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## DISTANCE

at the centre of the relationship

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Marion Dapsance

Editorial

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Jean-Louis Meylan

Distance Learning

Didactic Device and Pedagogical Relationship

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Michel Van Aerde

For a Theology of Distance

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Emmanuel Boissieu

Long Live Distance, The Heart of Identity

DOMUNI pr@ss







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*Telos – in other words, the target, the goal, the destination. It is a Greek word rich in both philosophical and theological tradition. It gives us a title summed up in the action of the shooting of an arrow. The source is identified and so is the objective. Telos is the journal of Domuni University. It is an international journal on Theology, Philosophy, History and Social Sciences, freely accessible and published on the internet, with the aim of stimulating thinking and contributing to the dialogue of thought.*

*Its structure is in keeping with the tradition of the Order of Preachers, that of the 'disputatio', understood not as vain controversy, but as a meeting place for different points of view on a same theme.*

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*We are present and spread on the five continents. Our languages and situations are often very different, but the diversity converges with the internet and specifically through this journal of scientific level.*

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# Editorial

**Marion Dapsance**

Domuni Universitas

The following statement may seem paradoxical. Distance - physical, intellectual, moral – allows for the creation of links. In fact, it is often *absence* that invites human beings to invent solutions for bringing people together and thus to demonstrate innovation. Generally, innovation is often analyzed in the stiff terms of technology. In the field of education, for example, we speak of “new information and communication technologies” (NICT). These are all the technologies that make it possible to process digital information and transmit it. By combining computing and telecommunications, these new technologies were much further developed with the generalization of broadband internet at the end of the 1990s. It was precisely at this time that *Domuni Universitas* was created, with the aim of responding to the intellectual training needs of the most isolated communities and of making available to a wide public the Dominican traditions of thought to which it would otherwise have difficulty in gaining access. It is thus surely of interest to look at the technologies and other means that make this unprecedented dissemination of Dominican academic and spiritual knowledge possible - and Domuni’s expertise in this area is now internationally recognized. However, it is even more relevant today to reflect upon the very *human* dimension of distance as a mode of existence, of relating to others or of functioning. What are the implications of distance, both spatial and temporal, for learning? What new flavors can the teacher-student relationship have? Are there old ways of teaching that take distance into account, or who even put it at the center? Is distance not the very condition of thought? These are the questions that this issue of *Telos* wishes and seeks to answer, passing the first milestone of a vast reflection on the current transformations that are reshaping higher education.

# Distance Learning.

## Didactic Device and Pedagogical Relationship

Jean-Louis Meylan

Doctor of Educational Sciences, Head of Andragogy research

### For a University-tailored Andragogy

Questioning identity in educational terms means questioning the system, the values it embodies, and the goals towards which the community of learners is oriented. It is in this context that Domuni has undertaken a reflection on its pedagogy and its specificity. In order to elaborate such a reflection, we have focused on three axes.

The first one relates to **Educational Sciences research**. Aware that a community of researchers is wondering about the effects of distance education, about the necessary implementations to strive constantly for andragogical efficiency, we have based ourselves on current theories that allow a better understanding of the pedagogical phenomenon in higher education.

The second deals with the **different concepts** used in educational sciences in distance learning and the **new technologies** associated with it. They do not render obsolete the research and theories in pedagogy that take place in the classroom. On the contrary, many disciplines, such as psychology, psychoanalysis, didactics or different pedagogical theories have the educational relationship as their cornerstone. This is always based on the tripartite model implemented by Houssaye and which the knowledge, the learner and the teacher define.

As for the third, it refers to the question of **absence versus presence**. The spatio-temporal rupture in any distance learning program has an impact on the didactic transposition. This can be analyzed according to the levels of mediatization and mediation, as well as according to the type of relationship that is established between the teacher and the learner.

The theme of absence versus presence is articulated both in relation to the great psycho-pedagogical principles that have proved their worth and to the new concepts developed by the new didactic theories, in particular those relating to the question of distance learning. This theme runs through this reflection and is found in notions such as dialogue and the intersubjective relationship.

## Between Mediation and Mediatization

### a) Mediatization:

The term media refers to the notion of medium, i.e. the means used to communicate between the sender and the receiver. Mediated communication in distance learning implies that the sender is physically absent. Mediatization refers to "the process of conceiving, producing and implementing a mediated communication tool" (1999, p. 8). It is above all conceptual operations and creative, technical processes that transform and adapt contents to the media with a communicative intention. In the framework of Domuni University, the courses are adapted to the Moodle platform in such a way as to allow for fluid reading. They do not need to be downloaded. They are structured in steps and allow for reading via a smartphone or tablet.

Mediatization also involves the adaptation of one language to another, sometimes abstract language that can be illustrated in the form of diagrams. This process is reflected in the content of the courses for which a professor is responsible. In addition, a group of specialists regularly reflect on the question of design, the layout of the site, and the structure of the courses. Media designers, pedagogues, and engineers assess and contribute to such a tool or system.

### b) Mediation:

Mediation refers, in the social field, to an intervener who stands between two or more subjects. The mediator intervenes in marital or institutional conflicts. He tries to re-establish a communication that has turned deficient. In the field of teaching, the didactician or the pedagogue is between the knowledge and the learner. We can retain two characteristics: First, there is always a human intervention. Second, this intervention transforms the relationship.

Mediation uses technique. It takes place by means of "artifacts". Whether we speak of tools or instruments, these are linked intimately to cultural patterns. Like the mediator, they have an impact on the learners' behavior. Mediation "comes from the uses and effects of tools and instruments on the subject" (Peraya, 1999). Thus, in the context of distance learning, the use of reading a course on the Moodle platform or the possibility of following a distance learning course synchronously, by videoconference, involve different socio-affective and cognitive attitudes and behaviors.

Mediatization is about the conception and process of communication, so it is about engineering. Mediation, on the other hand, is primarily about "observing, analyzing and understanding the effects in its social and personal use" (Peraya 16) and is thus about research.

Mediation	Mediatization
Observation, analysis	Conception of the communication tool or system
Social and personal use	Research application
Research	Engineering (application)
Reference to Vygotsky, Cognitive tools, Phenomenology	System applied according to the socio-constructivist or phenomenological theories
New theological theories on the question of distance (practical theology)	Putting practical theology into practice

The effects of mediatization can be observed. The system may or may not favor communication, presence, and decentering. It is in terms of mediation that such an observation can be made.

The mediation approach, research, and observing the new uses that Domuni's students can deploy thus lead us to renew our systems, to propose new mediatizations that will in turn be evaluated. This reflection can be applied, for example, to the hypothesis raised by Jézégou (2010, p.266) on the advantage of asynchronism, which would promote reflexivity. Another important question is whether a mediatization process can compensate for the physical absence of the trainer or teacher by the possibility of having a high-quality "virtual" presence. A second related question is: how does presence promote a pedagogical link?

## Presence and Distance

### a) A Presence Created in the Distance

We will not dwell on the difficulty that arises from the notion of presence in distance learning. However, we will note that the spatio-temporal rupture (Peraya, 2011, p.446; Charlier et al, 2006, p. 474) presupposes an impossibility of physical contact between the learner and the teacher. In terms of a philosophy of education, this reality can be addressed both phenomenologically and theologically. We have included a paragraph, which serves as a reaction to Michel Van Aerde's text entitled "*Théologie de la distance 2021*", at the end of this document.

Technical systems have tended to obliterate the symbolic, cognitive and relational functions, as the work of Charlier et al (2006, p. 470) reminds us. The absence of a physical presence does not prevent an intersubjective relation in an andragogical process at a distance, on the contrary, one could express a psychological overstimulation due to the different media at work. Not having a direct contact with the interlocutor can open to numerous projections and transfers. This problem of presence and distance, which is often expressed by the absence/presence dichotomy (Jézégou, 2010), could be overcome under certain conditions. It is in this sense that some authors can speak of "a presence at a distance" (Jézégou, 2010; Peraya, 2011; Gervais, 2007; Jacquinet, 1993). The presence of the other, in a pedagogical relationship, refers to numerous variables such as verbal or non-verbal, bodily, olfactory, proprioceptive communication. It is possible to find some of these variables in interactions taking place in a virtual reality. The other person's presence would then not only be possible but could also take place in conditions that favour a positive relationship between the trainer and the learner. In the following, we focus on two aspects.

- 1) Firstly, according to Jézégou (2010), the interaction of learners is based on a "**confrontation**" of points of view aimed at negotiation. The trainer will encourage learners to take up their points of view. In the discussion forums set up by Domuni, exchanges take place as per this principle. The monthly debate is a forum for the students of a faculty. The topics proposed often lead to lively debates. The confrontation of points of view, which are essentially based on opinions and emotions, allows for a free exchange of ideas and thoughts, and the objective is essentially to create a community where respect

must prevail. Quite different are the seminars (interactive trainings of about fifteen students under the direction of a teacher) which make use of analytical arguments, and which very often take place according to a core text proposed by the teacher. In this case, it is the cognitive level that is engaged during the exchanges and communications revolving around a didactic process.

In e-learning, cognitive presence is defined by Jézégou (2010, p. 266) as the result of transactions between learners, in order to solve "a problematic situation in a joint and common manner. Transactions are social interactions, confrontation of points of view, mutual adjustments, negotiations and deliberations that testify to a distance collaboration between learners within a digital communication space".

- 2) Secondly, interactions should take place in a **socio-affective climate** that favors the various transactions. In this way, the trainer contributes to nurturing respect and appreciation of and for each learner. The notion of presence differs little from the definitions that could be given in the context of a physical classroom teaching relationship. Thus, it is the affective and cognitive dimensions that must be taken into consideration. Often the latter are given greater importance than the former. In the context of distance learning, the trainer must have recourse to particular skills. He must both master the tools on a technical level and be aware of their impact on communication as well as on socio-affective and cognitive behavior.

#### **b) Transactional Distance**

The concept of transactional distance developed in the early 1970s by Moore allows us to take into consideration the question of dialogue, structure and autonomy of the learner in the context of distance learning. The transactional distance will be higher the less dialogue there is and the more the structure of the training emphasizes the student's autonomy. Moore & Marty (2007, p.5-6) take the example of correspondence courses where dialogue is an important element in correspondence between the instructor and the learner. An emphasis on dialogue and a more flexible structure thus decreases transactional distance. The structure is defined in terms of objectives, flexibility or not, pace, summative or formative assessments.

The interactions put in place by the training system meet two types of needs. First, accurate administrative information and clear instructions for methodology provide the learner with the means to meet academic requirements. Second, interpersonal relationships with tutors meet psychological needs. The sense of belonging, self-confidence, and feeling the presence of the other are essentially established through dialogue.

In their model and definition, Moore & Marty (2007, p.5) note that "interaction is not always constructive, but dialogue is. Dialogue creates synergies, as each of the two communicators builds on the other's comments." Dialogue operates on a different register than that of a pure exchange of formal information. In this sense, a strong structure (clear objectives, elaborate didactics, adapted and formative evaluations), associated with a high degree of learner autonomy, will determine an increase in transactional distance. However, it is quite possible to play with the variables and imagine a much more flexible structure, without necessarily a lot of dialogue. In this case, the learner must himself look for internal and external resources.



In the context of Domuni University, the degree of transactional distance is quite high depending on the student population and the flexibility of the pace of work and assessments. A majority (70%) of students already have a university-level education and are professionally active.

At Domuni, the frequency of assessments depends on the student's personal organization and work/study schedule. The flexibility of the curriculum meets the student's need for autonomy. The management of his work/study rhythm allows him to develop fields of interest that often go beyond the teachers' requirements and instructions. However, such an openness to autonomy can have its pitfalls, notably pitfalls related to dispersion and sometimes to an exaggerated level of rigor, a result of an ideal of success that is part of the learner's psychological structure. The dialogue with the tutor can counterbalance this over-investment.

**Blended Learning:** At Domuni, face-to-face in person meetings are organized in various forms. First, the Participatory Study Days (that take place once a month, except during Covid-19 lockdowns), allow students, teachers and members of the administration to meet, each time in a different city. Second, the "Sessions", each lasting at least one week, are organized in significant places (in Jerusalem with the *Ecole Biblique et Archéologique Française*), which allowed to visit various important archaeological sites, with Jordan next. Other sessions are being planned and are to take place in Turkey (sources of philosophy and of many texts of the New Testament...), in Spain, etc. The colloquiums organized by Domuni with partner universities also allow students and teachers to meet in significant occasions. Up until the Covid-19 sanitary crisis, the defense of MA theses and dissertations were organized in person (see last paragraph of this document). Even if everything can be organized remotely, it is however possible, in all the occasions which are favorable, to use blended learning (synchronous and asynchronous, remote and face-to-face/in person). Experience shows that the direct exchange is all the more intense if it has been prepared by a real pedagogical follow-up.

## **Schematization of Pedagogical Relationship**

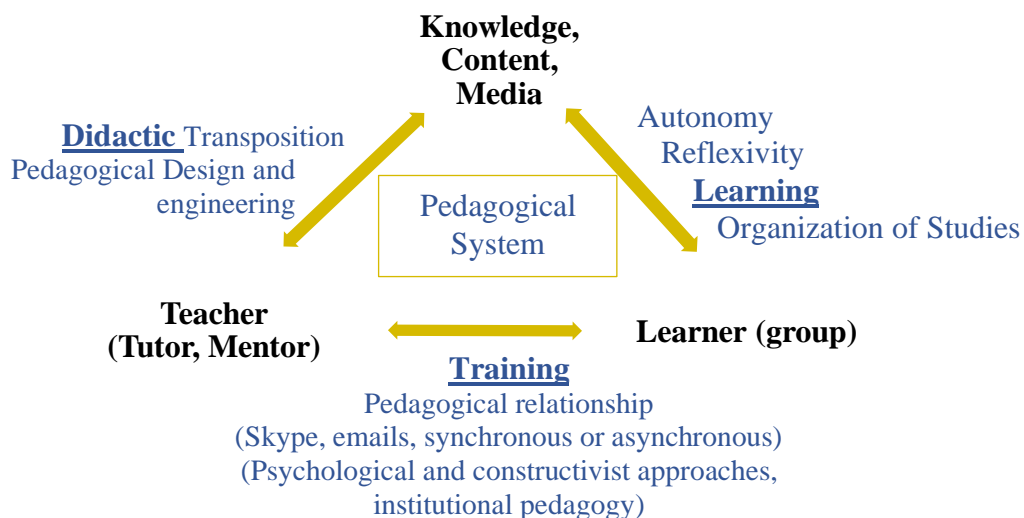
### **a) Three Levels**

- 1) Learning to learn. This is cognitive development with a socio-constructivist approach. The intention is to develop in the student, for example, a reflexivity on his learning (to become aware of his way of learning, how he reacts to others), on ways of reasoning (in philosophy or in theology). The approach is logical, rational. The didactic dimension can be defined at this level.
- 2) Loving to learn. This is affective development. The objectives can be expressed, for example, in a relationship between teacher and learner, but also between teacher and group (in forums). There can be an approach that is linked to humanistic psychology, psychoanalysis or even positive psychology. Some contemporary authors base their work on Rogers' theses: authenticity, unconditionally positive regard of the learner, congruence, etc. The student can prepare a work on/about himself (he can reflect on his own affects in a logbook for example).

- 3) Persevering in learning. This is the conative aspect: the objective is to allow the student to find within or outside himself, resources to persevere. It is about supporting the student's efforts. The negotiated study program, the individualized rhythm (e.g. we will find here the individualized pedagogy or pedagogy by objectives), the decentralized resources or otherwise... all this has an impact on motivation.

#### b) Three Poles: Houssaye's educational triangle

Some authors such as Peraya (2011) and Parr (2019) refer to Houssaye's educational triangle, a model that has been adapted to distance learning.



Houssaye's educational triangle refers to three poles: knowledge, the learner and the teacher. Three typologies can be identified according to the axis from which the relationship is established. The first axis, didactic, concerns the Teacher/Knowledge relationship. The second axis, that of the Teacher/Learner relationship, refers to training. Finally, the Learner/Knowledge axis concerns learning and self-learning. It is thus clear that the difficulty in any training system is to find a balance between these three poles, at the risk of one of them "playing dead" as Houssaye points out.

Compared to a traditional physical classroom-based pedagogy, a distance learning course has two major differences in terms of the axes addressed. The first concerns the training dimension. The physical presence gives way to a new type of relationship, totally mediated, allowing to counterbalance the spatio-temporal rupture. The redefinition of the relationship between the Learner and the Teacher will have direct consequences on the didactic axis, since a reflection on the mediatization level will have to be carried out, and on the Learning axis since the question of the learner's autonomy is a central element, in particular in a system taking into account the question of the transactional distance.

#### c) Three Axes

##### 1. Training Axis

Under this axis are the great pedagogical principles that have been developed by humanistic psychology and taken up in other terms by Hamel (2019), who speaks of a pedagogy of empathy adapted to distance learning. It is possible to implement a didactic system with

procedures that favor such an approach. The emphasis is to be put on a formative or educative approach. Knowledge is to "play dead" (Houssaye), that is to say that the focus is on the question of relational quality.

We may mention in this context the great Rogerian precepts of trust, congruence and empathy, which allow for a more "horizontal" type of relationship with the learner.

## *2. Didactic Axis*

By drawing on the model of Houssaye, one can inspect in this case the questions linked to didactic transposition (Chevallard & Johusa, 1991). For the teacher in particular, it is a question of conceiving his course in terms of the transformation and elaboration of scholarly knowledge into a teaching object. This taught knowledge is adapted according to a specific population, particular objectives, and institutional goals. This taught knowledge, put online and available on a platform, is never static. In our case, the teacher has to update it not only according to new scientific findings, but also according to an institutional culture that is always evolving.

## *3. Learning Axis*

The question of didactic transposition, of the type of relationship the teacher has with the learner, and of the transactional distance, has an impact on the learning axis.

### **When it comes to the teacher:**

Domuni has put in place many modalities, such as:

- Surveys on quality, completed by the students
- Feedback from the teachers
- Feedback from the pedagogical committee
- The system (or Moodle platform) that provides external resources (bibliography, methodology)
- The accompaniment by the administration and the mentor which helps to build confidence
- And other means.

### **When it comes to the learner:**

The educational system put in place by Domuni can contribute to fostering the learner's competences by giving him/her the means to expand his/her personal resources. The implemented means are:

- A Moodle platform to which the student can connect: the student finds, for example, hyperlinks that direct him to a bibliography, forums that link him with his peers, with the teacher of each course, with the administration, with his mentor...
- A personalized communication procedure: emails to exchange with his mentor, the secretariate as well as with other students.
- A certain choice of courses selected according to one's level and faculty
- Registration procedures for other courses, interactive seminars, videoconferences (webinars), etc.

## Philosophical and Theological Considerations

### a) Rupture in Intercorporeality

From the point of view of developmental psychology, it is not possible to imagine a subject progressing without a connection to his body. Communication, as a factor of development, passes through the body. What is expressed, what others communicate through all their verbal and non-verbal means, kinesthetic, through the olfactory senses, through the pores of the skin, this expressive unity founds the interpersonal relationship. The child can develop himself by touching an object, by making gestures, by appropriating the world through his body. His intelligence develops on motor schemes.

The condition of the possibility of a communication is inscribed in a physical world that forms a unique world where subjects can understand each other. Somato-spiritual unity according to Husserl - man - would be only a nomad "without windows of understanding if intersubjective phenomena were not there" (PFP 270). These are necessarily founded from the "living" body. This does not mean that one should limit the mind to a physical nature. Though, from a phenomenological point of view, if we remove the bodily element, the mind remains enclosed, isolated, and sociability cannot be realized (RPC 400).

In a distance relationship, the dematerialization of information (or its virtualization) provokes a rupture that is above all in intercorporeality. The intersubjective relation is mediated by an information that reproduces the "real" world. One hears the other, one sees him and, according to technological progress, one might even be able to touch him, as one touches now the screen. This type of communication makes use of a form of imagination and abstraction that creates a diffraction of the unity of the comprehension of the subject. The other appears to me through reconstituted binary information units, which are transmitted by networked infrastructures (cable, radio waves) that carry impulses (bits). This "dematerialization" and rematerialization of the information brings us in a virtual universe where the body disappears and reappears in favour of a digital communication.

If one takes the example of an epistolary communication, it is clear that matter remains the substratum of the communication. I write a letter, with ink, thanks to the movement of my hand which seized a feather. My hand touched the paper on which my message was written. The letter is conveyed by a means of transport to be seized by the correspondent who will open the envelope to touch in his turn the same paper. A distance communication is established materially. The traces and the signs that I can locate on the letter, its smell, are of the many elements which can connect me with the person. I can mentally reproduce the gestures made by the other person while reading a handwritten letter. My imagination and my understanding are rooted in the matter. On the contrary, the new means of communication reproduce and create a "digitized" world. Communication is no longer addressed to the body, but to a cognitive-cerebral level that must process information like a computer.

This rupture of the intercorporeality leads us to perceive that, if the technology allows us to establish a communication beyond space and time, there are social and pedagogical stakes to think about. In particular, that which concerns relating to others, because the "virtual" world favours, among other things, the desire for omnipotence and escape. We can also suspect that



the feeling of solitude can be exacerbated by this illusion of being in a much-needed relationship. To conceive a training or study program is to try to avoid this narcissism exacerbated by the virtualization of the world. This is opposed to any educational project since it aims on the contrary at the learner's autonomy (cf. *Le risque de la virtualisation du monde* Serge Tisseron, *Dans Rêver, fantasmer, virtualiser* (2012), également: *Critique de la dématérialisation*, Pascal Robert, *Communication & Langages* Année 2004 140 pp. 55-68)

### **b) Rethinking Distance with the Help of Philosophy and Theology**

If distance is intrinsic to faith, as Van Aerde recalls (2021, p.4), this faith (from the theological point of view, we can speak of faith, but analogically, in other disciplines, we could speak simply of trust) bears a paradox, since it can mean the proximity of a presence as a reference to a living interiority, where the dialogue with the author of the text, or with the speaker of the videoconference that we are attending, is taking place.

Whether teaching takes place physically in the classroom or is in the form of distance learning, there is always a certain distance. Distance learning must avoid falling into the trap of trying to restore a presence that would supposedly be "real" in physical classroom teaching, and of trying to achieve this through high-performance technological tools for an "identical" media representation. On the contrary, the physical distance must be acknowledged and owned, as it is in physical classroom training.

Asynchronous communication particularly allows such an approach. It presupposes a spatial and temporal distance and gives the learner time to enter into a reflexivity. As Van Aerde points out: "Presence is what is sought and hoped for, it is, in a way, postponed or saved for later, it therefore calls for faith". The quest for an immediate, instantaneous, non-postponed presence, that of a teacher or a peer, is the subject of a "phantasm". Not only this "subject that is supposed to know", as Lacan would say, does not exist, but moreover, obviously, the living corporality, inhabited, embodied by the subject who accompanies me in my sociality, will never be found in a virtual world.

Even if, as some authors suggest, there could be an almost equivalent quality of presence in a "virtual" context, the notion must be put into perspective. Presence, yes, but it always remains relative, indicative, and the student must develop autonomy and therefore assume a part of the entailed solitude. Postponing the answer to a question or issue or having a time lag, dealing with absence and an inner lack, make up an approach that can be included in a training program where the relationship to the text remains the essential axis from which the learner structures his progression. It is not only a question of acquiring academic knowledge or even know-how that would fill the void and absence. Just as one would satisfy a hunger, it is also a question of growing in the knowledge of how to be, to be oneself by being in relationship, in communion<sup>1</sup>, with the other learners and with the teachers, in a dialogue that is not expected to end.

When the time of the correction of written assignments, or of oral exams, comes, it is, in this context, a decisive moment. It is a very intense moment of encounter, of recognition (positive or negative), that is extremely emotionally charged. Because of Covid, we have found

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<sup>1</sup> "It is better for you that I go. For if I do not go, the Advocate will not come to you." Jn 16,7

that students prefer oral exams (through videoconferencing) to written ones, which shows the importance of the direct visual and auditory relationship. The teachers, for their part, have the same opinion. The defense of master's theses and doctoral dissertations is a pivotal moment, during which the learner crosses a boundary, the one that introduces him or her to the teachers' side. It is therefore important that this very particular and unique moment be solemnized, with decorum and procedures, and even that it be recorded and filmed. To ensure that this is not a mere liturgy or performance, the publication of the work written concludes the process: the learner, in turn, disseminates what he has produced in his research. His personal qualities and the quality of his work are now acknowledged.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Cf Axel Honneth

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# For a Theology of Distance

Fr. Michel Van Aerde

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*"I am looking for the emergence of a presence, the excess of reality that ruins all definitions.  
(...) There is a reality infinitely greater than any reality,  
which crumples and crushes and inflames all appearances.  
There is a presence that has crossed the underworld  
before reaching us to complete us by killing us."*

*Christian Bobin Pierre, Paris, Folio 2021 p. 9.*

## Jesus, Near and Far

### a) A proximity that raises questions

Jesus touches the leper<sup>3</sup>, which he was not supposed to do according to the law on ritual impurity... He drinks the water of the Samaritan woman, he lets himself be touched by the prostitute<sup>4</sup>, by the hemorrhoidal woman<sup>5</sup>. He touches the girl who is said to be dead<sup>6</sup>. He eats at the table of sinners<sup>7</sup>. He washes the feet of his disciples<sup>8</sup>. He then shows himself to be "too" close. He transgresses the required distance.

### b) An absence that raises questions

In contrast, he is absent when he is expected. He is told that Lazarus is ill, but he remains at a distance. Those around him reproach him for this, as a lack of fidelity in friendship: "If you had been there, my brother would not have died"<sup>9</sup>.

### c) A distance in space and time

Distance is sometimes a matter of time; it is expressed as a delay. For Lazarus, the absence lasts three days, an allusion to Easter. Three days, as when the parents of Jesus lost their child before finding him. Here we already find the theme of delay, or even tardiness, present in every page of the Bible: "when will you come?". Presence creates hope: it is delayed, it calls for faith. Absence is measured in terms of centuries, years, days, more than in terms of kilometers.

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<sup>3</sup> Mt 8:3

<sup>4</sup> Lk 7:38

<sup>5</sup> Mt 9:20

<sup>6</sup> Lk 8:54

<sup>7</sup> Mk 2:15

<sup>8</sup> Jn 13:8

<sup>9</sup> Jn 11:20

#### **d) Elsewhere.**

Jesus is not where we expect him to be and he appears when and where we do not expect him to. “Let us go elsewhere!”<sup>10</sup>. He cannot be held back (*noli me tangere*<sup>11</sup>), he cannot be found. This distance manifests a freedom, an otherness that disturbs. This is similar to the question asked to God throughout the Bible: “Where are you?”, which was to be mostly expressed in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe in this accentuated form: Does God exist? In the gospel parables, God is compared to a great landowner who has left. He has distributed his goods (the talents<sup>12</sup>) or entrusted his vineyard (the murderous vinedressers<sup>13</sup>). He is gone, but he will return.

#### **e) Neither here nor there: in the heart.**

Relativizing the place leads to relativizing many things involved in geographical location. We see this in Jesus’ dialogue with the Samaritan woman. Place is relativized in favor of interiority: “it is neither in Jerusalem nor on Mount Gerizim that we must worship, but in spirit and in truth”<sup>14</sup>. As a result, religions, with their set of rites, their clergy, their multiple cultural references, are relativized: it is a question of worshipping “in spirit and in truth”. This is the meaning of “abide”: “abide in me, as I in you...”<sup>15</sup>. “Let the little children come to me”<sup>16</sup>. To abide is to love. “When two or three are gathered in my name, I am in their midst”<sup>17</sup>. Where is he? Where love is present. “*Ubi caritas, ibi Deus est*”. It is a place that is not geographically identifiable, a presence that is not *stricto sensu* located.

There is no longer an omphalos, a center or navel of the world, as Delphi in Greece and Cusco in Peru (*el ombligo del mundo*) claim. The center is everywhere, and in the Apocalypse, there is no longer a Temple<sup>18</sup>. The peripheries are not despised (“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”<sup>19</sup>). There is no more talk of Rome or Jerusalem. “When people say to you ‘he is here’ or ‘he is there’. Do not go there...”<sup>20</sup>.

“God is an infinite sphere whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere”<sup>21</sup>.

On the other hand, it is necessary to go to the people, because it is among them that we will meet him: “He goes before you to Galilee”<sup>22</sup>, that is to say “to the crossroads of the nations”. “Go and make disciples of all nations...”<sup>23</sup>. He seeks to gather them “as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings”<sup>24</sup>. Their dispersion moves him to tears<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> Mk 1:38

<sup>11</sup> Jn 20:17

<sup>12</sup> Mt 25:14

<sup>13</sup> Mt 21:33

<sup>14</sup> Jn 4:21-23

<sup>15</sup> Jn 15:14

<sup>16</sup> Mt 19:14

<sup>17</sup> Mt 18:20

<sup>18</sup> Ac 21-22

<sup>19</sup> Jn 1:46

<sup>20</sup> Lk 17:23

<sup>21</sup> Pascal Blaise *Pensées* 198 Lafuma ; Brunschvicg 383

<sup>22</sup> Mt 28:7

<sup>23</sup> Mt 28:19

<sup>24</sup> Mt 23:37

<sup>25</sup> Lk 19:41

#### **f) An open void**

The narratives of the empty tomb are, as at the agony and the cross, the height of God's apparent absence. It is worth meditating on them.

- In Mk 16:5 and Mt 28:1-10, the tomb is not empty, since there is a young man dressed in white... And it is not forbidden to hope to see the Risen One: he will appear in Galilee, far from Jerusalem.

“As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man, dressed in a white robe, sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, “Do not be alarmed; you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here. Look, there is the place they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him, just as he told you.””

- In Luke 24, the tomb is at first empty, but there is also a message: two mysterious men testify that we should not look among the dead but among the living.

“But on the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came to the tomb, taking the spices that they had prepared. They found the stone rolled away from the tomb, but when they went in, they did not find the body. While they were perplexed about this, suddenly two men in dazzling clothes stood beside them. The women were terrified and bowed their faces to the ground, but the men said to them, “Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen.””

- In John 20, it is not an absolute void either. There are clues and a form of order in the cloths, laid flat, and the shroud, rolled up separately. And the emergence of faith. “He saw and believed.” But he did not see what he believed. If he believed, it was because the little he saw made him understand the Scripture.

“Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the tomb. So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him.” Then Peter and the other disciple set out and went toward the tomb. The two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent down to look in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he did not go in. Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb. He saw the linen wrappings lying there, and the cloth that had been on Jesus' head, not lying with the linen wrappings but rolled up in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who reached the tomb first, also went in, and he saw and believed; for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead.”

The void, the absence, presents itself in the tomb as a question. A question that has no obvious answer, but which points to a message.

- The presence of the Risen One breaks through. Each time, the evangelist emphasizes that the doors were well “locked” (Jn 20:19,26). It is an excess of presence. The disciples are “filled with joy”. But the last words of Jesus, in John's Gospel, call for believing without physical evidence, for believing in spite of absence: “Have you believed

because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.” (Jn 20:29).

## Jesus Teaches at a Distance

### a) Numerous and delicate mediations

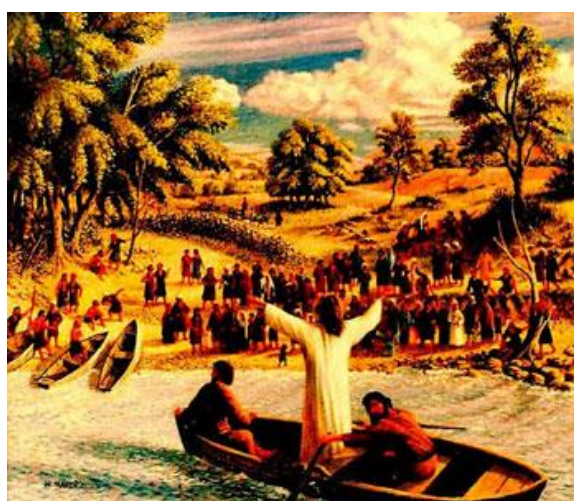
In the Jewish and Christian faith, mediations are always numerous and their fragility has an important meaning. Furious with the golden calf, Moses at Sinai, for example, breaks the Tables of the Law<sup>26</sup>. This indicates that they should not be made absolute<sup>27</sup>.

When I teach at a distance, via the internet, the distance is little compared to the distance that is established by the witness: the distance that separates the speaker from the God of whom he speaks. He is not Christ, but his servant - useless, but a servant! Jesus takes the risk of delegating. It is to the one who has denied him that he says: “feed my sheep”. It is to the one who persecuted him that he entrusts the evangelization of the pagans<sup>28</sup>.

The Risen One does not write nor does he speak directly. By deliberate choice, he communicates through his disciples. This very important fact teaches us many things. The disciples themselves, like Saint Paul, will send epistles... This means that they are not present in the community with whom they are corresponding. This paradoxical distance allows us, today, to be recipients in our turn and, even more, to enter into this apostle-disciples relationship, reading with them what is intended for them.

“The medium is the message!”<sup>29</sup> And the chosen medium is weak: it seems to have been chosen because of its very fragility. Faith proposes itself, does not impose itself. To announce his resurrection, Jesus chose a woman, Mary Magdalene, a laywoman and a forgiven sinner. This tells us a lot: Christ chooses a despised medium because the medium must be in keeping with the message, which in itself is fragile and despised. It is a message that does not impose itself, but delicately proposes itself. Nothing is top-down.

In the Gospel, Jesus shows rather than demonstrates. Rather than explaining, he acts. Faith is not taught; it is preached. Faith is communicated by preaching, by bearing witness... not by teaching. To teach theology, faith must first be awakened - the faith of the student and also the faith of the teacher.<sup>30</sup>



<sup>26</sup> Ex 32:19

<sup>27</sup> Cf. the comments of F. Nietzsche on this subject by Jean-Luc Marion in *L'idole et la distance*

<sup>28</sup> « I am the One you are persecuting »

<sup>29</sup> An emblematic phrase of the thought of [Marshall McLuhan](#)

<sup>30</sup> See Paul Ricoeur's article in Lectures 3, on the hermeneutics of testimony.



### **b) A distance, that of death, and a presence, that of faith**

Jesus teaches from a boat across the water<sup>31</sup>. We are not told what Jesus taught. Could this be because the disciples did not retain anything? It seems rather that what is important is not so much the content of what was transmitted as the way it was transmitted: not so much the message as the way the message was transmitted.

In this story, it is a structure, a theological way of thinking that is revealed. Jesus teaches from the lake to the multitude who are on the land, on the shore. Between the two there is water. This gospel is topical, what it says is still true.

Jesus does not only teach with words, that is, at a distance, but he also teaches from the water, that is, beyond death, because water, as in baptism, is a symbol of death. The Risen One teaches the Church from beyond death. It is a presence at the heart of absence: a presence at a distance, an absence inhabited by a certain presence, by faith.

## **Jesus Heals at a Distance**

### **a) The centurion of Capernaum<sup>32</sup>**

The centurion of Capernaum sends emissaries to tell Jesus that he needs his help, but that he does not need to go anywhere. He stands at a distance from Jesus and encourages Jesus to act at a distance too. "And Jesus went with them, but when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and let my servant be healed.'""

This acceptance of distance leads Jesus to recognize the strength of the man's faith: "When Jesus heard this he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, he said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith.'""

### **b) The healing of the 10 lepers<sup>33</sup>**

There is one leper among the ten, a Samaritan, who, having been healed on the way, at a distance, turns around and comes back to see Jesus. He perceives that he owes an exchange in "return", an acknowledgement. Here, the presence found comes from acknowledgement.

### **c) The man born blind**

Jesus touched him, but the healing is delayed; it will only take place at the pool of Siloam, because the blind man believed the word and did as asked. Jesus' presence when he touches him does not yet produce the light of the encounter. The real encounter will take place once the blind man is healed, and above all after a form of trial and expulsion, initiations of the trial of Jesus, which will allow the blind man - who sees clearly - to meet Jesus, in the structure of a paschal apparition, outside the city.

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<sup>31</sup> Mk 4:1; Lk 5:1-11

<sup>32</sup> Lk 7:1-10

<sup>33</sup> Lk 17:11-19

#### **d) When Jesus, because he has healed, must put himself at a distance**

Sometimes, on the contrary, as we have seen above, Jesus establishes physical contact, even though this is forbidden by the Law for reasons of ritual impurity: the hemorrhoidal woman, the leper, the dead girl, Jairus' daughter, etc. In so doing, he himself becomes impure, or at least he joins the impure, moving away from the group of those who are pure. The healed leper has spoken; Jesus has to avoid the villages, he stands aside, as an outcast... It is a kind of descent into the underworld to bring up those who are trapped there. Because he made himself close, he is then obliged to step aside.

### **Jesus Accompanies at a Distance**

#### **a) Riding the waves of history<sup>34</sup>**

When the disciples face the storm, they are in the night, terrified by the waves and the wind... Jesus appears, walking on the water, accompanying them at a distance. And when he boards the boat, in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew (14:22-33), the storm calms down. According to John's gospel (6:15-21), when Jesus is about to get into the boat, they touch land. This is the end of the crossing, the end of History. Jesus and the Church are one.



In Theology, but also in many other disciplines, distance is a path to be travelled, so it requires time. There is not space *and* time, but space-time. Space is the equivalent of a certain amount of time, it can be converted into a certain amount of walking time and, conversely, time can be understood as a certain amount of space travelled. There is a distance in time. Absence means “not yet”; far away means “a long time from now”; near is “soon”; presence is arrival, it is right “now”. From the point of view of the path, arrival is the end: end of the road and end of the story. Distance is therefore a positive element because it is what allows us to move forward, what “gives” time. Conversely, presence kills time. More precisely, in presence, time no longer offers a space for progress: it is accomplished as a *pleroma*, an eternity of quality and not an eternity of quantity (Hegel's bad infinity). From a pedagogical point of view, arrival is

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<sup>34</sup> Mt 14:22

evidence, knowledge, or rather intuition, the light that springs to the mind or heart. Love is presence, immediacy. On the other hand, desire, like the question, is space, because it is a delay to be filled, before satiety.

Between two people, a certain distance is necessary for dialogue to be possible. An embrace is not conducive to great discussions, nor is full agreement. Between the learner and the teacher, a space is indispensable, a delay too, between the word and its reception, as well as a form of repetition of the meetings, spaced out to allow time for assimilation and reflection. This is how it is between lovers, and one may regret, very paradoxically, that the long delays between the moment when a letter is written, a real letter with ink and paper, and the moment when the correspondent receives it are over. In this epistolary exchange, a relationship matured, a relationship that electronic messages, which are too fast, do not build up as deeply, even if they are more intense, because we can hear and see each other. Never before has there been such an understanding of the bad of the fusion of immediacy. There is something violent here, and the encounter between religions, between mystics, whether nuptial (often Christian) or fusional (often Oriental or Muslim), is going to manifest it more and more clearly. To put it simply, when I take myself for God, when I identify myself with him or merge with him, supposedly alone and self-sufficient, I become totalitarian.

It is understandable then: space or delay is life, just like growth (quantitative) and development (qualitative); whereas the here and now, without any movement or change, is death. Death poses as an opening towards nothingness or towards the after-death. Death becomes the ultimate space to be crossed and thus the paradigm of all space.

“No one can see God without dying”. This is true even more so in the sense that no one can see God without suffering, without experiencing the Passover of dispossession, the loss of self through self and resurrection through the Other. One then enters the beyond of time, one reaches the other shore. Better still, we reach the top of the mountain, that of the transfiguration. Life can be pierced by these eternal moments, summits from which it is imperative to descend, so that everything they signify can be fulfilled in concrete history. Death becomes an analogy to qualify any transformation. “To leave is to die a little”, for example, is an expression where space is surreptitiously reintroduced.

#### **b) Distance is necessary**

*“Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s hometown”*<sup>35</sup>. The witnesses must come from outside. There must be a certain distance for transcendence to be expressed.

And Jesus himself says that he must leave, so that the disciples can mature. “Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you”<sup>36</sup>.

Faith accepts the distance. The centurion in Capernaum says that Jesus can heal his child at a distance; that he does not need to enter his house<sup>37</sup>. Jesus then points out that he has never

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<sup>35</sup> Lk 4:24

<sup>36</sup> Jn 16:6-7

<sup>37</sup> Mt 8:8

met anyone in Israel who has so much faith (although he is neither a Jew nor a Christian, but a Roman occupier). This is beyond inter-religious dialogue.

Some will say that the Samaritan approaches the almost dead man, that he goes so far as to touch him to heal his wounds<sup>38</sup>. This is true. But once the wounded man is handed over to the innkeeper, the benefactor pays and leaves. He does not do everything; he delegates the rest and distances himself. The rescued man must love the one who “made himself his neighbor”, who saved him, but without seeing him because he left without imposing his benevolent presence. Distance is the condition of faith.

Sometimes the absence is doubled. When the women run to the tomb, they hope to find a corpse, and they are even refused that! “He is no longer where you put him”<sup>39</sup>. This statement applies to many things, liturgical habits, certain dogmatic formulas... Jesus, to say the least, does not protect his disciples from trauma.



### *The Ascension*

The last sentence of the Gospel according to Matthew, at the moment of Jesus' departure, is a paradox: “And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age”. He is **with** us, but he leaves. He is with us, but at a distance.

Love creates distance, in order to bring together. “Who listens to you, listens to me”; “As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you... as the Father has sent me, so I have sent you.” It is in a surge of love that the Father sends his Son; it is in the same surge of love that the Son sends his disciples, so that all may be one.

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<sup>38</sup> Lk 10:34

<sup>39</sup> Mt 28:6; Mk 16:6



Jesus taught at a distance, but this distance is not an obstacle: it is a practice that he himself chose. The distance corresponds to the essence, to the truth of what is at stake: faith. The distance is consistent with what is to be taught and practiced. The objective is the personal interiorization of a message that cannot be taken for granted and that must be verified by putting it into practice. It is a question of awakening a conviction, without proof, without immediate verification. “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen”<sup>40</sup>.

It is not just an intellectual message; it is a way of life. It is said of Moses that “he persevered as though he saw him who is invisible”<sup>41</sup>. The “distance” is based on this “as though”: “as though he saw”, but without seeing directly, without yet seeing.

### c) “Real presence” or “real absence”?

*“For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them”*<sup>42</sup>. Present in the icons, as with the Orthodox? In the sharing of thoughts on the biblical text, as with the Protestants? Not ‘in’ the consecrated host (which would be an ‘impanation’, not a transubstantiation), but the bread and wine themselves, shared, becoming his body and blood, as with the Catholics? If one were to follow the invitation “Become what you receive”<sup>43</sup>, the distance is truly abolished, but is it still a presence? “I am whom you are persecuting”<sup>44</sup>. It is an identification. “Just as you did it to one of the least of these (hungry, in prison, naked...), you did it to me”<sup>45</sup>. Presence or representation (in the sense that some people “represent” him)? These two words come from the same root.

It is about a deep mystery of a raw but unverified presence, of a communion internalized in faith, so strong that it becomes an identification. Catholics who follow the ciborium and bow to the holy sacrament should furthermore bow to the faithful who have taken communion, for that is the ultimate point of the sacrament, its purpose, its goal: that we become members of the living body of Christ. Here the words “presence” and “absence” are no longer adequate. The poet breaks down these concepts. “I am looking for the emergence of a presence, the excess of reality that ruins all definitions.” He challenges the intelligence of the theologian to push one to think about this unique relationship, both transcendent and immanent: imminent?

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<sup>40</sup> He 11:1

<sup>41</sup> He 11:27

<sup>42</sup> Mt 18:20

<sup>43</sup> Saint Augustine

<sup>44</sup> Ac 9:5; 22:8

<sup>45</sup> Mt 25

P.S. An analogy could be made with the Tsimtsum theory of Judaism, where God creates in himself a place where he is “absent”, or at least a place where “he is not”, like a pregnant woman for her child or a seed for the embryo, which is already another plant (with a different genome).

For Emmanuel Levinas, the existence of atheists is a proof of the greatness of God<sup>46</sup>. Indeed, when you are God, you have to be very powerful to go unnoticed!

This is in contrast to pagan temples where the divinity is physically represented by a statue, often made of gold, such as Athena in the Parthenon of Athens, who was thus herself the treasure of the city (a sort of a golden calf...). The idol is always accessible. In contrast, in the temple of Jerusalem, the holy of holies is... empty!

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<sup>46</sup> E. Levinas, « Une religion d’adulte » article in *Difficile liberté*.



# Long Live Distance, The Heart of Identity

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Nowadays, the relationship to identity seems ambivalent. On the one hand, bad winds are blowing all over the world and people are turning in on themselves. They lock themselves into an identity that is closed in on itself. In Afghanistan, the Taliban refuse all otherness, especially female otherness. They ask television stations to avoid broadcasting series that show women. They require journalists to wear the Islamic veil on screen. Moreover, four Afghan women were killed in early November, including a women's rights activist. In France, the theory of the great replacement is developing. In 2010, it appeared in Renaud Camus' work, *l'Abécédaire de l'innocence*. This theory is based on untruths. For example, according to INSEE figures from 2015, non-European immigrants and their descendants represent only ten percent of the French population. How can only ten per cent be used to replace the entire population? This theory also gives rise to untruths. How can a French caricatural polemicist who claims to lead France doubt the innocence of Dreyfus or claim that he was implicated as a German and not a Jew? This theory is, moreover, the cause of much violence such as the attack in Christchurch, New Zealand on March 15, 2019.

On the other hand, we are witnessing the development of narcissism, the dissolution and crumbling of the self, as Gilles Lipovetsky states in *L'Ere du vide*. The contemporary man is no longer capable of mobilizing himself for collective causes and remains locked up in his particularity. It is therefore fundamental to think of human identity in relation to distance, to otherness. What is the role of distance in the construction of identity? Why refuse a way of thinking that locks itself into the "same"? How does translation and interpretation allow us to think about an authentic identity?

## Facing the Same

Thoughts and ideologies that lock man into the same are destructive of humanity. They divide humanity in two: the civilized and the barbaric. They are then the expression of ethnocentrism, of barbarism. They denounce others as barbarians but, as Montaigne writes in the article *Les cannibales* in the *Essais* [Essays], it is they who are barbaric. In October 1562, Montaigne met three Brazilian natives in Rouen and asked a traveler about them. He then wrote this article taken from the *Essays*. "I find that there is nothing barbaric or savage about this nation, as far as I have been told, except that everyone calls something barbaric that is not of

their custom”<sup>47</sup>. The barbarian is the one who believes in the existence of barbarism, and how many are those who should meditate on this adage today!

## Opening up to Others

Human identity, if it is to be constructed, must not remain closed in on itself but must be open to distance. Only a distant view of ourselves can tell us who we authentically are. According to Montaigne, the gaze of the barbarians, of the three natives, can make explicit who we really are. The French, in 1582, were torn apart by religious issues and submitted to a king, Charles IX, then aged 12. That who is different then allows the manifestation of who we are, of our identity. It allows each of us to tell the story of our lives. Thus, Michel de Certeau, in *L'Écriture et la différence*, explains the role of distance in history. The voice of the savage and the words of the possessed in seventeenth-century France enable the constitution of history. Distance is thus always present; it allows the authorities to be contested. Possession opens up the text; it speaks of an elsewhere that society wants to ignore. It reveals a strangeness in relation to the closed-in group and questions the basis of social authority. As Michel de Certeau writes in *L'écriture de l'histoire*, “a discourse is unraveled, as witnessed by the possessed who take advantage of this game to insinuate ‘something else’ that has ‘taken’ them and sets in the language of illusion the question of the subject”<sup>48</sup>.

Thanks to the other, thanks to the different, men abandon some of their illusions about themselves and they open up to a space of truth. The different bears witness to a word, to an otherness. It allows society to get away from its lies about itself. The other allows us to abandon a mythological conception of ourselves and reveals to us the otherness present within us. It frees us from our prejudices, our egoisms, our ego which believes itself to be the center of all things. As Paul Beauchamp writes in *Le récit, la lettre et le corps*, “for many men [...] their own culture has become a prison: how can one not look for a border?”<sup>49</sup> We must then get out of ourselves, cross the border, even if this crossing implies a risk. We must not close the borders with a wall but go beyond them. We must then expose ourselves to the otherness of the different and enter into an act of translation.

## Translation as an Ethical Experience

Any translation, any openness to the other implies overcoming our apprehensions, our fear, our hatred of the stranger. The other, at first, appears to us as a threat to our own identity. Moreover, translation is never perfect. We never fully understand what the other means. As the poet Paul Célan thinks, following the death of his parents in 1942 in the Transnistria internment camp, following his own deportation to Moldova in 1943, words cannot fully translate the terrible situation he experienced. Language always lacks and there is always a difference

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<sup>47</sup> M. de MONTAIGNE, *Des cannibales*, *Les Essais*, Tome I, XXXI, Edition Strowski, Gebelin and Villey, Bordeaux, 1981, p. 250.

<sup>48</sup> M. de CERTEAU, *L'écriture de l'histoire*, Bibliothèque des histoires, NRF, Gallimard, 1975, p.273

<sup>49</sup> P. BEAUCHAMP, *Le récit, la lettre et le corps*, Pars, CERF, 1992, p. 234.

between the own and the strange, the foreign. Translation is therefore a test relative to the other's distance. It consists in saying the thing differently. We must recognize an untranslatable part, but this part does not prevent exposure to the other. According to Ricœur, in *Sur la traduction*, we must construct that to which can be compared.

The gap, the distance, is the condition for authentic speech. Ricœur proposes an analogy between translation and hospitality. He insists on three elements. The first element is that man is set in motion by human plurality. Secondly, the trial regarding the stranger allows us to discover the strangeness of our own language. Thirdly, without this experience of the stranger, we would be "threatened to shut ourselves up in the bitterness of a monologue, alone with our books. Honor, then, to hospitality"<sup>50</sup>. According to Ricœur, translation creates in us the pleasure of inhabiting the language of the other, an authentic happiness. It is an ethical task, a form of hospitality and not just an intellectual task. It must be exercised in different places, between confessions and religions. Ricœur is thus in favor of Eucharistic hospitality between the different Christian communities.

We must therefore abandon a false conception of violent and murderous identity, the idea of a pure and integral identity, in order to open ourselves to a thought of identity inhabited by otherness, by distance. This gap is at the very foundation of our identity. This question is essential for today. Openness to the different allows man to leave behind his sad passions, his enclosure in himself. This openness to the other has a fundamental social stake because it allows us to leave behind the separations and exclusions that always divide people and that deny some of them their fundamental dignity. These refusals can lead to exclusion, deprivation of rights, and even extermination, as Jean-Paul Sartre reminds us in *Les réflexions sur la question juive*. It should be noted that they also degrade the humanity of those who make such exclusions. This question also has a religious and ecclesial dimension. The encounter with Christ, according to Michel de Certeau, is always the experience of an otherness, of an absence. As he writes in *La faiblesse de croire*, about Christ: "He is nothing more, otherwise made possible for him the tracing of a passage, a relationship between a coming (birth) and a departure (death), then between a return (resurrection) and a disappearance (ascension), indefinitely. Nothing but a name without a place".<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> P. RICŒUR, « Le paradigme de la traduction », *Le juste* 2, Esprit, 2001, p. 140.

<sup>51</sup> M. de CERTEAU, *La faiblesse de croire*, Esprit, Seuil, 1987, p. 288.

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