PREAMBLE

Truth is a qualification which applies to Appearance alone. Reality is just itself, and it is nonsense to ask whether it be true or false. Truth is the confirmation of Appearance to Reality. A reflexion in a mirror is at once a truthful appearance and a deceptive appearance.

A. N. Whitehead: "Civilisation: Truth". In: *Adventures of Ideas*, New York: Simon & Schuster 1933, p. 241.

The first task of historians of ideas is to use relicts from the past to reconstruct as historical objects the weak intentions that constitute the hermeneutic meanings of utterances made in the past.

M. Bevir: "On Objectivity". In: *The Logic of the History of Ideas*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1999, p. 78.

At the beginning of a new decade in the 21st century, the International History of Ideas Club (founded in May 2009), as well as the History of Ideas Research Centre at Jagiellonian University in Krakow (founded in November 2011), focus their attention, among other issues, on the dispute between two notions of early modern times: *Kultur* and *civilisation / civilization*. This issue, which appeared at the time of the Enlightenment, has been underlying the adventures of the European thought for almost two centuries: from circa 1750 to 1950. Over that period the British *civilization* and the French *civilisation* have been presented in opposition to the German *Kultur*.[1] These two concepts are known to have strongly intermingled with the political doctrines of Europe, particularly in times of specific national ambitions. Due to the contribution of Arnold Joseph Toynbee and the eminent thinkers of the Frankfurt School, since the beginning of the 20th century, the evident opposition between *Kultur* and *civilization / civilisation* has been fading away. Not only did the end of World War II erase the dispute between the two concepts,

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1 B. Binoche: *Les équivoques de la civilisation*. Seyssel: Champ Vallon 2005.

but it also contributed to a new understanding of the idea of culture, in particular one that we have recently considered under the name of the "cultural turn" (conceptualized in the singular or in the plural, e.g. as Doris Bachmann-Medick posits in her bestseller entitled *Cultural Turns*).[2]

As one of the last examples of the old perspective—anchored in the tension between the aforementioned notions—one may refer to Alfred North Whitehead's concept of civilization that was drafted in the study published in 1933 and entitled *Adventures of Ideas*. A construction of a previously Greek concept was founded on a pure and balanced architecture based on five main columns, i.e. truth, beauty, the relation between truth and beauty, adventures and peace. In this architectonic perspective Whitehead stresses the outstanding items of the conceptual grip pertaining to the term civilization. The relevant elements of that grid reflect the continuum of Western thought. Hence not only ideas, but also concepts are crucial for the history of ideas; Whitehead also tries to explain the main philosophical aspects of this concept, in which the problem of "Appearance and Reality" is emphasized. Since the time of Plato's cave allegory that problem couldn't escape the canon of the mainstreams of Western thought. According to Whitehead, this dichotomy has for a long time deceitfully attracted the philosophers' attention.

In modern and contemporary philosophy especially, the problem of Appearance —the reference to Reality, due to Kantian criticism, has become dramatically confusing. After dogmatic realism, especially through German idealism, European thought returned to the Platonic presupposition of the unreal nature of Reality. In this way, since the end of the 18th century, the realistic principle "Res sunt, ergo cognosco, ergo sum res cognoscens"[3] was replaced by the radicalized Cartesian principle "cogito ergo sum" that underlines the importance of Appearances, especially those spelled out by the human mind.

However, the above mentioned dichotomy still influences today's reflection and has a direct effect – it appears in such expressions as "linguistic turn" and "pictorial", "visual", "iconic" turn. This new attitude seems to be very fruitful and it has yielded numerous approaches: P. M. S. Hacker's "Philosophy of Mind", "Visual Studies" and "Visual Culture", or—as is observed by Bachmann-Medick and referred to in a German-speaking context—the turn and dynamic development of particular subject constellations rooted in actual visual sensitivity: "image anthropology" (*Bild Anthropologie*), "image and media studies" (*Bild-Medienwissenschaft*), "image cultural encounters studies" (*transkulturelle Bildkulturwissenschaft*) or "interdisciplinary general image studies" (*interdisziplinäre Allgemeine Bildwissenschaft*). This interdisciplinary approach is increasingly being opposed to linguistics which dominated German thought under the name of general linguistics (*Allgemeine*

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2   D. Bachmann-Medick: *Cultural Turns. Neuorientierungen in den Kulturwissenschaften.* Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt-Taschenbuch-Verlag 2006.

3   E. Gilson: *Le réalisme méthodique.* Paris: Pierre Tequi ³1936, p. 93.

Sprachwissenschaft). The conceptual variety does not come as a surprise for the tradition of thought, in which the notion of "Bild" has been adopted as an area of the world perception (*Welterfassung*), and which Barbara Cassin defines as the untranslatable (*intraduisible*) one.[4] Concurrently it is clear that in the global context, the "iconic turn" shows the importance of the past 20th century's revolutions that relativized the *Übersetzungskehre*, the famous "translational turn" with its *Translational Studies* aiming again at new understanding, (re)interpretation of culture and its phenomena. The tendencies in contemporary culture seem to constantly change reality by generating Appearances in culture. Therefore, it contrasts with the philosophical approach to cognition.

In political and social philosophy, the philosophy of culture, and in the field of cognitive sciences—supported by the neurosciences, biology and psychology—the same metaphysical aim may today be observed, that is an aspiration to discover, still unattainable, the border between Appearance and Reality. In this context, how can we form various models of ethics, theories of laws or political systems if we are unable to give "clear and distinct" criteria of what is real, and thus what is true?

It seems that this dichotomy attracts the attention of a wider audience. The problem of the relationship between Appearance and Reality has been dealt with —recently for example—by Raphaël Enthoven on the *Arte* television channel (*France Culture* broadcasting station journalist and *Philosophie* programme moderator on *Arte*), and Alexander Schnell (lecturer at the Sorbonne and Erasmus Mundus Exchange Programme "EuroPhilosophie" coordinator).

The International History of Ideas Club in collaboration with the History of Ideas Research Centre at Jagiellonian University in Krakow, the *Goethe-Institut Krakau* and the *Institut Français* organized a conference on "Appearance, Reality, and Beyond" held on December 8th 2011 in Krakow. On that occasion, with the support of the *Goethe-Institut Krakau*, in the *Auditorium Maximum* of the Jagiellonian University, Mischa Kuball exhibited his *Platon's Mirror* starting from December 8th, 2011 until January 5th, 2012. In this *Orbis Idearum* issue we publish selected papers presented at this conference.

The moment chosen by the organizers coincided with the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the end of the first decade of the 21st century and the memory of the policy change for world politics, the latter known as "anti-terrorist", and demanding the new concept of Western civilization. In this context, the following question arose: is the Appearance – Reality dichotomy still valid or is it an outdated perception? In reference to the philosophical tradition, our reflection intended to explore the following query: did philosophy really aim and does it aim at truth or do only particular philosophers want to explain their mental representations (Appearances) as the essence of Reality? Probably the history of

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4   B. Cassin: *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: dictionnaire des intraduisibles*. Paris: Le Robert / Ed. du Seuil 2004.

ideas today may lead to a better and more comprehensive understanding of this problem, displaying the "adventures of ideas" in different aspects of our culture, and in various interpretation models of the same philosophical problem.

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