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Γάζα διηρπασμένη
Storia naturale
della distruzione

La Rivista di Engramma
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Γάζα διηρησμένη.
Storia naturale
della distruzione

a cura di
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Restitutio ad integrum

On the impossibility of reconstruction

Bernardo Prieto



Israel, 1950: A Jewish family from Yemen immigrants to the Israel prepare their *sukkah*, the temporary shelters that the Bible commands be built for the weeklong Feast of Tabernacles, or *Sukkot*.

Man staune ihn bestenfalls an, und dieses Staunen sei bereits eine Vorform des Entsetzens, denn irgendwo wüssten wir natürlich, dass die ins Überdimensionale hinausgewachsenen Bauwerke schon den Schatten ihrer Zerstörung vorauswerfen und konzipiert sind von Anfang an im Hinblick auf ihr nachmaliges Dasein als Ruinen.

W. G. Sebald, *Austerlitz*, I.

εἶπαν οὖν οἱ ἰουδαῖοι, τεσσαράκοντα καὶ ἕξ ἔτεσιν οἰκοδομήθη ὁ ναὸς οὗτος, καὶ σὺ ἐν τρισὶν ἡμέραις ἐγερεῖς αὐτόν.

John 2:20

Sed cum aedificiorum circumspicimus copiam et varietatem, facile intelligimus non tantum hos esse ad usus omnia, neque horum tantum aut illorum gratia comparta, sed pro hominum varietate in primis fieri, ut habeamus opera vria et mutiplicia.

Leon Battista Alberti, *De re aedificatoria*, Liber IV

Exordium

Perhaps one of the most remarkable facts of the conflict in Gaza is the almost total opposition of large parts of the international Orthodox Jewish community – often Hasidic – to the war. One might think that these Orthodox communities would be the strongest supporters of the confrontations and actions carried out by the state of Israel. Yet for these communities, only the Messiah is given the task of rebuilding the Temple and, at the same time, restoring the Kingdom that properly belongs to him. According to the prophets, the identity of the Messiah is double: he is not only King, but also High Priest; the glorious Messiah is also the Suffering Servant. Beyond the necessary precautions and the military, political, economic, and geopolitical aspects of the conflict, there is a sense of urgency whose motivations can be read – or translated – into a theological language. We modern people, protected by universal and procedural conventions, have believed – wrongly – that political life can be reduced to a set of communicative processes which, in their complexity, do little more than celebrate the ever-unfinished Babel of the modern state. This language breaks down precisely when that same constitutional, republican, modern state shows its limits. For this reason, it becomes hard to understand, at a deeper level, some of the motivations behind this conflict. On one side, there is the political theology of a state of Israel that claims for itself certain messianic rights; on the other, as in a mirror or a smaller model, the political theology of Hamas, which, shaped by the pathologies of religion – for no religion, not even the modern religion of the state, is free from them – sees itself as standing beyond life and death. And then, in between these two poles, there stands what in the Hebrew tradition has been called the remnant (therein lies the mystery of salvation). Even so, the betrayal of republican and constitutional values by Israel is far more serious and dangerous, since it justifies the use of reason for goals that are, in themselves, deeply irrational. If we want to understand the conflict, we must face a metaphysics of evil, which can only be read as perversion: the turning of good into evil. Like a rotting apple, evil needs a body to enter. This is why the images of this conflict inevitably recall, in an ironic way, the well-known siege of Jerusalem in the year 70, which began as a theological-political claim and ended with the total destruction of the city by the Roman Empire. What is truly disastrous is that, in a perverse reversal – the true sign of evil – the Roman troops seem to remain alive, now clothed in other garments. From the destruction of the Temple came Rabbinic Judaism, which began a different way of life: unlike other peoples, it held on to the fragile Word of God and, without a temple, returned to living in tents, scattered across the world. The Torah became portable; it became, in a real sense, its Kingdom and its land. This essay tries to adopt not a genealogical but a paradigmatic method, in order to trace, across political, religious, architectural, and ways of knowing, a single line that takes different forms until it reaches its highest point in this conflict. It is a kind of Pauline typological approach, in which the temporary figures of the past, often through a dark inversion, appear again in the figure of the present. Within this frame, the concept of *apokatastasis* seems to reflect certain elements that drive this obscure *scientia destructionis*.

I

In a *lectio magistralis* entitled *Apokatastasis: Gastvorlesung an der Theologischen Fakultät Trier am 18 April 1988*, Hans Urs von Balthasar attempted to summarize the principal intuitions governing the doctrine of “universal reconciliation”. This *lectio* – which is inscribed within a sort of personal apologia – is, in a certain sense, a vindication of Origen against the accusations of Augustine contained in *De haeresibus* and *Civitate Dei*. As von Balthasar makes clear, the Greek term ἀποκαθιστώ [πάντων] appears only once in the New Testament, in Saint Peter’s discourse in the Temple of Jerusalem (Acts 3:21). Von Balthasar indicates that there are two possible translations of that passage: “Until the time for universal restoration of which God spoke,” or “until everything predicted by God’s prophets has come about” (Balthasar [1988] 2014, 181). It is precisely at this subtle yet decisive exegetical juncture that the polarity of the term *apokatastasis* opens up a true dilemma for us: where philology and theology become practically indiscernible. Of these two possible translations, von Balthasar indicates that the second – “Until everything predicted by God’s prophets has come about” – is probably the one that best corresponds to the discursive logic of Saint Peter. In this translation, as von Balthasar writes, “the notion of linear development prevails: the chronological line from the most ancient origins to Abraham, Moses, Samuel and all the prophets, directed toward Jesus, who represents the certain assurance of the final Messianic kingdom [...]” (Balthasar [1988] 2014, 182-183).

However, for von Balthasar, the linear and chronological understanding of this term is not so easily separable from the first translation and its obvious cyclical and politico-messianic implications (“the restoration of the Kingdom” which comes after exile). The messianic promise certainly implies – here von Balthasar cites Heinrich Gross – “the hope for an eternal, all-embracing universal peace” (Balthasar [1988] 2014, 184). Von Balthasar reminds us that the first translation can be employed in various semantic contexts:

(1) medical: restoration to health; (2) legal: return of hostages to their hometowns; (3) political: restoration of a previous form of government; (4) astronomical: recurrence of the same planetary constellation, meaning the completion of a “Great Year”; and hence (5) philosophical / cosmological: recurrence of a cosmic era (Balthasar [1988] 2014, 181).

That the “restitution of all things” represents a true paradigm is singularly evident to us, above all in its modern and secularized form, where this syntagm has become – and this is what we shall attempt to show – a genuine gnoseological-governmental paradigm which, in its paroxysm – amid Gaza’s rubble and ruins – demands that we think with precision the way in which we subsequently understand the terms construction and destruction, history and nature, peace and justice. All this not only in order to respond, more or less integrally, to the hermeneutic subtleties of theology, but more importantly still – against that empire of the *voûç* which has colonized the social sciences as much as the arts, and with them, precisely, urbanism and architecture – to formulate a kind of minimal and provisional poetics.

II

According to von Balthasar, within any interpretation of *apokatastasis* it is impossible to deny a strong impulse toward a “recurring cycle” in which, the entire universe will perish and a new one will be created, where “the cosmic conflagration would not leave anything evil behind.” (Balthasar [1988] 2014, 182) Such conception is evidently rejected by Augustine, who writes in *De haeresibus* that:

According to him – Origen – even they who die in infamy (...) even the devil himself and his angels, though after very long periods of time, will be purged, liberated and restored to the kingdom of God and of light. Then, again, after very long periods of time all who have been liberated will fall and return a second time to these miseries. (*De haeresibus*, 43)

What seems most distressing to Augustine is not simply that purification and restitution devoid of justice, but above all the logical consequence that makes the “Eternal Return” the true soteriological negation of the Christian mystery: the Cross. What is curious is that within this interpretation – with its different nuances – it becomes possible to establish something like a secret alliance between the philosophies of Kant and Nietzsche. That both conceptions may be understood as distant from Augustinian thought and yet antithetical to one another is no real surprise. Within the Augustinian framework, Nietzsche’s Eternal Return is nothing more than another face of that perpetual peace desired and sought by Kant.

Let us briefly review two important texts: the first, *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose*; the second, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*. In the first one, the *Eighth Thesis* upholds the necessity of understanding the historical destiny of human beings in natural terms – that is, as a kind of hidden project of nature which, in some way, gradually reveals an optimal constitutional form (Kant [1784] 2024). Kant’s *Eighth Thesis* announces something like a “natural history of law”, its secularized soteriological force lies not so much in the “philosophical millenarianism” of which Kant speaks, but rather in this logical-cosmological structure which foresees the revelation of a universal juridical order: an order immanent not to the individual but to the species. The second text (*Perpetual Peace*) is a minimal guide for the possible consolidation of a lasting peace among nations. Kant starts by warning of the difference between a true peace treaty and a mere armistice. But more important for us, at the end of the first section, Kant reveals that his concept of law is directly related to its universal validity, in contrast to a merely general value which accepts and promotes exceptions. For law, insofar as it is law, in order to distinguish itself from a mere desire, must figure as a kind of mathematical formula that governs, in a punctual and precise manner – perhaps Kant was thinking of Newton’s formulas – all and each of the cases (Kant [1795] 1970). When Kant thinks his philosophy under the benevolent auspices of Copernican astronomy and Newtonian science, he does nothing other than reconcile his pietistic morality with a new cosmology. The Kantian idea of a politics inclined toward Law – or rather, governed according to the providential principles of a “natural history of law” – finds perfect consonance in the ancient universalist

promise, now rationally transformed, in the possibility of a perpetual peace which, by distancing us from evil due to its self-destructive nature, leads us to live – within a universal history of cosmopolitan character – “as if” we had returned to the beginning (as if peace reigned in Gaza). The longing for this “perpetual peace” is nothing other than another name for the *restitutio*.

III

Precisely speaking about the Gnostic conceptions, the discourse on the *restitutio* is consequently shifted to the problem of the nature of bodies, and Von Balthasar then reminds us how Irenaeus defended the centrality of the divine creation of all matter: consequently our flesh, justified in the Incarnation of the *Logos*, will attain its ultimate glory in the Resurrection. Nonetheless, according to von Balthasar: “The more the theological reflection on the Christ event develops the more we see the linear chronology of promise-to-fulfillment almost wrapped in a cyclical conception” (Balthasar [1988] 2014, 184)

In contrast to the radicality of Irenaeus, von Balthasar points out how the *School of Alexandria* attempted to preserve certain Gnostic-cyclical elements in its theological development (Balthasar [1988] 2014, 186). It is precisely Origen who, without abandoning the idea of *creatio ex nihilo*, tentatively imagined that the human being was originally created with a kind of “subtle body”, which only after the Fall precipitated into matter (thus also initiating sexual reproduction). According to Origen, it will be the human genre which will then occupy the place of the fallen angels in the Resurrection of the bodies. Von Balthasar writes:

We find here, then, an *apokatastasis* in a predominantly cyclical conception: the vertical descent from God and the return to him. As the matter-bound, earthly body reverts back into the spirit-like resurrected body, all evil disappears as well (Balthasar [1988] 2014, 187).

Some echoes of this peculiar form of *apokatastasis*, and of Origen’s question of the “subtle body” that pre-exists matter, can be found precisely in the discussion of artistic creation and interior representations in the Middle Ages. Panofsky, in a brief study published in 1924 (*Idea: A Concept in Art Theory*) affirms the prevalence of the architect’s model, who visualizes the house, the quasi-idea of the house – or the “subtle house” we might say – before building it, as the paradigm of the artist in the Middle Ages. A footnote of that study is illuminating. Panofsky writes:

[...] the form that is built into the material is, after the actual act of Creation, not a subsistent but only an inherent one, that is, it perishes with the destruction of the material; therefore the products of art – and also those of nature, insofar as it is understood as *natura naturata* – are mere alterations rather than creations (Panofsky [1924] 1968, 195-196).

Thus art theory appropriates this kind of Gnostic shadow – still delimited and regulated by scholastic orthodoxy – as the way of thinking the work of art. Art and nature share an apparent existence which, unlike the soul that is the form of the body, will not be restored

to its glory at the moment of the Resurrection. Several centuries would be required for the work of art, precisely in the Renaissance – that common historiographical convention – to finally emancipate itself. Not by chance, having mentioned the corresponding theories of Gregory of Nyssa and Maximus the Confessor, von Balthasar declares himself tempted to continue the history of the different conceptions of *apokatastasis*, which would ultimately lead us to the ideas of Meister Eckhart, who identified true and ultimate human reality with the Idea, that is, with the essence of God. Panofsky similarly mentions how Meister Eckhart, in a decisive operation, replaced the “subtle house” with a rose: here, therefore, as Panofsky affirms, there is truly no difference between the model of figurative art and the architectural model, between a purely speculative example (“the images preexisting in God”) to its practical function (Panofsky [1924] 1968, 198). The transformation carried out by the artist is, in this sense, something like the apparent image of the resurrection of the bodies which, however, can only be thought through the moment of their dispersion. This strange form of reconciliation with the Idea, this vertical assumption verified in the moment of destruction, is without a doubt another name for the *restitutio*.

IV

Later on, in this *lectio magistralis*, von Balthasar informs us that Origen decided to reserve the mystery of *apokatastasis* solely for the initiated. Von Balthasar explains that this posture of Origen can lead to various misunderstandings. However, for Origen, the decisive moment lies – just as a doctor hides the scalpel from the patient before the painful cut – in teaching the multitude about the punishment of sinners rather than their ultimate purification. Origen intuits that by openly teaching the *apokatastasis* doctrine, there would be those who, knowing that punishment is purifying and not definitive, might feel free to sin (Balthasar [1988] 2014, 193). Origen's fear is shown to be justified in one of the most mysterious and ambiguous episodes of Jewish mysticism; an episode described by Scholem in his famous study on Sabbatai Zevi: *The Holiness of Sin*. This study seeks to analyze Sabbatianism a 17th-century Jewish messianic movement, which, in Scholem's words, is essential for understanding precisely the: “Tragic yearning for national redemption to which the initial stages of Sabbatianism gave expression” (Scholem [1937] 1971, 41).

The central creed of this movement can be summarized by the idea that only through the violation of the Torah could become its true fulfillment. Nonetheless, Scholem reminds us, it is very important to understand the movement beyond its obvious pathological preconditions or those of its leaders. This sect, full of paradoxes and contradictions is especially lacking innocence. The Sabbatian movement that spread throughout Europe at the end of the seventeenth century was principally inspired by the Kabbalistic ideas of Isaac Luria, in particular by the idea of mystical redemption and the advent of “the restored world’ (*olam ha-tikkun*), in its full historical expression, where there would occur a rectification of the primordial catastrophe of the ‘breaking of the vessels’ (*shevirat*

ha-kelim), in the course of which divine worlds would be returned to their original unity and perfection” (Scholem [1937] 1971, 45).

However, the most important and unresolved questions of this sect will emerge only after the apostasy of Sabbatai Zevi: once the process of messianic redemption had already begun: “[...] Why had the historical and political deliverance from bondage which was to have naturally accompanied the cosmic process of *tikkun* been delayed?” (Scholem [1937] 1971, 48).

At the heart of this doctrine, obedience is authorized to reject even the precepts of *logos*, a kind of transcendental ethic whose sensible consequence would seem to be Sabbatai Zevi’s conversion to Islam. The subsequent defense of the apostasy of its leader signified a necessary descent into the realm of evil in order to redeem it completely: a literal and true inversion of all values. Here, Scholem makes an important remark regarding Sabbatianism and Palestine: we learn how certain sects sought, albeit in a moderate way, to return to Palestine in order to transgress the Law in its own land (Scholem [1937] 1971, 61). The heirs of this movement would gradually not only content themselves with the radical transformation of Judaism but would consequently seek the transformation of society as a whole. In the aftermath of the French Revolution, those Jews discovered that: “The Revolution had come to corroborate the fact that the nihilist outlook had been correct all along: now the pillars of the world were indeed being shaken, and all the old ways seemed about to be overturned” (Scholem [1937] 1971, 68).

The pursuit of this liberation, both political and spiritual, appeared to integrate perfectly into a new kind of eschatology: one that parodied openly soteriology. Revolution thus became nothing other than another name – perhaps the most complex – for political messianism, in whose excessive ambition to reconcile transgression and historical fulfillment we encounter once again the *restitutio* which, as Origen intuited, could prove truly ominous.

V

Von Balthasar mentions one last matter: Origen believed that the definitive consummation of the Mystical Body of Christ would occur only when the last of sinners repented. In this sense, within an existential reading, the assurance of Paradise is considered a reality for others, but not for one’s personal salvation. Hans Urs von Balthasar ultimately conceives *apokatastasis* not as a certainty but rather as a form of hope: concerning these ultimate things, we truly know nothing, and therefore even the idea of Aquinas – that the blessed feel joy, since they can no longer feel pain in the punishments inflicted upon the damned in hell – is possible (Balthasar [1988] 2014, 204). Hope, however, is not merely one possibility among many, but the certainty of realities that are not visible. Here, von Balthasar’s gnoseological drift dissolves the objective form of hope into a subjective form of knowledge. For this reason, a series of studies by Leibniz entitled *Apokatastasis pantôn*, of 1693, is of particular interest. One of the interesting conclu-

sions of Leibniz's mental experiment is that – as Nicholas Rescher affirms in his study of Leibniz's "quantitative epistemology" – for the philosopher and mathematician: "Order, simplicity, repetitiveness are substantially phenomena of oversimplification. Ontologically (for Reality) and theologically (for God) there is and can be no repetition. Everything that exists is unique" (Rescher 2004, 225).

According to Leibniz, human knowledge is finite because it is intimately bound to language and therefore thinks in a discursive, recursive, and discrete way, which precisely limits what it can think and say. God, by contrast, who lies beyond these limitations, can simultaneously contemplate an infinity of possible worlds in all their complexity. Here arises the abyssal separation between reality, which is continuous, and the human way of knowing it, which is fragmentary and partial (Rescher 2004, 224). To use an analogy drawn from mathematics, the *continuum* is not obtained by the aggregation of *discrete elements*, but by imposing a structure of order and completeness upon a set. Hans Urs von Balthasar's hope may be nothing more than a form of desire to conceive the inconceivable. Yet those reservations – which save the great Swiss theologian from making categorical judgments – are an essential part of his speculation, for von Balthasar casts doubt until the very end upon his own conclusions. That knowledge of the world is partial and limited seems to be a principle – both gnoseological and political – forgotten by our modernity. Indeed, this pretension of knowledge is perhaps one of the most terrible characteristics of our age. Friedrich von Hayek warned against the destructive drifts of that fatal conceit, that is, the pretension of knowledge on the part of human planners: bureaucrats, experts, or professional politicians who mistakenly believe that we can fully understand and control the complex order of society (Hayek [1988] 1991). In this sense, the Austrian economist and philosopher wrote, in *Law, Legislation and Liberty*, that "constructivist rationalism" paradoxically rejects reason itself, since it deceives itself into believing that reason can directly master all the details and fragments of reality; this error then leads to a preference for the concrete over the abstract, the particular over the general (Hayek [1982] 2022, 54). Terrifyingly, not only is knowledge presumed, but action – political action – is undertaken, motivated by this presumption; assuming moreover – as state and supragovernmental entities that manage life and death seem to do – that values, law, arts, and institutions have value only insofar as they fulfill a previously established goal (Hayek [1978] 2022, 4). A *telos*, characterized by justifying a predetermined future that does not truly exist; a *telos* by which we are darkly governed. If architecture is the musical and political form of inhabiting the world, it must reflect the plurality of forms of life. As Arendt thought, it is not man but men who inhabit the earth (Arendt [1958] 2022, 7); plurality that does not know how to flourish within the narrow confines of the religion of unified design and progress; nor under the empire of that shadowy, and artificial *telos*. The city, in this sense, is not a human laboratory but a garden where, through each of our different forms of life, we help – minimally yet substantially – to cultivate and, through this same process, to cultivate ourselves. The ultimate violence is that which seeks – at least ideally like in

Gaza – to erase even remnants, injustices, and wounds, blindly – or benevolently – guided by a technical and ‘rational’ ideal. This pretension of knowledge – so harmful to the social sciences, now revealed as sophisticated forms of engineering – seeks to project something like a *restitutio*, believing that, given the right means and necessary resources, it is possible to carry out a great and portentous reconstruction.

VI

History and nature have been violently separated, and it is this separation that in some way terribly marks human life on earth. Not only – as Benjamin reminds us – does nature fall silent, but humanity then begins – under the gaze of a terrible angel – its tormenting historical existence. This *hiatus* is the fundamental ontological problem. History separates from nature precisely at the moment of the Fall. And yet, at the moment of the Fall, the messianic promise is revealed in a dazzling manner (with its corresponding polarities: soteriological and eschatological); a promise that is not – as it is often understood – a simple *restitutio*, but the opening to an existence still more glorious: not a return to the lost Eden, but to the Eternal Jerusalem. This promise does not truly belong to the natural or historical field. Every messianic promise that seeks to realize itself in strictly historical terms ultimately parodies and destroys that promise, destroying – indolently – our nature in the process. The Promised Land does not exist as a political or historical identity; it lies, so to speak, beyond history and – according to the dogma of the resurrection of the bodies – beyond nature. Therefore, politics – our full life in community – must not be thought in relation to any teleological justification (the Eternal Jerusalem), nor according to the paradigm of the lost Eden. For this return to the same – *restitutio* – already reveals the false problem of origin: the creation of an archetypal instance to which one is destined to return. But where, exactly, is the origin? There is no origin – or rather, each person is, in himself, this origin, both natural and historical. Not only because in each life nature is renewed, but because in each new life there occurs, so to speak, a vertiginous historical recapitulation. Thus, in each person, without exception, the drama of that terrible separation is reenacted. The Incarnation – revealed dazzlingly in the feast of Christmas – shows us this profound mystery. But let us not forget that the Child who is born is also that Crucified Man. For this reason, we can affirm that God is especially present with those who suffer and perhaps chooses instead a terrible silence – understandable as the temporary impunity of actions – for those who exalt and promote death as justice. *Residua desiderantur.*

Epilogue: The Stones and the Temple

Καὶ ὁ Λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο καὶ ἐσκήνωσεν ἐν ἡμῖν
John 1:14

A series of images has powerfully captured my attention: photographs of those tents which, amid the ruins and rubble of Gaza, now shelter thousands of people. In the preparatory notes for this essay, I came across a curious footnote written by Kant. In it, the



Displaced civilians shelter in tents amid the ruins of Gaza. Photo: *The Wall Street Journal*.

German philosopher explains why the Mongols call Tibet: *Tagut-Chadzar*, which literally means – at least according to Kant – the land of the inhabitants of houses. Kant notes that the Mongols use this appellation to distinguish themselves from them, since this people – the Mongols – live nomadically in the desert under tents. Two facts seem interesting to me: first, the astonishing geographical and anthropological erudition of this man (Kant), who, according to his biographies, never left his hometown; second, precisely, that in a footnote – marginal, so to speak – I might have found the precise *figure* needed to understand this series of photographs. For every revelation, I thought at that moment, has something undeniably *naïve* about it (for what we seek now appears obvious) and something astonishing (for we are terrified by our awareness of having failed to perceive it much earlier); as if we were drinking from a cup that mixes memory and desire, and suddenly, after the first sip, everything becomes strangely familiar and, for that very reason, entirely different. Before finally turning to the photographs, there is another note –again marginal, I would say– that only now seems important to me. Rereading fleetingly the *Apocalypse* of John, I realized that in the new heaven and the new earth there will be no temple (*Revelation 21:22*); a few lines earlier, however, we read that God (*Revelation 21:3*) will dwell with human beings in His Tabernacle, that is, like Kant's Mongols, God will live under a tent. These photographs of Gaza – unintentionally of course – show with unusual clarity that dense and mysterious theological formulation: that God lives among us,

that He has chosen, as we see so clearly in Gaza, to camp among the ruins of our history. Not by chance: the Greek verb used in both Revelation and the Gospel of John (σκηνώω) comes from the Hebrew *'ohel* (אהל) which means a portable tent, showing that God's presence is like pitching a tent among His people. However, when I tried to derive from this unobvious intuition a more formal or philosophical line of reasoning, I found myself lacking the necessary words. I therefore decided not to write anything about it. In a final revision of these pages, a friend remarked – though I did not have time to verify the precision of her reference – that it was Ephrem the Syrian, in his famous hymns, who first identified the Virgin Mary as the living dwelling of God on earth, that is, the Virgin Mary with the Tabernacle. And I asked myself, isn't the mother's womb something like our first tent, our portable home that welcomes us, pilgrim-like, into the world? This same friend also pointed out that the entire discourse on history and nature made more or less sense if we excluded the Virgin Mary from it. Provocatively, she told me that perfect *apokatastasis* occurs in the Virgin Mary. I say all this because, upon seeing the photographs of Gaza, I thought once again of the Virgin. It was she who found neither rest nor dwelling in her own land; she who, in the midst of the night, took refuge in an improper house. I thought that if it is true that in this life we are only pilgrims, then we should imagine ourselves already far from those temples that will be destroyed and closer to those fragile tents that, at night, terribly let the cold pass through. I thought all this and initially decided not to write it. Sebald once asserted that if any form of restitution exists – “over and above the mere recital of facts, and over and above scholarship” – it can exist only through literary writing. For one might conjecture, as Camilla Miglio writes in her prodigious study of Celan, that “poetry – and I would extend this definition to all literary writing – has the *forma della materia tutta*: the distinction between organic and inorganic, visible and invisible, no longer holds”. If it is true that in every lament there is a profound inclination toward silence, then observing devastation and ruins from afar, one might affirm that only a poet – or rather, only truly literary writing – can make stones sing (a similar idea appears in *Luke 19:40*). Every poetic task is not simply a linguistic transformation of scattered fragments, but something singularly closer to alchemical magic. For, in Miglio's words once again on Celan, what is at stake is the ability to “read this disconnected score” and to make it – to return it – “dissonantly singable”. That *ricercar per verba* where nature at last – even if briefly – can be reconciled with our history. I copy a long quotation taken from Miglio's book, a passage which, in its particular *pathos*, includes point by point that minimal and provisional poetics which I have perhaps not yet known how to formulate:

Celan chiede a ogni lettore lo sforzo di abbandonare la comoda posizione di chi cerca un referente determinato e dato per ogni parola, di avere occhi e orecchie per vedere e sentire il proprio e l'estraneo; di interrogarsi sulle ragioni di una ripresa o citazione parziale, cercare la traccia, il bagliore ancora percettibile delle parti eluse o elisse di una citazione. Chiede di andare a cercare altri libri, altri contesti, non per controllare l'esattezza o la letteralità di un verso o di un nome ripetuto, ma per ascoltarne l'eco che, come una cicale, risuona nel testo

per percepire l'alone luminescente che l'elisione può aver lasciato come una cicatrice sopra un taglio. (Miglio 2022, 74)

One of the grandsons of the Palestinian diaspora, Eduardo Mitre, has written what is perhaps one of the most beautiful poems in Bolivian literature: *El Peregrino y la Ausencia*, dedicated precisely to his father (*yaba* Alberto). If, as Miglio writes, a fundamental requirement for reading poetry – Celan's poetry, but I would say any poetry – is the ability to hear the echo of other voices resonating within the poem, then in this poem-account by Mitre there occurs, precisely, the transfiguration of a body that seeks, through words, to invoke the presence of another body. Like a betrayed quotation that lives, so to speak, clandestinely within another text. Here, the poet invokes his deceased father so that he may accompany him on his visit to Granada ("*Ven conmigo / al menos en estas palabras / que de un peregrino son errantes / y cumple tu deseo*"). He invokes him in order to undo the silence; in order to go together to the market and eat those clams that, as the poet tells us, taste of resurrection. The poem closes with the following verses:

Pero cae la tarde y ya suenan
campanas cristianas.
Fragua celeste, pasa la luna
sobre la Cruz de la Rauda.
Ya este poema-reencuentro se acaba:
recógete, yaba, a tu sueño de tierra
en el valle de Cochabamba,
mientras siento el martirio
de tu sangre que corre
en Gaza y Cisjordania.
En el silencioso adiós ya se pone,
por última vez,
Granada (Mitre 1988).

Let invocation be, then, the fundamental formula of every poem; let life be sustained, in some way, by fragile verses. Let there be nothing, great or small, whose presence the word cannot invoke. Only in words and music do we find something like our *restitutio ad integrum*.

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English abstract

In *Restitutio ad integrum: On the Impossibility of Reconstruction*, Bernardo Prieto analyzes the theoretical and historical dimensions of apokatastasis, in Hans Urs von Balthasar's thought. The text examines the tension between linear and cyclical conceptions of time, from Origen through Meister Eckhart, and their echoes in Kantian philosophy and Sabbatian mystical movements. Prieto highlights the semantic and theological aspects of "universal reconciliation", the limits of human knowledge, and the ethical implications of hope as a subjective stance toward the invisible. The discussion gains contemporary relevance in light of the recent destruction of Gaza, where the image of tents amid the ruins (*'ohel*, אוהל) illustrates the persistence of human dwelling and the theological symbolism of God dwelling among humanity.

keywords | Apokatastasis; von Balthasar; Restitutio; Ruins; Origin; von Hayek



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