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Transitions

Edited by Tommaso Sgarro

FIRST SECTION

<i>Tommaso Sgarro</i> EDITORIAL I – Transitions: New and Different Perspectives	9
<i>Tommaso Sgarro</i> The Human “Historicity” as a Permanent Transition in the Philosophy of Ignacio Ellacuría	13
<i>Luis Roca Jusmet</i> François Jullien: The Double Transit of Human Life	27
<i>Jordi Riba Miralles</i> The Event, beyond the Permanent Crisis	37
<i>Alessia Franco</i> For an Epistemology of Transition: Paul B. Preciado, Psychoanalysis and the Regime of Sexual Difference	51

SECOND SECTION

<i>Tommaso Sgarro</i> EDITORIAL II – Governing Transitions	67
<i>Pierpaolo Limone - Maria Grazia Simone</i> Becoming Support Teachers at the University of Foggia During the Pandemic. An Exploratory Survey	71
<i>Francesca Finestrone</i> Music: For a Sustainable Community and the Promotion of Well-being	85
<i>Gennaro Balzano - Vito Balzano</i> Educating for Transition in Work Contexts	101
<i>Giuseppina Maria Patrizia Surace</i> The Future We Want: The Transition to Adulthood of Unaccompanied Minors	111

Editorial I

Transitions: New and Different Perspectives

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“But ultimately you should at least remember that this is a century of transition. / TRISTAN: Oh, what conclusions do you draw from this? All centuries, more or less, have been and will be transitional, because human society never stands still, nor will there ever come a century in which there is a condition destined to last”. Giacomo Leopardi wrote these words in 1832, in *Dialogo di Tristano e di un amico*, included at the conclusion of the 1834 Florentine edition of the *Operette morali*, devoting a quick critique to the all-Nineteenth-Century idea that he wanted the Nineteenth Century to be a “century of transition”, marked by contradictions that would nevertheless be resolved and find their fulfillment in the affirmation of human progress. It is precisely the idea of progress (which holds within itself that of transition to a new and better era) that Leopardi rejects; the protagonist is not history itself but human nature, which equal in all eras, would make each era identical to the other. That of “transition” would thus be a “naïve” idea, given by the illusion of the present, the time that everyone lives, which by its movement gives us the idea of a more overall ordered and oriented movement of history toward something that is beyond the human itself. Indeed, the problem of transition brings with it in modernity the problem of “where”, of the horizon, since speaking of transition always indicates an indefinite intermediate condition from one state to another. If, then, for Leopardi, transition is the meaning of History itself in relation to man, for Hegel it has a definite function in History: “Long periods may perhaps elapse before an old ethical form can be superseded by the new; the epochs of philosophy fall in these periods of transition”. Transition is

thus a necessary moment for the affirmation of universal reason, which manifests itself in the form of ethics and is shown through the affirmation of a new philosophy. If in Leopardi the need for a permanent form of transition of an existential nature is attested, for Hegel the nature of transition is logical, necessary, and posed by the demands internal to history itself. It is no coincidence that the term has had its own importance in the construction of historiographical categories conditioned precisely by the Hegelian interpretation of History, as if in history there is a kind of general transition from one civilization to another, during which new social forms, customs, new cultural, literary, and artistic conceptions and productions mature. For Marx, who starts precisely from Hegel's logic, transition is the indispensable historical characterization of socialism as a preparatory phase for the establishment of communist society, showing how important this term was within the 19th Century.

Today the word has left the "safe" (admittedly no longer too safe) field of the philosophy of History, to return to great use in specific ethical issues. Thus, we speak of energy transition when we talk about the need to abandon the old forms of energy production and invest in renewable energy, in order to protect the planet; of ecological transition when we talk about the reshaping of the production system towards a circular economy, no longer based on the consumption cycle, but aiming at a more sustainable agriculture to protect human health (in Italy they have even established a Ministry of Ecological Transition, whose goal is to hold together these ethical-productive demands). While a use of the word unshackled from any historical-ideological superstructure has ensured its "new fortune", this use has mostly been done uncritically, without a precise awareness of the implications the term carries. In order not to make a trivially *à la page* use of it, it is necessary to put on the agenda not a conceptual re-founding of it (useless to anachronistic), but a careful phenomenological observation that allows us to grasp new nuances and different perspectives from those of the past.

The goal of the present volume of the journal *Elementa. Intersections between Philosophy, Epistemology and Empirical Perspectives*, is by all means ambitious, and treads impervious ground. The operation is facilitated, however, by the precise awareness, that the main objective is to go and retrieve new senses of the term firstly within new and little-practiced intellectual contexts, and secondly in the field of practice. It is this reason why, within this philosophical "first half", the operation focuses on the transition of the term, from the "old" terrain of history to that of human "historicity" within the first essay, which I proposed, *The Human "Historicity"*

as a *Permanent Transition in the Philosophy of Ignacio Ellacuría*. Through Ellacuría's analysis of the philosophy of historical reality, a new key emerges that makes transition the dynamic needed to read History no longer from the standpoint of ideology, as much as idealism, but as the place of praxis, of the realization of human possibilities that are characterized within a constant dialogue between man and the socio-historical reality to which he belongs. A first indispensable step to relocate the theme of transition within the human-history relationship, however, abandoning – however – the paradigms of the most rigid and obsolete Hegelism. This also means overcoming the reading entirely internal to Western culture of the lemma “transition” based on the oppositional and conflicting nature of the two states (the one of departure and the final one) within which the “state of transition” would be located.

With LUIS ROCA JUSMET's essay, *François Jullien: The Double Transit of Human Life*, in fact, through a comparison with Chinese culture, a comparison that can no longer be procrastinated even from a cultural point of view given the transformations in economic and social relations with the East caused by economic globalization, it is highlighted how nature, and the very human life that is part of it, are processes that cannot necessarily be formulated in terms of continuity (as is the case with the West) but as “transit”. Through the reconstruction of Jullien's work, the author leads the reader to the knowledge of elements of thought that are absent in Western culture and, nevertheless, useful in understanding the challenges imposed by the new use of the term transition with respect to ecological challenges. Rethinking transition means, then, rethinking the political practices that result from it and, at the same time, rethinking politics itself (ecological transition practices, after all, involve a political paradigm shift).

JORDI RIBA MIRALLES, in his *The Event, beyond the Permanent Crisis*, through comparing the work of Jean-Marie Guyau and that of Alain Badiou, and delving into the ideas of “permanent crisis” and “event”, questions precisely the rethinking of the nexus between history and the transformation of political reality. At a time like today's, it must be understood that the problem is not overcoming the crisis itself, but rather understanding the political event to which it opens: in this respect, the permanent crisis is nothing more than the political dimension of the permanent transition of human reality.

Closing out the overview is ALESSIA FRANCO's essay, *For an Epistemology of Transition: Paul Preciado, Psychoanalysis and the Regime of Sexual Difference*, confirming how the recalibration of the new meaning that accompanies

the term “transition” has more to do no longer with universal and general contexts, but with the human, considered no longer under the meaning of the old concept of nature, but on that of the practices within which it shows itself. This becomes visible when we analyze the theme of the body in relation to that of transition, so as to overcome the old oppositional logics on which the Western way of thinking has been held. In this sense, Paul B. Preciado’s epistemology of transition, which is the focus of Franco’s essay, aims to go beyond the epistemological regime of sexual difference based on heterobinarism, placing the topic of the body in transition no longer under the mere lens of psychoanalysis but from a philosophical perspective.

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