

Hermeneulogy - I - First moment : causal associative chains

By Clémence Ortega Douville

We are now entering a new phase of our developments that would be the setting of the foundations and conceptual territory of Hermeneulogy. As precedently announced, this field would have for object a cross-disciplinary approach to the structures of the human mind, seen as sensorimotor and symbolic. This field then summons a network of various domains of investigation, such as Hermeneutics, Psychoanalysis, Neurobiology and Ethology.

Two distinct yet complementary perspectives are subject to investigation : the phylogenic process of anthropogenesis (for which the theory of the three paradoxes has been thoroughly presented) ; and the ontogenic process of the formation of the human mind as experienced by the individuals at the present moment of our species's evolution.

Our first session here will introduce the first cross-topological concept of *causal associative chains*. Beyond the opposition induced between causal and associative learning - one that would be immanent and rational logic, the other including the subjective association of exogenous events by the individual -, we wish to express here the way each one is weaving its relation to the other.

For which demonstration we first put to test the peculiar object of metaphor, as a disruptive association in the logical structure, yet creating a new level for causality. Reality is then read as contextual, and the kind of reality the aesthetics level uses is not that far from concrete reality when you enter a mythical construction of causal relations.

As for the theory of the three paradoxes, it has much to do with the bipolarity of the body-rooted perception of self-action. It occurs in the network of meanings that has been built on the paradoxical measure given to the subject's personal and relational input. The *delay or lag* created by the sensorimotor paradox of gazing one's own hand created the distance for meaningful action and its semantics.

The intentional sensorimotor vector we named *seize-wish* mentions that the neural value of the activity of the hands is not neutral. Hands seize and the founding paradox of the gazed hand provoked, we believe, a radical split between what is inside of my relational mediation to the hands and what is outside of it. The hands create common objects between the world and I.

Then, the inside of the hands would tend to be associated and identified with the objects from which they put distance to the body - for instance, when one bipedal being falls forward because of gravity : distance from the ground. Becoming biped displaced the centre of the body from the middle to a position a bit forward, at a little distance from the body itself - and a proper yet precarious balance.

The outside of the hands would on their side tend to be associated with the integrity of the body, the exterior shell that can be hurt and damaged. This bipolar dynamics inside/outside, open/close, standing/falling, breathing in/breathing out, naming/perceiving, can be described as causal associative chains connecting relational *slight traumas*. Namely, the receiving of a sensory perception of reality, a mark and neural imprint, and our responding to it.

The perception of volumes would be for instance intimately related to the abstraction from the self's projection - distance - in the reception of still and moving objects perceived as *identities*, and therefore as detached forms from the subject. Causal associative chains aim at the articulation that the subject operates to convey personal enaction into the relational expectations to their experiential semantic fields. The convexity of the objects then creates the notions of time and space necessary to locate them in the personal world of the subject and their modalities of perception.

Ruptures in these chains, as we will see, do not mean a rupture in the capacity of the subject to leap over to the next step into their own mythical and metaphorical causal associations. The

rupture in logic presents in the metaphor an invitation for the subject to leap over these semantic and syntactic gaps, in order to create new contextual meaning.

Drops of sweat, drops of tears

In the 1985 Chinese film 'The Boarding House of Regrets', by female director Hu Mei, we witness some interesting moments, in spite of some monotonous parts. During the Cultural Revolution, a 15 year old girl named Qiao Xiaoyu is sent as a nurse to a military hospital in the middle of the mountains.

The order is strict there and personal afflictions or sentimental feelings are highly discouraged. Yet the young girl falls in love with a wounded captain, stirring her mind away from work, with very few words. Dead in the water, this love story will become the melancholic essence to the poetics of the film. From there, 15 another years pass before she marries and decides to turn a new page.

What is really striking in this film is the presence of water. More precisely, the close shots on the faces when the main characters sweat - when witnessing gross surgery or removing a painful bandage in an intimate moment between the girl and the boy. This materialisation of sweat becomes an entire aesthetic object in those shots, the poetics of those metaphorical objects. Thus, it appears as though the body through the skin was shedding tears. And then, it turns to another passage with a close shot on Qiao's tear-bathed eyes.

In absence of words, the pain striking from regimented actions leaves no other choice to the body than to find another way to tell, to show outside of it what is happening on the inside.

Then, the separation scene between the lovers is only marked by those hesitating words : 'You... I... We...', the look of Qiao away from the soldier and suddenly - a rupture in causality - the image of the bus driving him away from her on dusty road. Metaphor was here, where we were expecting for a causal return to the face of the loved one ; it drove directly, it cut off and patched up to the feeling of separation, of loss, of being torn apart from something dear.

Later, the tears become the rain, and the rain, a child giving transparent marbles to the nurse he admires, 15 years after she renounced writing back to the captain. And later on, another image, a two or three year old boy in the arms of her mother, a friend of Qiao's, in an apartment, and the same little boy tearing the page of a magazine in the same way that Qiao had torn the envelope - with the adress of the soldier - that she mended and stuck in her diary.

To finish with, the snow and the page of the notebook torn into small pieces, blown in the wind.

In all that, you can see the symbolical logic of the humours of the body, organic and ecological poetics. But the most important feature is that if the associative causality of the metaphor turns accurate on the aesthetic level, what does it tell us of the subject's contextual reading ? Is the metaphorical causality written on an arbitrary and logical text, or does the subject create the conditions in which the unnamed poetics of those images would emerge ?

Then, what does it tell us about the interpretation of reality ? What does count as pure causality (even if you can doubt the very existence of matter like René Descartes did in his time) and what can be put on the account of the relativity of our personal subjective perception ?

More importantly, where does meaning appear as meaning and not only as the habit of holding things as being meaningful to us ? To be more precise, how much is our relation to causality imprinted in the personal associative experience we made it something meaningful from ? How does the semantics of experience become so entangled that the sensorimotor and the symbolic level are almost impossible to dissociate ?

All those questions stress why the concept of causal associative chains seems relevant to us

in order to bring out some crosspath objects that would help us create new relations between those plans.

Causality and distance

When I think that I know that an event *a* will provoke another that would be the event *b* as a consequence, I do not only infer that it will be so everytime the adequate conditions will be gathered for it. If I say : 'This marble is going to fall from the train window to the ground, and every marble of equivalent size and weight will', I not only say that it *will* surely do ; but I also suppose that the reality I associate myself with is stable. That means, not that causality is relative, but that the distance from the objects I observe is relative to my being sure of its being related to *me*.

If I say : 'This book is put on the table, and it is not going to move', inevitably, even unconscious, another voice would respond : 'Is it ?' Because in fact, we can expect everything from reality, as soon as a meaningful affirmation implies the confidence in the stability of our own experience - all that is learnt from childhood. It is not reality that is doubtful, it is us as an emerging structure of experience - of the others, language and ourselves. Therefore, we have to check everytime that what we hold for a stable reality - that is *for us* - is really something meant for us at all. Am I really part of this reality ? Am I included ? Isn't the self a proof that there is a difference between the world and I ? How am I enough different to be some piece of an identity ? And how am I different from my thoughts of myself ?

In fact, metaphor is everywhere language forms our relation to reality, because our relation to reality is based on unacheived reality.

Let us go back to the paradox of the gazed hand. If I could have swallowed my own hand, I may have acheived a potential reality : *I turn my hand into an object of intentional projection and then the next logical step is that I eat and swallow my hand*, that I assimilate it. Yet the hand is the very outside object that I *can't* assimilate. It is a blocker to circling reality. And it is sensorimotor, that is why it is so powerful.

Hence, this is also why the *id* of psychoanalysis always feeds itself, restlessly, and nurrishes the drive for the conscious to self-maintain its own contextual stream of conscious. The context of thinking is not what I want to do, it is observing the logics of what I am going to do.

Psychoanalyst Darian Leader observed wonderfully how the hands expressed the disruptions in the continuity of the self. When chains of the causal associations of the conscious's activity are tight, it is working and it is self-coherent. It creates its own context for meaning, it is dense and intense. But when it gets loose or finds inherent contradictions with inhibiting gaps in its semantics, blank spots where the function of the thinking annuls, the reference for meaning collapses ; and at this moment, the hands are the most direct testimony left of our social and moral existence to the common world.

So there is of course always a distance created between the social norms, those cultural networks of meaning and the inside workings of the mind. But every now and then, this fabric of the moral context meets cracks and then we can only witness the outside persistence - or not - of our common automatic, unconscious behaviour amongst the others.

There is a constant dialogue between what we propose as statement to the reality we expect a confirmative response from, and the insecurity that it will - maybe not. There are always two sides to the hands : the inside that is in some way related to the self, action, seizure and the control of distance ; the outside to the others, to the unknown and never certain capacity to relate to them.

Therefore, we can only associate together that if one reality is certain because I act within it,

the other is uncertain because I may get hurt because of it. Causality is thus always associative because it has to include that if the reality I describe and find causality in does not prove me right, it may not only prove me wrong on this point ; I may have to face a difficult disruption in the integrity and fabric of the reality I perceived as valid for a legitimate contextual action up to this moment.

The semantics of action is based on the fabric of what I hold as favourably responding to my assertions on reality. Reality has a phenomenological volume when it is potential and possibly moving. As soon as I plan to act toward it, it only recovers the properties that make it edible or not, that make it *still*.

Reality, because of language, because of distance and because of the bipolarity of its paradoxical conditions, is always a resistance - therefore *radial* - because it needs a reliable distance to be either true or false. Reality needs to be moving to have volume, time, space. Either way, we don't have a choice, by nature : as soon as we assert something on reality, we are only stressing the metaphorical nature of our relation to language - that is our prime intermediary to reality, a reality for action - out. We live to eat, and language helps us explain why we want to eat some things that we *cannot* without hurting ourselves. That is why the root of the human mind is a moral root.

We propose the concept of causal associative chains to express that anytime we make a connection between two events - between drops of sweat and tears -, sequencing reality into chains of action, we are only trying to get closer to the very property that makes us keep a distance from a difficult outcome. If I bite my own hand and try to swallow it, I will hurt myself. If I fall forward on the ground without raising my hands open to stop it and protect my body, I will get hurt.

If I don't put a word between myself and the other that comes towards me and that is yet just a confused form, just a convex event in the fabric of reality, I will never get to know them and place a common object to be convex in our stead between them and I.

That is the elementary function of articulating the three levels of our experience - physiological, relational, symbolic - together with adequate cross-concepts that allow us move more freely and in a more fluid way beyond all the metaphorical fields of our wonderments. All those notions we will precise in our ongoing work on Hermeneutological investigation.