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The Hubris of the word.

Logic and Language in the Philosophy of Giorgio Colli

ABSTRACT: *This article will be divided into three sections and will address the status of logic and language in Colli's philosophy. Firstly, I will examine the final chapter of *Filosofia dell'espressione*, where Colli develops the hypothesis of the 'spurious λόγος'. From a Collian perspective, logic is regarded as having merely instrumental value, being reduced to a set of relations to a form of substantial otherness that cannot be expressed and which, for that very reason, makes the λόγος unstable. Secondly, I will conduct an examination of the manner in which the spurious λόγος attempts to disguise its caducous nature through the use of the language. Thirdly, I will demonstrate how Colli's theses on logic and language represent a deepening of certain Nietzschean positions. Furthermore, I will show how Colli's engagement with Nietzsche led him to adopt a markedly divergent philosophical position from those of other authors (Derrida, Vattimo, Heidegger) – who, following Nietzschean thought, had previously highlighted the crisis in logic and language.*

KEYWORDS: *Colli, Logic, Language, Expression, Nietzsche.*

1. Introduction

Twentieth-century philosophical and scientific thought has keenly and persistently explored, from multiple perspectives, the theoretical insufficiency of the epistemological-social models that for millennia have inspired the “grand narratives” of Western civilization¹. The past century began with the proclamation of the death of God (F. Nietzsche), followed by the announcement of the disappearance of the subject-author (M. Foucault, R. Barthes), the crisis of logical-mathematical foundations (D. Hilbert, K. Gödel), and the inadequacy of classical physics paradigms (first with A. Einstein's theory of relativity, then with the advent of quantum physics thanks to the Copenhagen school). The idea that absolute and objective truths exist, or that they are demonstrable, shareable, and universalizable, has been progressively set aside; instead, more or less latently, Gorgias' conviction about the total irreducibility of truth to ontological, epistemological, and linguistic planes (simultaneously) seems to have spread uncontested: οὐκ ἔστιν, εἰ δὲ καὶ ἦν, οὐκ ἂν νοητόν, εἰ δὲ καὶ νοητόν, οὐκ ἂν ἐκφραστόν².

¹ The term 'grand narratives' was coined and popularized by Lyotard (1979).

² DK 82 B 3.

Upon closer examination, philosophy seems to have been more affected by the general theoretical crisis of knowledge than other sciences, partly due to its primal predisposition toward a foundationalist approach defined by the primacy of *θεωρεῖν*³. The growing recognition of the potential contestability inherent in all epistemic discourses has pushed philosophy into increasingly intense – and at times exasperated – dialogue with disciplines it once dismissed. This shift has led to the adoption of an ‘experimental’ and heteronomous stance, often reduced to a psychologistic approach rooted in empirical grounds. Subordinated to the ancillary role of supporting various technical sciences, philosophy seems therefore to have forfeited not only its institutional prestige but also its distinct academic identity, relinquishing trust in its speculative capacities and abandoning any genuine theoretical ambition. Broadly speaking, the current trajectory appears to culminate in a decisive *aut-aut*: a stark choice between a theoretical orientation or a philosophy stripped of its autonomy and speculative essence. Yet one might ask: is this truly the only philosophically tenable ‘solution’? Or could it be that philosophy has been – or still is – capable of envisioning alternatives?

For instance, within such a *scenario*, the thought of G. Colli can be considered a distinctly dissonant voice⁴: while acknowledging the transience of reason and, in effect, the insufficiency of the Western philosophical and scientific *λόγος*, Colli simultaneously highlights its speculative potential. For him, the wounds afflicting rationality neither signal its death nor foreshadow its demise; rather, they expose its true nature, inviting an inquiry that seeks to illuminate its actual workings, unburdened by any inclination toward deconstruction.

In the course of this article, I will therefore aim to specify the status of logic and rationality as described by Colli, as well as the language that enables their development. After retracing, in §§1-2, Collian reflections on the instances of *λόγος* and its grammar (with a focus on *Filosofia dell'espressione*), I will demonstrate in §3 its dependence on and its distance from certain Nietzschean theses (thus examining some passages of *Dopo Nietzsche*). On this basis, I will draw a comparison between the interpretations that Nietzsche's philosophy has assumed in Colli's thought and in that of other authors who have engaged with it, in order to highlight, in §4, the originality of Collian position itself⁵.

3 On this topic, see Arendt 1946, 34-36.

4 It is perhaps for this very reason that the Collian perspective, even today, is often overlooked, even within the Italian philosophical landscape. For a contextualization of Colli's figure within the philosophy developed in Italy, see Santoro 2022; Corriero 2023, 235-256. On the contrary, Colli's thought, especially in light of recent philosophical debates, deserves to be rediscovered – also in consideration of the recent publications that complete the editorial picture of his works – Colli 2018; Colli 2024.

5 Colli's works will be cited abbreviated and followed by the page number: *Filosofia dell'espressione* = FE; *Dopo Nietzsche* = DN; *Nascita della filosofia* = NF; *La ragione errabonda. Quaderni postumi* = RE; in this last case, I will refer not to the page number but to the fragment number.

2. The spurious λόγος

The first section of *Filosofia dell'espressione* opens under the sign of an antinomy – one that is evidently deliberate and carefully orchestrated by the author.

I. On the one hand, Colli assumes the inescapability of the category of *representation*, defined as “the only primitive given”, so “vast is its scope”⁶. Furthermore, the essence of representation is immediately linked to the category of *relation*: “From a categorical standpoint, an essence can be assigned to representation, which will be relation [...]. The world is representation insofar as it is subordinated to the category of relation. In fact, representation has no substance; it is merely a relation, a fluctuating connection between two terms”⁷. The reality described by Colli takes the form of an image *for* the perspective of a subjectivity, determining itself *in relation* to the latter and dissolving into the simple connection between a “subject” and an “object”⁸: “The word ‘representation’ as used here is not to be understood as a translation of the German *Vorstellung*, a term that gained prominence in modern philosophy, but rather in its primitive meaning of ‘bringing back to appearance,’ essentially a ‘re-evocation’. The emphasis, therefore, does not fall on the ‘object for a subject,’ but on the ‘re-presenting’ function”⁹.

II. On the other hand – and simultaneously – Colli discerns the non-originality of the very category of *representation*. It is conceived, in fact, against the backdrop of a reference to “something hidden”¹⁰, to a reality that lies beyond representation—understood as *other* than representation itself: “Something else outside of determined representation”¹¹. Nonetheless, this alterity, articulated in terms of *immediacy*, is invariably translated into the language of recollection for a subject: it is subsumed within the representational domain, showing its irreducibility to representation itself: “A subject represents something to itself: this is, after all, what knowing is. But this traces back to a past time when the something was not yet represented, and from which it was taken in order to be represented”¹². And again:

Every time a representation is analyzed, an object is found, albeit within the framework of a relation, that is, according to a perspective, as a determined projection. But it is futile to search for the point from which this perspective opens: at the moment it is discovered, it becomes an object, absorbing within itself the old object, and once again the origin of the perspective escapes [...]. It must be an element beyond the series of representations.¹³

6 FE, 9.

7 FE, 9.

8 See also RE, 411; 281.

9 FE, 6. On the meaning of ‘categories’ in Collian philosophy, see Torrente 2022.

10 FE, 10

11 FE, 19.

12 FE, 6.

13 FE, 13.

In this regard, however, a clarification is necessary: the notion of immediacy, though portrayed in *Filosofia dell'espressione* as an excess in relation to the realm of representation, carries *no* transcendent connotation. Were it to do so, the transcendental claim of representation itself would collapse, rendered partial and dismissible as it would remain confined to this side of a transcendent element. On the contrary, the alterity of the *immediate* in relation to the representational field is expressed solely within the latter, in its immanence – which thereby confirms its pervasiveness:

Signification, manifestation, derive their name from something that lies beneath. But once this lying-beneath is introduced into the discursive context, it no longer lies beneath. That which truly lies beneath cannot be called substance, for no name belongs to it, precisely because it is hidden [...]. If, in order to have meaning, substance must still be included within representation, its lying-beneath must be elevated, and it is precisely this instrument of preservation that we call “expression” which constitutes substance, inasmuch as it alludes to something hidden.¹⁴

In brief, the horizon of immediacy and that of representations are bound together by a relationship of *alterity*, without implying mutual transcendence: “In the unrepresentable, the sphere of expression encounters a limit – one it cannot reduce to itself, but must interpret, precisely because it bears witness to it [...]. Thus, the immediate intertwines with expression, and the extrarepresentational is drawn into immanence”¹⁵.

The two aspects – (I) and (II) – of Colli’s hypothesis of expression thus generate the following antinomy: the very definition of *representation* acquires a transcendental status in exact proportion to its incapacity to express its own immediate foundation – that which enables it to define itself as *re-praesentatio*. The immediate proves irreducible to the representational horizon: even if certain forms of this horizon (such as those of art, or more generally of bodily sensations¹⁶) may come closer to it, the instance of immediacy remains fundamentally unrepresentable. At most, one must valorize the expressive force of representation – that is, its potential to refer to an *other* that remains forever different from representation.

Nonetheless, it is precisely within this contradiction – and not in spite of it – that Colli situates the problem of logic, or rather, *logic as a problem*. In the second section of *Filosofia dell'espressione*, observing the inherent disposition of the λόγος to operate through representation, he detects its intrinsic instability: “Representation [...] is the guiding thread of abstract expressions,” and “it opens and concludes the path of the *logos* [...]. Representation as such: the relation among representations; the principle of the *logos*”¹⁷. The philosophical-scientific λόγος is

14 *FE*, 21.

15 *FE*, 43.

16 *FE*, 30.

17 *FE*, 94.

thus reduced to the function of a mere instrument, an expedient through which representation (fails to) define its relation to the other-than-itself (the immediate), ultimately reducing it to its object:

The *logos*, which [had been] fashioned as an expressive instrument of individuation, in view of action and possibly of man's domination over man, in its refinement [becomes] object".¹⁸ Reason can thus claim no absolute or substantial value, revealing itself to be operative – like representation itself – within a relational domain: "Relation is thus the abstract essence of everything: [...] the principle of the *logos*."¹⁹

On these grounds, Colli can proceed in the second section of *Filosofia dell'espressione* to identify the inherently *failed* nature of logic as it emerges, for example, through its deductive-definitional exercise: the λόγος, he argues, strives to determine the immediate from which it originates and in relation to which it defines itself as *other*, ceaselessly mediating it through further representations. More precisely, it seeks to elaborate a definition of immediacy by means of a series of deductions that admit only mutually exclusive alternatives, thus adopting an "antithetical comportment"²⁰. In this framework, according to Colli, the presence of the immediate is replaced by a relational network of representations (regulated by the law of connection, which establishes its inescapability): the imponderability of the immediate is concealed and determined by virtue of a qualitative unity hypostatized *a parte subjecti* and governed by the "principle of identity":

The law of connection generally expresses the supremacy of the necessary within the structure of *logos*. This supremacy, which is tyrannically consolidated and reaffirmed by the deductive constraint, gathers together the already-constituted abstract objects, gluing them to each other, so that the being and truth that derived from them gradually lose, in the descending movement, their original character of instantaneousness, and their call to immediacy becomes increasingly faded and blurred. Being and truth become "scientific".²¹

On the contrary, from Colli's perspective, the definition that identity logic seeks to establish can only remain a mere ideal: every definitional attempt regarding the immediate is destined to fail, highlighting the inefficiency of reason itself:

Expression is by nature insufficient and lacking in its manifesting effectiveness: thus even definitional expression cannot be identical to what it aims to express. Definition remains an ideal, primarily because expressive identity, which constitutes its core, cannot be realized. Furthermore, the completeness of definitional expression – postulated by the claim to manifest the completeness of divergent expressive series – is equally an unattainable goal if the definitional object is to exist as such, that is, as a manageable fusion of elements: triangular contradiction would, in any case, truncate

18 *FE*, 165.

19 *FE*, 94.

20 *FE*, 94.

21 *FE*, 115.

any excessive extension [...]. It is impossible for the definiendum to designate an immediacy, yet this is precisely what it would need to justify both the definitional “is” and the completeness of the definition.²²

The identity that reason seeks to determine mediately inevitably escapes the immediate as such, for the latter resists stable identification as an object: “The so-called principle of identity is a proposition devoid of autonomy. Indeed, it designates the relationship between the *definiens* and the *definiendum*, that is, in summary, the nature of definition – not a principle, but an error and an ideal”²³. Consequently, by developing concretely within the mesh of representation – thus by virtue of a reference to an (immediate) foundation that remains inexpressible – the true nature of the λόγος is marked by a “radical error”²⁴: reason remains in a state of “check”²⁵, for it is defined by an aporia that undermines its actual constructive capacity. It proves incapable of expressing what lies beyond itself – that is, forced to express it without determining it. Conversely, the supposed absoluteness of logic dissolves into mere abstraction, into the illusion of rigor by which the λόγος has historically sought to conceal its own inability to articulate the immediate – that which, as the foundation of representation, would allow it to rationally legitimate its transcendental status, otherwise merely presupposed.

It is for this reason that, ultimately, Colli calls for representation to be rethought as expression – that is, as the evocation of an immediate that is not transcendent, yet intrinsically unrepresentable. Expression, although it configures itself as a relation between subject and object, and therefore as representation²⁶, consists in an attempt to identify the immediate while remaining conscious of its intrinsic limits: it unfolds by internalizing the impasse of the λόγος, thereby relinquishing its hypostasis, since its “accent does not fall on the ‘object for a subject’, but on the ‘re-presenting’ function”²⁷.

3. The ὕβρις of the Word

In *Filosofia dell'espressione*, Colli analyzes the process by which λόγος has sought to conceal the radical error that, paradoxically, has always constituted its most authentic core. By refusing to accept the irreducibility of the immediate to representation – and therefore the same intranscendable yet spurious status of the representational context – logic has developed the illusion of being able to produce epistemically certain definitions. Even (and especially) if “everything is appearance”, one must instead admit that logic “illusion” consists of a form of

22 *FE*, 121-122.

23 *FE*, 122.

24 *FE*, 116.

25 *FE*, 151.

26 *FE*, 19.

27 *FE*, 6.

“appearance within appearance”²⁸, i.e., a hypostatic transfiguration of the representational domain of appearance.

Now, according to Colli, the instrument that has allowed logic to perpetuate its own (self-)deception objectively has been language – and more precisely the word²⁹. The latter has functioned as the device through which the human being has attempted to identify what lies beyond itself – immediacy – by reducing it to a form of objectivity: “Language, constitutive of the categories, is an instrument of this multiplication of the object”³⁰. From Colli’s perspective the λόγος, understood at the verbal level, should simply reflect the relative nature of reason, presenting itself as a merely instrumental device, relational rather than substantial – since it is devoted to formulating definitions that remain this side of the immediate, towards which they asymptotically tend. However, over the course of its historical development, the λόγος has instead acquired a plastic tendency, rising to the status of a constitutive function of reality, in the claim to replace it³¹: “After Aristotle, philosophy has not sufficiently investigated what we mean to express when we say ‘being’; rather, it has started from the word ‘being’ assigning it, from time to time, the most varied contents and meanings”³². Progressively, language has claimed to stably and definitively express reality determining its individuality, specificity, and particularity in a logically coherent manner: “Language became the creator of philosophy, whereas its nature is only that of a propulsive intermediary, which must preserve, purify, organize, and connect, but will never be an *arché*”³³. Hence, through words, logic has progressively reduced itself to rhetoric, concealing its spurious status: in rhetoric, “the living word becomes intoxicated with itself, seeks to become polished, sculptural. [...] λόγος transforms, changes its skin. The cunning of reason, honed in the adventurous disputes of abstraction, is now employed by rhetorical discourse as a sparkling tool of the will to domination”³⁴.

By criticizing the hypocrisy of language, *Filosofia dell’espressione* ultimately attributes to the word a genuinely overreaching disposition, aimed at compensating – at “levelling out”³⁵ – the status of a reason that has been errant since its very inception. The word has served as the instrument through which logic has attempted to conceal its constitutive deficiencies, violating the alterity of the substantial immediacy that underlies it and that cannot be determined. Language, for its part, does nothing but pursue the hypostasis of stable and concrete objectualities, disavowing the very dimension of the immediate from which such objectualities themselves originate: “Thus arises something unitary, which is the universal, and this still un-

28 FE, 116.

29 The problem of language in Colli’s philosophy has been developed by Cutrì 2022.

30 FE, 27.

31 “Words express objects of representations, without considering them in their substance; therefore, they are improper expressions” (FE, 31).

32 FE, 74.

33 FE, 74-75.

34 FE, 203.

35 FE, 94.

certain inner result needs a sanction, it must be fixed, further expressed in a more stable way: here, precisely, the contribution of language is decisive”³⁶. And again: “The acquisition in inner extension manifested in the universal, as an abstraction of the representative object, propagates through language into an acquisition of outer extension, as the result of communication moving toward a universality of representing subjects”³⁷.

All this, according to Colli, brings catastrophic consequences, since the plasticity invoked by language tends naturally to expand inexorably:

Individuals develop words and language only to then be dominated by them. This is objective *logos*, but this in no way implies that it is constructive. Such *logos* is not simply constituted by assigning certain names to certain universals, nor by articulating languages rich in connections and meanings. All of this is the baggage that serves individual life, falling within what has been called spurious *logos*.³⁸

To counter the ὑβρις of the word, the hypothesis of expression instead aims to limit the performative and constructive aspirations of language, bringing it back to its subsidiary and thereby redundant nature: “In the sphere of expression, language thus occupies a collateral position: the character of insufficiency, of lack, which belongs to the essence of expression, unsatisfied in evoking ever-new appearances, brings into play, at certain links in the chain of expression, the word as a subsidiary duplicate”³⁹.

This is not simply a matter of choosing – almost Pythagoreanly – a practice of silence, that is, the suppression of the word *qua talis*. Colli instead aims to value the original nature – in its very intranscendability – of every linguistic expression, indicating that its syntax rather than finding an outlet in strict semantic terms, assumes a configuration as a “decorative grimace, an abstract hieroglyph”⁴⁰. The verbal nature of λόγος is barred from the ontological experience of the immediate: it can at most configure a semiotics in which every word must be interpreted exclusively as “a sign, a hieroglyph indicating something else”⁴¹: in this light, the task is not to restore a linguistic form capable of conveying immediacy, but rather – at most – to recognize those inflections of verbal λόγος that are aware of their own indeterminacy. These are restrained articulations, those that – much like the ‘phenomena of art’ – remain closest to the primordial expressions: not because they capture immediacy, but because they reveal with clarity their inability to represent it⁴².

36 *FE*, 31.

37 *FE*, 159-160.

38 *FE*, 164.

39 *FE*, 32.

40 *DN*, 164.

41 *FE*, 20.

42 *FE*, 33.

4. Re-reading Nietzsche

In Colli's reflections on logic and language, the echo of some of Nietzsche's theses resonates with vivid intensity. This resonance is not unsurprising, considering that Colli's philosophical work developed in parallel with his translation and editorial efforts on Nietzsche's texts, for which, together with M. Montinari, he produced the first complete critical edition.

However, Colli's relationship with Nietzsche has been undoubtedly ambivalent. As G. Campioni pointed out during a conference dedicated to Colli's thought, in a contribution titled *Colli "interprete" di Nietzsche (Colli "Interpreter" of Nietzsche)*, including the author of *Filosofia dell'espressione* among Nietzschean interpreters would verge on the absurd: "The title of this contribution", writes Campioni, "poses a problem. Did Giorgio Colli want to be an interpreter of Nietzsche, and, in general, can or should Nietzsche, according to Colli, be interpreted at all?"⁴³.

In fact, in most cases, Colli's objective seems to be to corroborate Nietzsche's positions, even at the cost of overturning them. He aims to radicalize Nietzsche's critiques of the metaphysical tradition based on the primacy of the subject or representation and to extend his polemics against the grammar that has shaped the developments of Western reason, thereby triggering its logistical consequences⁴⁴. After all, as Colli writes in *Dopo Nietzsche*, the German philosopher did not go far enough in his philosophical endeavour: "The belief in the subject, which Nietzsche helped to demolish, is nonetheless intrinsically connected to his thought, even in its most mature phase. Already in calling the substance of the world 'will,' one finds in the background a metaphysical subject"⁴⁵. According to Colli, Nietzsche's attacks on the logic and grammar of the Western metaphysical tradition remain insufficient, as his works reveal a "rationalistic hubris, a regurgitation of Enlightenment fanaticism"⁴⁶. It is therefore necessary to complete the philosophically deconstructive project that Nietzsche only sketched, bringing to the fore the aporetic nature of λόγος and its representations – beneath which lies the claim of the immediate, an idea explicitly rejected in Nietzschean thought⁴⁷. Only such an operation could lead to identifying the authentic nature of λόγος, namely its inher-

43 Campioni 1983, 19.

44 Nietzsche's critique of the subject and representation (in its opposition to things-in-themselves), based on a broader challenge to the grammar used in an anthropomorphic sense, emerges strongly in *Beyond Good and Evil*, §34: "Aren't we allowed to be a bit ironic with the subject, as we are with the predicate and object? Shouldn't philosophers rise above the belief in grammar? With all due respect to governesses, isn't it about time philosophy renounced governess-beliefs?" (Nietzsche 2002, 35)

45 DN, 87–88.

46 DN, 99.

47 On Nietzschean critique of immediate certainties, see again *Beyond Good and Evil*, §16: "There are still harmless self-observers who believe in the existence of 'immediate certainties', such as 'I think', or the 'I will' that was Schopenhauer's superstition: just as if knowledge had been given an object here to seize, stark naked, as a 'thing-in-itself', and no falsification took place from either the side of the subject or the side of the object. But I will say this a hundred times: 'immediate certainty', like 'absolute knowledge' and the 'thing in itself' contains a *contra-*

ent deficiency: conversely, “in burying philosophy, Nietzsche went far. He was just shy of completing the task”⁴⁸.

Actually, the operation Colli carries out regarding Nietzschean philosophy – whose philological accuracy is not the focus here – seems to echo that of other authors who, likewise inspired by Nietzsche’s thought, in the last century, developed independent philosophical projects often centred on the crisis of Western rationality. For this reason, a comparison between certain Nietzschean heirs of the 20th century and Colli’s position could shed light on the latter, highlighting some of its subversive outcomes.

a) That Nietzschean philosophy could be used to declare the insufficiency of logical reason, that is, to emphasize its finitude, has been repeatedly argued in the debate within Italian philosophy in the second half of the 20th century, particularly by proponents of the so-called “weak thought” (*pensiero debole*). The prevailing idea is that Nietzsche, by challenging Western (especially modern) metaphysics, invites to reach a position finally beyond the subject and its rationality, proclaiming the end of modernity and the logic of objectivism, that is, the collapse of theoretical, philosophical-scientific thought. To use G. Vattimo’s words, Nietzschean thought outlines an ontology of decline that

hints at, rather than describes, a conception of being that is modelled not on the immobile objectivity of scientific objects but on life, which is a play of interpretation, growth, and morality, history. Such a conception of being – living-declining, that is, moral – is more suited, among other things, to grasping the meaning of experience in a world like ours, which no longer offers (if it ever did) the contrast between appearance and being, but only the play of appearances, entities that no longer have anything of the substantiality of traditional metaphysics.⁴⁹

In this sense, certain Italian interpretations of postmodern philosophy, directly linked to Nietzschean thought, might initially seem like the ideal continuation of some theses developed by Colli in his dialogue with Nietzsche. After all, the hypothesis of expression itself, in addition to declaring the crisis of logic, is presented as a “path to the annulment of the subject”⁵⁰.

b) Yet, at first glance, the Nietzschean reform of philosophy envisioned by Colli might appear to share certain affinities with the deconstructive approach of J. Derrida, with whom he has occasionally been compared⁵¹. Colli’s conception of reason, for example, emerges within the living fabric of expression – as a continual reference to a form of alterity: the immediate. This immediacy discloses reason’s heteronomous nature and asserts the impossibility of aligning the logic of identity

dictio in adjecto... For once and for all, we should free ourselves from the seduction of words!” (Nietzsche 2002, 16).

48 *DN*, 81.

49 Vattimo 1984, 25.

50 *RE*, 411.

51 See Toffoletto 2018, 137.

with the reality of the subject in any sovereign or totalizing way⁵². Such alterity, which resists subsumption under representational and relational logic, seems to operate through what Derrida terms *différance*: a relational play of difference between the immediate – as Colli describes it – and its rational mediations. This alterity from logic could seem surface as exteriority, a remainder that resists assimilation – unexpected, repressed, and transcendent with respect to representation – marking the site where the otherness of reason comes into view. As Derrida contends, reality can be framed as an intricate web of continuous references to otherness, understood as fundamentally distinct within the very structure of that relationship: “Every concept is necessarily and essentially inscribed in a chain or a system, within which it refers to another and to other concepts, by a systematic play of differences”. Not by chance, Derrida defines *différance* as “the movement of play that ‘produces’ (and not through something that is simply an activity) these differences, these effects of difference”⁵³.

c) Finally, Colli’s attempt to recover – with and beyond Nietzsche – the occurrence of the immediate at the root of every logically determined expression might be mistaken for Heidegger’s search for an original event (*Ereignis*) capable of highlighting the ontological difference between the immediate itself and its expressive manifestations. Indeed, in grappling with Nietzsche’s philosophy, M. Heidegger contemplated the possibility of crossing and overcoming metaphysics, which failed to grasp the difference between Being and beings (i.e. between ground and grounded), incorporating it into a logical circuit that reduced and obscured its concreteness:

Metaphysics thinks of beings as such, that is, in general. Metaphysics thinks of beings as such, as a whole. Metaphysics thinks of the Being of beings both in the ground-giving unity of what is most general, what is indifferently valid everywhere, and also in the unity of the all that accounts for the ground, that is, of the All-Highest. The Being of beings is thus thought of in advance as the grounding ground. Therefore all metaphysics is at bottom, and from the ground up, what grounds, what gives account of the ground, what is called to account by the ground, and finally what calls the ground to account.⁵⁴

Now, although seemingly close to certain (post-Nietzschean) theses of weak thought, deconstruction, or Heideggerian philosophy, Colli’s hypothesis of expression differs significantly from the theoretical frameworks outlined in a), b), and c). Indeed, the reflections on the status of logic and language discussed in the previous paragraphs should provide clear evidence of this:

– First, the wound that Colli identifies at the heart of definitional logic does not legitimize an appeal to weak thought – contrasted with a supposed strong thought that historically existed and then declined. On the contrary, from a histori-

52 For example, cf. Derrida 1991, 97.

53 Derrida 1973, 140-141.

54 Heidegger 1969, 58.

cal perspective, Colli argues that a strong and absolute λόγος has never existed⁵⁵: it has only ever gained legitimacy as a phantom through which reason sought to rhetorically disguise its own performative ineffectiveness. The authentic nature of logic, in other words, reveals its original limitation – its inability to express the immediate in its rational contingency and unpredictability. The authentic nature of logic reveals its inherent limitations: the inability to capture the immediate in its contingency and rational unpredictability. It delineates its reality exposing the purely phantasmal status of any so-called ‘strong thought’: “The essence of reason, that is, the authentic *logos*, lies in the separation of the violent component within the immediate through the bond of necessity: here, the appearance of the individual is ignored, contingency remains banished by the principle of exclusion, and the constraint imposes that chance be purged as if it were waste”⁵⁶. In short, the birth of reason itself represents a weakness: the problem is its hypostatization, which is a simply “incident”⁵⁷: “Thus, reason is born, the authentic *logos* – but with its birth, its completion is already near. A radical misunderstanding has always distorted the meaning of ancient Greek philosophy. The latter conceived reason as merely a ‘discourse’ about something else [...]. This origin was later forgotten, and this allusive function was no longer understood”⁵⁸. On this basis, from Colli’s perspective, there is no need to abandon speculative rationality *via* Nietzsche (in favour of morality, as suggested by Vattimo), since it is logic itself (in crisis from the outset) that reveals the dominance of non-logic. The failure of λόγος – its literal *dyspracticality*, as thematized in Nietzschean writings – immediately inaugurates “a ‘merely’ theoretical vision of the world”⁵⁹.

– For the same reason, moreover, the movement of expression described by Colli never takes the form of a deconstructive exercise. The non-logical, the immediate considered as ‘other’ than logical and definitional expression, never assumes the appearance of a removed or exterior opposite⁶⁰ with which λόγος could ever establish a dialectical relationship (whether it be a closed synthesis or not); indeed, it is not determined according to the logic of reference, but exactly on the basis of the failed attempt to refer to an immediate, that is in itself inaccessible. In Colli’s philosophy, therefore, otherness simply (but paradoxically for that very reason) cannot be defined by logic: the immediate escapes definitional relation, determining itself in its own arrest; in this sense, the category of otherness – unlike those pertaining to rationality (even if spurious) – develops less within than in opposition to that of relation, since the distance between the immediate and its definition is irreducible; “That which exhaustively opposes expression is only immediacy: but

55 See *NF*, 85-93. On this topic, see Sini 2018.

56 *FE*, 164.

57 *FE*, 172.

58 *FE*, 183.

59 *DN*, 89.

60 It is no coincidence that Colli repeatedly criticises the idea of an unconscious, of a repressed as such, affirming the intrascendibility of consciousness in the domain of representation – for example, cf. *FE*, 35-36; *RE*, 804.

meaning is less than anything else immediacy. It follows that meaning falls within the field of expression, and as a rule it will be precisely the expression expressed by ‘expression’⁶¹. This is to say that what differs from λόγος is not determined deconstructively through the logic of reference, resulting as undetermined on the basis of its deflagration.

– Finally, it is precisely the imponderability of otherness, which constitutes the immediate, that suggests the untenability of any analogy between Colli’s philosophy and Heidegger’s. Indeed, the relationship between the immediate and its mediations cannot be defined in terms of simple “ontological difference”, as it does not constitute itself as a relationship – potentially definable in terms of difference. Immediacy, as a fundamental ontological fact, lies irredeemably outside the definitional horizon of λόγος, to the extent that it cannot be defined in any way – not even as different from it. Put otherwise, if a relational experience with such a form of otherness is impossible, it cannot configure itself within a definitional and determined relationship of relation. For this reason, as Colli asserts in *Filosofia dell’espressione*, what lies beyond expressive and rational definition is expressed solely through the reference of a reason that, in turn, is incapable of defining it. The collapse of logic – conducted logically – thus certifies the irreducibility of the other to the structure of λόγος: “If, as a whole, reason consists in thinking certain objects (in a representation) and saying them, then what is expressed by this thinking of certain objects and this saying is undoubtedly not reason”⁶². In this sense, non-reason, the immediate, does not simply remain beyond logic and thus different from it: it is simultaneously expressed by λόγος in its very (non)determination.

5. Conclusion

In the context of the cultural landscape of the 20th century, Colli’s hypothesis of expression reflects a philosophical position that is, in some respects, almost counterintuitive. Not surprisingly, it has undoubtedly remained isolated, slipping to the margins of philosophical debate (even within the context of the very authors Colli engaged with throughout his studies). Nevertheless, the speculative reason explored in *Filosofia dell’espressione*, precisely because it is a victim of the crisis (repeatedly highlighted by 20th-century thought), reveals its authentic originality. It demonstrates – contrary to what most thinkers of the last century argued – its irreducibility and speculative necessity, thereby inaugurating a new form of *episteme* – in the light of the one sketched by certain Presocratic thinkers⁶³.

Colli’s notion of λόγος thus appears indispensable insofar as it exposes its own inconsistency: its spurious nature determines its unavoidable theoretical demands, allowing it to attain a true definition – one that, though constitutively antinomic, is not untenable.

61 *FE*, 32

62 *FE*, 184.

63 This idea has been developed in *NF*, 13-21.

Indeed, as shown in §§1 and 2, starting from the analysis of the status of logic and its language, Colli exposes the constitutive antinomy of λόγος, thereby giving rise to the following *scenario*: logic, as well as the grammar of reason, are unavoidable instances, assuming a transcendental function; nonetheless, and for the very same reason, the transcendental that pertains to them subsists by virtue of the presupposition that contradicts their original and principial value, since logic assumes a totalizing extension precisely because it is incapable of giving a definition of totality (or of itself as a whole, i.e. in relation to immediacy), due to the impossible definition of the immediate. Colli's objective, therefore, consists in the mere exercise of unmasking the proper character of λόγος, in redefining its status and its language: the domain of rationality is relocated within a representational and relational context, in which it can operate in definitions that follow an identitarian logic incapable of identifying and defining the immediate.

Based on this paradox, then, Colli's hypothesis of expression seems to resolve into a new meaning to be accorded to the relation of otherness that binds the immediate to the domain of relation (and representation)⁶⁴. Once again, contrary to contemporary philosophy – which has witnessed the (sometimes inflated) development of so-called “relational ontologies” – Colli outlines an ontology of the immediate triggered by the crisis of the concept of relation, which constitutes the “fulcrum” of the category of representation itself⁶⁵. The relational instance (as the λόγος it defines) subsumes the essence of the (representational) subject-object binomial, assuming for Colli a value, so to speak, transcendental rather than ontological: it proves incapable of determining what the immediate is, revealing only how it (does not) present itself, that is, how it does not determine itself at the representational level. *Re-praesentatio*, in this respect, can be said to reconstitute an experience of the extra-representational immediate only by not reducing it to a relational object, hence by not defining any stable relation: representation must become expression, i.e., a vehicle of a relation with the immediate that reveals its irreducibility with respect to the representational relationality of subject and object. On the other hand, insofar as it rises to absolute reality – namely substantial (in the sense of expression, thus non-relational) – the logic of reference exhibits a mere contact with the otherness of the self, which amounts to its (non) determination or definition⁶⁶: relationality here can only be exercised where it proves ineffective, dissolving into the non-relational.

Within this framework, then, λόγος can perform the paradoxical experience of immediacy that underlies it, transcendently stabilizing and admitting the limits of the category of relation: representation, as expression, finally reduces to a representational and relational instance that, in a non-hubristic manner, testifies to itself and not to the otherness of the self, without accessing immediacy in any way

64 See *RE*, 290; 366. For an interpretation of Collian philosophy of expression in relational terms, see, for example, Meattini 2018; Di Giuseppe 2021.

65 *FE*, 51.

66 On the notion of contact, which plays a primary role in Colli's argumentation, see *FE*, 39. In this regard, see the first section of Anzalone e Minichiello 1984.

and without reference, but carrying within itself – as expressive substance – the failure of such relation. On these bases, lastly, it becomes possible to affirm that we “possess immediacy without knowing it”⁶⁷, since immediacy, as other than that which defines it, is evoked by every definition that, without defining it, expresses its otherness.

Now, it is precisely the subversive force of these Collian arguments, directed at the fundamental and foundational questions of philosophy, that contemporary thought should rediscover. They invite a purely speculative exercise along the lines of the numerous antinomies that, far from bringing it to a halt, continuously fuel and renew it. Indeed, Colli’s reflections on logic, language, and the categorical notions of “otherness”, “relation”, and others – so distant from the main areas of interest of contemporary philosophical schools – likely deserve renewed attention and careful re-examination. Or perhaps, precisely because they are irreducible to current theoretical perspectives, whose insufficiency is evident and self-reported, Colli’s reflections could encourage unconventional and less reassuring philosophical ventures, but ones that, for this very reason, are indispensable.

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