval mystics to define God as *summe sensibilis*: the fundamental Principle of a qualified mundanity. After that which I previously stated, it would not be exaggerated to state that the authentic Christianity [...] is all here: in the competence to speak of God, as Adam himself should have been

²⁴ The concept of Christianity-as-philosophy (*Cristianesimo-filosofia*) is perhaps the most significant and, at the same time, one of the most challenging expressions of Moretti-Costanzi’s thought. We are so accustomed to using the adjective “Christian” ideologically, adapting it to various areas of human culture and experience, that we often forget it is primarily a noun—one that demands a central place in our lives. In this sense, Christianity-as-philosophy is precisely the opposite of what has traditionally been defined as Christian philosophy, even by theologians themselves. On this, see in particular: E. MIRRI, *Teodorico Moretti-Costanzi: un profilo*, in T. MORETTI-COSTANZI, *Opere*, cit., pp. LIV e ss.; Id., *Cristo-sapienza fondamento del pensare*, in E. MIRRI, M. MOSCHINI (a cura di), *Filosofare in Cristo*, Atti del Convegno di Perugia 17-19 giugno 2005, Ed. Archidiocesi di Perugia-Città della Pieve, Perugia 2007, pp. 19-28; M. MOSCHINI, *L’ascesi di coscienza e il Cristianesimo-Filosofia. Teodorico Moretti-Costanzi*, Ed. Sala Franciscana di Cultura “P. Antonio Giorgi”, Assisi-San Damiano 1990; M. BOZZA, *La categoria cristologica nello sviluppo del pensiero Teodorico Moretti-Costanzi*, Università degli studi di Trento, Trento 2017.

seeing over his Eden, with those simple, great and foreign words for pagan intellectualism: *Summe sensibilis*.²⁵

As it is well known the expression *summe sensibilis* recurs in St. Anselm *Proslogion* and represents the unavoidable conclusion of the “speculative” itinerary of what is known as the “demonstration of God’s existence”.²⁶ Too often rationalism and intellectualism in western philosophy have sacked the ontological argument, depriving it of its proper environment that is an environment of Consciousness inscribed in a Edenic earthliness, that only the experienced monks could fully understand. This is why the “*unum argumentum*” is comprehended between the initial invocation to God and the exaltation of God itself as “*summe sensibilis*”. The highest sensitivity of God is in fact the restitution of the reasoning about Him to the authentic level on which He is understandable: so if reason does not elevate itself into a concrete horizon in which the senses themselves are renewed and rediscovered in their capability to experience God, the reasoning on God remains something abstract and ungraspable, ready to be criticized in front of the tribunal of “pure reason”, and to become a dead concept – for which it was possible for Nietzsche to speak of the “death of God” in the notorious aphorism 125 of the *Gay Science*.

But as Nietzsche himself stated in his *Zarathustra*: «only where there are graves, are there resurrections», showing clearly that the spirit of Christianity never dies, even if the God of metaphysics finally dies due to its own emptiness. Of course, this is not the occasion to go into Moretti-Costanzi’s interpretation of Nietzsche in depth, but it is undeniable that for the Umbrian thinker the experience of nihilism is actually the highest expression of a need of redemption that always awaits those who did not fear to face the dark side of western metaphysics.²⁷

This is why, for example, a deep esthetical sense inhabits the works of thinkers like Nietzsche or Heidegger – this is not only due to a sort of evanescent estheticism, but rather to a real need of rediscovering a

²⁵ T. MORETTI-COSTANZI, *La terrenità edenica del cristianesimo e la contaminazione spiritualistica*, cit., p. 281.

²⁶ Moretti-Costanzi dedicated one of his most important works in 1951 on St. Anselm’s thought titled *L’ascesi di coscienza e l’argomento di S. Anselmo* (in Id., *Opere*, cit., pp. 117-169).

²⁷ For what concerns Moretti-Costanzi’s interpretation of Nietzsche see in particular: *Il cristianesimo in Nietzsche* (1953); *Sul prologo di Zarathustra (Nietzsche-Schopenhauer)* (1964); *Ancora sul Prologo di Zarathustra: Nietzsche e Schopenhauer* (1988) all in *Opere*, cit., pp. 2697-2744. See also E. MIRRI, *La metafisica nel Nietzsche*, Ed. Alpha, Bologna 1961.

receptive aspect that can give Consciousness its proper consistency and concreteness.

An aesthetical resurrection of thinking (as Moretti-Costanzi's experience of thought in relationship with Heidegger has been defined by his scholar Edoardo Mirri²⁸) is finally possible because the seeds of philosophical thought were planted in good terrain. A terrain that even if often forgotten in its primal creatural dimension, has been taken care of by those who had eyes to see and ears to hear. And this is the case of St. Francis and of the Franciscan Doctors, particularly of St. Bonaventure, who is for Moretti-Costanzi the undiscussed champion of such aesthetical resurrection of thinking. The doctorality of St. Bonaventure does not proceed from his undeniable speculative abilities, but rather from his being fully experienced of that which he speaks about in a speculative manner.

In this sense St. Bonaventure individuates in the so called "*mens*", that concreteness of consciousness in which it is possible to find the restitution of a full comprehension of the world in the light of its principle. In the *mens* the aesthetical presence of a renewed sense means the rediscovery of a corporality strictly connected with the real Christian news of the incarnation represented in the Franciscan sight by the symbol of the crucified Seraph, which has, as Moretti-Costanzi often recalls, winged feet – signifying the elevation of the entire earth and the whole body in the redemption of Christ.

«Thus –Moretti-Costanzi states in his essay *The actuality of St. Bonaventure's mystical philosophy* of 1956 – St. Bonaventure evaluates philosophers and philosophies on the basis of the "*status*" they testify: he devalues Aristotelian philosophy because he finds in it the language of an evident "*status miseriae*" (a state of misery). [...] Actually St. Bonaventure, in the "*status*" doctrine, conceives a situational non-abstract ego and considers the situation itself as relative to a real being-in-the world.²⁹

²⁸ Cfr. E. MIRRI, *La resurrezione estetica del pensare (tra Heidegger e Moretti-Costanzi)*, cit.

²⁹ T. MORETTI-COSTANZI, *L'attualità della filosofia mistica di San Bonaventura*, in *Opere*, cit., p. 2633. The ideal leap from the concept of Edenic earthliness to Bonaventurian symbolism of the winged seraph is justified here by the ascetical element developed in the 1955 work, in which ascesis itself is conceived as an elevation *with* the world rather than *over* or *against* it. As previously stated, this is one of the most significant ideas extensively developed by Moretti-Costanzi in his first trilogy—*La filosofia pura*, *L'etica nelle sue condizioni necessarie*, and *L'estetica pia*—which finds in the *Doctor Seraphicus* its highest point of dialogue within the Christian tradition, always understood as a tradition of reality, truth, and sapience.

In this sense the world and the fully embodied consciousness result on different levels, qualitatively differentiated by virtue of which every abstracted dualism is converted in a concrete duality. Moretti-Costanzi appreciates in St. Bonaventure the strong reprise of the Augustinian distinction between *ratio inferior* and *ratio superior* that can never be confused with a dualism because in this *ratio* the *vires animae* (the “powers of the soul”) – *esse, nosse, velle* (being, knowing and willing) – are all involved (elevated or depressed) in the different level or environment of consciousness. In this regard Moretti-Costanzi recalls a significant quote from St. Bonaventure’s *Commentary on the Sentences of Petrus Lombardus* where the distinction between the two levels of consciousness is clearly stated: «“*Divisio rationis in superiorem portionem et inferiorem, non est... per diversa membra, ut haec et illa sit potentia alia et alia... nec est per membra ita convenientia ut non sit in eis differentia nisi secundum aspectus. Est... differentia in eis secundum dispositiones*».³⁰

Thus, for San Bonaventure there is no dismemberment of the *mens* – of the consciousness – in the distinction between *ratio inferior* and *ratio superior*, but they are distinguished by an ontological difference: this is the difference “*secundum dispositiones*” – otherwise by their dispositions. «And the disposition – comments Moretti-Costanzi – is that which, according to its perversion or its integrity, makes the world that we live physical or Edenic».³¹ Because the senses too can be intended on different levels rather than being declassified to a mere physical medium between an abstracted reason and a heterogenous material world. This is only a limited way to conceive reality, a reality that never becomes true because it only partially fits the real needs of a consciousness that is rooted in the earth in a different way, by virtue of which the sense is what really permits us to appreciate the quality of being: that sapience that, for the Franciscan Magister, “*a sapore dicta est*”. The connection between sapience and *sapor* (taste) means, for Moretti-Costanzi, the highest experiential level reached by St. Bonaventure: «There is no doubt that the Saint philosopher really had this experience of the qualitative dimension of the sense; maybe in this region [in Umbria], may be in the wooden loneliness of the La Verna,

Moreover, in addition to *L'attualità della filosofia mistica di San Bonaventura* (1956), it is also important to mention *L'attualità di San Bonaventura nel “Cristianesimo-filosofia”*: *l'Intellectus Fidelis* (1974), *Il tono estetico del pensiero di San Bonaventura* (1974), and *Al di là delle scissioni filosofia-teologia, ragione-fede: l'Intellectus Fidelis di San Bonaventura* (1972).

³⁰ T. MORETTI-COSTANZI, *L'attualità della filosofia mistica di San Bonaventura*, cit., p. 2638.

³¹ Ibidem.

where the Seraph by winged foot appeared to him to illustrate the truth of the redeemable sensations». ³²

As already stated, in the Franciscan philosophy proposed by St. Bonaventure the winged Seraph reveals the proximity to an Edenic earthliness that signals the possibility of a Paradise regained. «And Paradise – as we can conclude with Moretti-Costanzi's words – is felt as a true proximity, the Seraphic status of beauty and harmony, the odoriferous, the sweet, and the tender, which the inner sense must look for, with joy, and find, and relentlessly return to. It goes without saying that these are the same sensations that allow St. Francis to perceive the beauty of “*Frate sole*” and “*Sora luna*” and “*Sore stelle*”». ³³

³² Ibidem.

³³ Ivi, p. 2639.

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