

# The Facial Paradigm: Face in the Western Politico-Philosophical Thought

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Submitted to  
Central European University  
Department of Gender Studies

In partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Arts in Gender Studies.

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Budapest, Hungary

2020

# Abstract

The following thesis is united by a claim that within the dominant Western juridical, philosophical and theological discourses operates a *facial paradigm*, that places the face as a sine qua non for the fraternity, sovereignty and democratic politics. Furthermore, this study aims at establishing the claim that this dominant facial paradigm is overdetermined by androcentric, ethnocentric and anthropocentric presuppositions. Through the readings of canonical Western political and theological thinkers such as, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Emmanuel Levinas, Thomas Aquinas, Aristotle, Plato and Tertullian I will show how they are united by their political conceptualization of face, which they often define against what they consider to be false faces or masks and how these binaries operate with their inherent instability. The facial paradigm that this study will articulate will be useful not only to understand the Western politico-philosophical canon in a new light, but also to better understand the present common-sense ideas regarding face. This study doesn't take for granted the commonsense Western understandings of face, but aims to demonstrate how they are the effects of the dominant Western politico-philosophical discourses.

# Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of original research; it contains no materials accepted for any other degree in any other institution and no materials previously written and/or published by another person, except where appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

I further declare that the following word counts for this thesis are accurate:

Body of thesis (all chapters excluding notes, references, appendices, etc.): 23431 words

Entire manuscript: 24238 words

Signed: Giorgi Chubinidze

# Acknowledgements

I dedicate this work to my father, Gela Chubinidze, who even in times of societal collapse, never stopped reading Friedrich Nietzsche.

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# Introduction

When all is said and done, I have more than one face. I don't  
know which is laughing at which.

Georges Bataille, *On Nietzsche*

The face is the only location of community, the only possible city.

Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without End*

The following thesis is united by a claim that within the dominant Western juridical, philosophical and theological discourses operates a *facial paradigm*, that places the face as a *sine qua non* for the fraternity, sovereignty and democratic politics. Furthermore, this study aims at establishing the claim that this dominant facial paradigm is overdetermined by androcentric, ethnocentric and anthropocentric presuppositions. Throughout this work reader will encounter following facial figures: Fraternal subject of the French 2010, Žižek's ultimate mask of a fellow-man (chapter 1), Rousseau's serene face of a young-man, Levinas' facial brothers united by the commonness of the father (chapter 2), Aristotle's democratic brothers, Plato's male philosopher subject knowing himself through the eyes of the interlocutor, Tertullian's male image of God (chapter 3).

All these figures are united by them being privileged in the facial paradigm, for them posited as the models for democratic, Republican or Christian fraternities. To account to this pattern I propose (chp 3 sec 2) the term *prosoponcentrism* or *facecentrism* by which I mean a certain metaphysical privileging of face which throughout this work either determines face as a promise of presence itself (chapter 3, the seductive face of God as promise) or as in most cases, as the ultimate representative of the presence that stands behind it (natural authenticity, soul, image of God). Furthermore, I claim

that none of these paradigmatic privileged figures are stable and in order for them to acquire their stability, the *facial paradigm* has to ceaselessly produce its others, non-faces, *aprosopon-s* or masks in order to reaffirm the status, privilege and coherence to the dominant figures.

Thus, I also propose the term *facial difference* by which I aim to account for the inherent instability of facial binary oppositions. By this term I mean the paradoxical logic of privileging one face over others, of designating only one face to be deserving its name, while others being demoted to the status of masks or inauthentic faces. Nevertheless, the othered faces are essential for the definition of paradigmatic, often brotherly faces, and precisely because of this the *facial paradigm* has to constantly reinvent and overcome this facial difference, where at some point, two polarities of faces become descriptively indistinguishable, but differently judged. This paradoxical logic of facial difference is most clearly explicated when I discuss the discourse of Bible on the face of God and Tertullian's discourses on the face(s) face of women (chp.3 sec.3).

Due to the obvious limitation of space and the impossibility to provide analysis to the many more canonical Western (political) philosophers and theologians, I rely on Jacques Derrida's established thesis that the canonical Western philosophy is determined logocentrically and particularly by its privileging of voice over writing (Derrida 2013, 2004). What is new in my thesis, and this is where I extend Derrida's overarching argument of his deconstructive thought, is that I claim that the Western logocentric philosophy is not only privileging voice, but also face which can be traced back to Plato himself. To my knowledge, Derrida throughout his oeuvre has only hinted to the possibility of such research (Derrida 1978), but he hasn't devoted any comprehensive analysis to what I call facecentrism or prosoponcentrism. Furthermore, what especially interests me here is the political in general, but particularly sexual and racial determinations and implications of this privileging. Therefore, I will analyze how 2010 and 1790 French Laws that prohibited face coverings articulated their political investments in uncovered faces (chp.1 sec.1, chp.2 sec.1). In addition to that, throughout

this work reader will see how the facial paradigm that I'm analyzing intimately ties the uncovered face to the sovereign and economic principles (chp.1 sec.2-3).

To the extent that I acquainted myself with the current research on the above mentioned or related subjects one work that has prominence in the analysis of Western facial paradigm is Deleuze and Guattari's short chapter "Year Zero: Faciality" from *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), where they propose the notion of "abstract machine of faciality" (175) and attribute the specific understanding of face as it is known in the Western world to its particular history and the particular assemblages of power. There they claim that *face* is not only not universal, but also it is the white-man himself (177). Deleuze and Guattari's conceptualization of face is rather complex and I won't be able to do justice to their arguments here. Nevertheless, I will point out in advance that I share methodological assumptions with that of Jacques Derrida and in a manner characteristic to what came to be known "deconstruction", I seek not to explain the politico-philosophical and theological investments in face by the recourse to a meta-theoretical level, but to look at how the *facial paradigm* is articulated within canonical texts, what this paradigm(s) privileges and excludes, how it constitutes itself against its others, how it fails to secure the coherence of model-face and to what extent it relies for its own definition to the false faces, masks or non-faces. Thus, I seek to inhabit the *facial paradigm*, its architecture, its dogmatic assumptions and zoom-in to its failures to live up its own claimed coherence, rather than seeking its dismantling through the reference of its Outside.

The other works that I'm acquainted and are somewhat related to the subject are Jenny Edkins' *Face Politics* (2015), which mainly focuses on the faces in photography and portraits. Another work that I acquainted myself with in early stages of this study is Sharrona Pearl's *Face/On: Face Transplants and the Ethics of the Other* (2017), which as the title suggests mainly focuses on face transplantations and the underlying conceptions of personhood that it challenges. I find this work particularly interesting because, my thesis might also be read as contributing to the understanding of the anxieties that the



destabilization of *facial paradigm* triggers. However, my focus is solely directed towards Western politico-philosophical canon, its political and theological investments in face. What interests me is not only psychic anxieties that the destabilization of facial paradigm triggers, but the political anxieties, if these two are even separable. Even if these two are not rigorously separable, and I do claim that they are not, my focus is precisely on the political investments in the dominant *facial paradigm* and its implications on the ways the canonical Western politico-philosophical tradition struggles with it. Here lies the novelty of my thesis which starts with the exemplary 2010 French Law that prohibits face covering in public places.

## Chapter 1: Sovereignty and Economy: Mapping the 2010 French Law

### Introduction

This chapter aims at exposition and analysis of the conceptual architecture by which contemporary French juridico-political discourse conceives face. The paradigmatic example here is 2010 French Law on prohibition of face covering, which institutes “face” as a pivotal concept for XXI century French Republicanism. In this chapter I will mark the conceptual terrain from which face acquires its specific juridico-political significance together with the notions such are “ideal of fraternity”, “living together”, “equality”, Republic, but also personhood, individuality, “exchange of glances” and life as opposed to “covered face” which itself comes together with notions such are symbolic violence, non-belonging and death. In this chapter this conceptual web that is presented by the Law will only be explored in relation to the central claim of this chapter. The main argument that I aim to establish here is that, against the insistence of the Law, the underlying structure and legacy

that underpins and informs the enforcement of unveiling and the exaltation of face is through and through theological.

The first section of this chapter will summarize the legal history of the Law and map the conceptual terrain out of which the Law constructs its coherence and principal justification. The second section will be devoted to the neutralizing language of the law, by which it positions itself outside of the theological and philosophical. There with the help of Carl Schmitt's account of "political theology", Jacques Derrida's notion of the "movement of veil" I will show how specifically the discourses of veiling and unveiling abides to the theological structure albeit in a secularized fashion. The third section will be devoted to the analysis of the conception of "exchange of glances" which Law establishes as the basic prerequisite for the dignified presence in the public space. There through the critical engagement with Slavoj Žižek's psychoanalytic conceptualization of face as the "ultimate mask", I will demonstrate how in the judicial discourse face functions as an exchange-value that ties fraternity together.

## Legal History and the Conceptual Terrain

11 October 2010 the French national assembly passed the bill "prohibiting the concealment of one's face in public places" (S.A.S. v. France 2014). Introduction of the law was accompanied by the informational campaign that sought to raise awareness regarding the legal consequences of the prohibition. The selected motto of the campaign in French was "la République se vit à visage découvert", which literally translates as "the Republic lives with a face uncovered". In the following sections, I will explicate and analyze the theological and philosophical discourse that underpins the Law, its official explanatory memorandum and the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights, which attested to the compatibility of the prohibition with the European Convention on Human

Rights. The grounding philosophical discourse was itself noticed by the dissenting Judges who did not agree with the decision of the Court majority and considered the judgment as based on “abstract principles” and therefore violated “concrete rights” of individuals. Explicit deployment of Western philosophical apparatus in the service of Law is not new for French legislative history. Joan Scott in her analysis showed that the 2004 French ban on “conspicuous” religious signs from public schools was already characterized by its philosophical grounding (Scott 2010, 152).

Notwithstanding some important commonalities between the discourses that surrounded the so-called “hijab ban” of 2004 and “burqa ban” of 2010, there are crucial differences as well. Scott sums up the crux of 2004 “hijab ban” discourse by writing that “racism was the subtext of the headscarf controversy, but secularism was its explicit justification” (Scott 2010, 90). What is different in the 2010 ban on full-face covering is that the explicit justification is not the principle of *Laïcité* but the ideal of *Fraternité*. The Law was preceded by an extensive discussion regarding the posited problem. In January 26, parliamentary commission produced a report where it emphasized the significance of the problem and claimed that the question of full-face covering goes even “beyond mere incompatibility with secularism” (S.A.S. v. France 2014, 5). In other words, something more is at stake than the principle of *Laïcité*, where the latter only accentuates on “the role of the state in protecting individuals from the claims of religion” (Scott 2010, 97-98). According to the 2010 Law, what is at stake and what is beyond secularism is “a denial of fraternity” (ibid), which as we will see, is said to be grounding the human dignity, gender equality, and the possibility of living together.

Precisely this ideal, value or principle (these notions are often used interchangeably in official documents) of *fraternity*, together with the imperative of uncovered face, stood out as the only argument that the highest European Court deemed substantial and therefore found no infringement of humans rights. In the explanatory memorandum of the bill, we see the full and crystalized articulation of its claims. The argumentation of the said document that accompanied the Law reveals

the internal tension between its claimed universalism and the very French particularism that restricts the former. The document admits that “the phenomenon at present remains marginal”, despite this, its importance stems not from numbers, but from its symbolic significance. In the words of the document, “the wearing of the full veil is the sectarian manifestation of a rejection of the values of the Republic” (S.A.S. v. France 2014, 8). This is a strong accusation. If not legally heavy, it is symbolically damning. Covering face in public is a rejection of the fundamental values of the Republic and therefore it is a challenge to the Republic, to its sovereignty over its territorial extension, to the fraternal “covenant” (ibid). Sovereignty of the Republic here is exercised through the uncovered face, which makes the Republic and face almost necessary conditions for each other. There is no Republic without face and face is a condition of possibility for it. Conversely, covering face, not showing face, not exposing oneself for the others of the covenant is not simply a refusal to be seen by the others, but it is a *political* rejection of fundamental values of the Republic. This is a spectacular claim since Law sets face right at the center of Republican understanding of sovereignty, of its self-mastery and unity (“sectarian manifestation”), of power. Its power resides in unveiling its subjects (in a double meaning of this term). That is to say, uncovering face is to subject oneself to the Republic, to its unity and coherence (and we will see in chapter 3 how for Plato sovereignty, power, mastery over one’s own body is mediated by the face of the other).

Veiling the human face, and I use “veiling” in a broad sense, is challenging the Republican fraternity, precisely because the practice is “negating the fact of belonging to society . . . , the concealment of the face in public places brings with it a symbolic and dehumanising violence, at odds with the social fabric” (ibid). What is interesting and paradoxical in this reasoning is that those with fully covered faces are in “fact” within society, within the Republic, but they “negate” that “belonging”. In other words, a fully veiled person is simultaneously inside and outside the Republic. What the fraternal Republic wants is to exorcise the ghost of being there without presence, to turn

absence into presence. To make its subjects truly present in the Republic is to uncover their faces. Here the determination of *face as presence* is explicit. Consequently, the problem of absent face is what goes “beyond secularism”; it is a matter of fundamental ontology of the Republic, which consists of the unveiled fraternal faces. What is under the threat in “beyond secularism” is not only equality of genders, but a more fundamental equality of face-to-face reciprocity, transparency and therefore of unveiling from which all other models of equalities are derived. What is at stake here for the Law is the equality as per *facial paradigm* which assumes that the recognition of “humanness” takes place only through the uncovered faces, as opposed to the “dehumanising violence” of face covering. So far it is not completely clear whether this violence is inflicted upon the one who dehumanizes one's own self by veiling or to the other who, excluded from the economy of “exchange of glances”, is unable to see the others face. Soon we will see that for the Law both are the case.

The explanatory memorandum further clarifies that even in cases when the full-face concealment is said to be voluntary, that is, when it seems to be an expression of an individual sovereign will, it still dehumanize the human. It is anchored in a dogmatic proposition that normally face and humanness, face and free will exist only in conjunction. The document, despite its frequent allusions or direct references to the specifically non-modern, non-secular nature of full-face veiling in one and the same gesture, neutralizes its argumentation and distances itself from this particular insinuation. To put it otherwise, Law sometimes states and sometimes insinuates its opposition to the culturally or religiously justified veiling for seemingly secondary reasons (“gender equality”, “security”), but at the same time, it attempts to stand above those particular concerns and claims that there is a *more fundamental* incompatibility between covered face and the Republic.

To recapitulate what I already stated, the effect of such neutralization is that the covering of face becomes a question of humanity, fraternity, Republic and furthermore, the question of violence, specifically of a violence towards other members of the “covenant”. In the document, we read:

It is not only about the dignity of the individual who is confined in this manner, but also the *dignity* of others who share the same public space and who are thus treated as individuals from whom one must be protected by the *refusal of any exchange, even if only visual* (ibid, emphasis mine). Again, the condition of this violence that stems from the concealment of face is that the veiled and unveiled “share the same public space”, this is emphasized as a “fact” and yet, some refuse to share, they refuse to participate in an exchange. What this exchange implies, what this exchange requires, according to the document, is “at least” the exchange that is visual. By this surprising claim, Law posits face as a necessary conditioning for exchange, face as surface that has an exchange value. I will return to the notion of “exchange of glances” in the third section of this chapter.

Belgium quickly followed the path of France and with essentially the same, but slightly different, arguments prohibited the face covering in public spaces. The Constitutional Court of Belgium in 6 December 2012 dismissed the application for the annulment of prohibition and offered its additional reasons behind the decision. Court claims, that “the legislature sought to defend a societal model where *the individual took precedence over his philosophical, cultural or religious ties*” (S.A.S. v. France 2014 22, emphasis mine). This is itself rather classic, traditional and quintessentially philosophical claim, philosophical claim that claims to be beyond philosophy. For the reason that I already pointed out, evoked discourse on the unveiled face hardly makes any sense outside the theological and philosophical registers. It is symptomatic that the secular thought, and here I have to notice in passing that even the concept of secular, *saeculum* acquires its modern sense through its multiple mutations after it was introduced by the Latin Christian theology,<sup>1</sup> claims its adherence to the values of “the right

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<sup>1</sup> Regarding the Christian origin of the notion of ‘secular’ Charles Taylor explains, that “first it was one term of a dyad. The secular had to do with the “century”—that is, with profane time—and it was contrasted with what related to the eternal, or to sacred time. Certain times, places, persons, institutions, and actions were seen as closely related to the sacred or higher time, and others were seen as pertaining to profane time alone. That’s why the same distinction could often be made by use of the dyad “spiritual/temporal” (e.g., the state as the “temporal arm” of the church). Ordinary parish priests are thus “secular” because they operate out there in the “century,” as against those in monastic institutions—“regular” priests—who live by the rules of their order” (Calhoun, Juergensmeyer, and VanAntwerpen 2011).

to life, the right to freedom of conscience, democracy, gender equality, or the principle of separation between church and State” (S.A.S. v. France 2014, 22), while in the same gesture, presents those values somewhat beyond or above “philosophical, cultural or religious”. Furthermore, after evoking the arguments of safety and “a certain conception of ‘living together’”, Court states:

*the individuality of every subject of law* (sujet de droit) in a democratic society is inconceivable without his or her face, a fundamental element thereof, being visible... *human relationships*, being necessary for living together in society, was rendered *impossible* by the presence in the public sphere, which quintessentially concerned the community of persons who *concealed this fundamental element of their individuality* (ibid 23, emphasis mine).

This is a very important claim precisely because what it asserts is that the subject of law should simultaneously be a facial subject. Juridical discourse here literalizes what Butler in another context, but not very far from the analysis of Law, claimed that “to face the law [is] to find a face for the law” (Butler 1997, 107). In addition to that, Court binds together individuality and visibility or anchors individuality in visibility. Perhaps one might ask here, in passing, isn’t the singularity of the other resides precisely in what escapes visibility? But let’s not stop here

The Court claims that individuality is impossible without a face. Though not only without a face but also without a visible human face. Furthermore, a visible human face is conceived as a precondition for the human relationships that are necessary, again, for “living together”. What's more, the Court stated that concealment of face is “depriving the subject of law, a member of society, of any possibility of individualisation by facial appearance” (S.A.S. v. France 2014, 23). This is a necessary condition for the presence in a “democratic society”. In other words, presence in a public space without a visible face is not a presence, perhaps an absence, since to be present is to be a face. The Republic abhors faceless opacity. As the French slogan of the Law told us, the Republic lives with the face uncovered. Figuratively, it is a question of life and death as well. Republic to live, its subjects -of-

law has to uncover their faces. One might say that perhaps life is possible without or outside the face or with concealing it, but “living together”, judicial discourse commands in the name of Republic - is impossible. Additionally, by stating that “living together” is impossible, it implies that the fully veiled is still granted a certain autonomy; nevertheless, one cannot join the fraternity.

To conclude the section, here I marked, mapped, accentuated the concepts that the juridical discourse itself called for to justify itself. It is difficult to shortly recapitulate the whole lexical constellation, where each term, “face”, “fraternity”, “living together”, “exchange of glances”, “equality”, “Republic”, “symbolic violence”, etc. refer or oppose each other and acquire their sense only when each of these terms are assumed to be present within a constellation or conjecture. Nevertheless, I will stress that the reason why I consider this juridical discourse significant and exemplary for analytic purposes is because it claims to establish a relation of necessity between the uncovered face, sovereignty of Republic and fraternity. These three concepts, along with others that we encountered in the discourse of law, in the following chapters will be traced back to their theological and philosophical predecessors, back to the Greco-Christian legacy from which the modern Republican reiteration of a facial paradigm borrows its core assumptions. Prior to this, the next section will specifically focus on what I stressed as the supposed binary between “secular” and “theological”, supposed beyondness of judicial discourse on face, that imagines itself to be speaking from a position that is neither philosophical and, most of all, nor theological. There I put forward a claim that the linkage between unveiling and the subjection to the sovereign is already present in Thomas Aquinas’ theological discourse.

## Political-Theology of Unveiling



As I pointed out in the previous section, the official argumentation of the Law is deliberately neutralized, it alludes but also distances itself from explicit statements against any religion, which is supposed to make the whole controversy a matter of what is outside or beyond the theological framework. Implication of this is that the Law implicitly positions itself as modern vis-a-vis religious. What I want to show in this section is that the presumption that the Republic itself speaks from beyond the religious, “secular” standpoint has to be interrogated and it has to be demonstrated that the logic of unveiling, of uncovered face by which it defines being “subject of law” is through and through mutation of a Christian theological paradigm of face.

Jacques Derrida in the midst of a prior “hijab controversy” in France, in his essay “A Silkworm of One’s Own” writes, that “finishing with the veil will always have been the very movement of the veil: un-veiling, unveiling oneself, reaffirming the veil in unveiling.” (Derrida 2001, 201). This statement here seems somewhat puzzling. How can unveiling reaffirm the veil? I will respond to this question by transposing Derrida's formulation for the context of this study with the example of Thomas Aquinas' explanation of the meaning of unveiling. Let's leave this question in suspense and get back to it after a short detour. To understand this claim it is important to consider Derrida's own understanding of “secular” and its relation to theological. Derrida is indebted to the thought of Carl Schmitt, who famously claimed that,

“all significant concepts of *the modern theory of the state* are secularized theological concepts *not only because of their historical development* — in which they were transferred from theology to the theory of the state, whereby, for example, the omnipotent God became the omnipotent lawgiver — but also *because of their systematic structure...* The exception in jurisprudence is analogous to the miracle in theology. Only by being aware of this analogy can we appreciate the manner in which the philosophical ideas of the state developed in the last centuries” (Schmitt 2010 3, emphasis mine).

What this paragraph suggests? The first is that the modernist confidence over the binary between “secular” and “theological” is unstable. The second is that the theories that underpin the modern secular states are operating with the concepts that are found in their theological systems. The third is that they are not only borrowed concepts uprooted from their original structural contexts, but these concepts are now functioning in a structurally analogous fashion.

Guided with this Schmittian observation and the question I asked “how can unveiling reaffirm the veil?”, let’s take a look how Thomas Aquinas in his exegesis of Saint Paul’s *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, conceptualized the underlying assumptions of veiling and unveiling. Before reading his text, I’ll note that Aquinas makes a clarification against those whom he considers to be mistaken and he claims that the Biblical statement that man is the image of God doesn’t refer to man and woman in the same way. He writes that since “man is the principle of his entire race” (Aquinas 2011 105) therefore, “man is *more especially* called the image of God, inasmuch as reason is more vigorous in him” (ibid). Man here stands as the generic name, as a model for the human race. Thus he is the image of God, *more*, rather than, *less*. Image of God doesn’t absolutely exclude women but places below the man’s hegemonic position, hence on the side of more. In this context Aquinas starts interpreting Paul’s insistence for men to unveil their heads. Thus, he writes that,

a veil put on the head designates the *power of another* over the head of a person existing in the order of nature. Therefore, the man existing under God should not have a covering over his head to show [ostendat] that he is immediately subject to God; but the woman should wear a covering to show [ostendat] that besides God she is naturally subject to another (ibid, emphasis mine)

In this Thomist theological scheme, veiling *shows* the subjection, but at the same time, and this is crucial, unveiling also shows, *ostendat*, exposes, exhibits the subjection to the Sovereign. Therefore, in his interpretation, unveiling, which is an immediate or unmediated subjection to Sovereign, is what is

proper to man and what makes man the principle of humanity. One shouldn't forget here that Aquinas is interpreting Paulian discourse which opposes Jewish men for covering their heads. To borrow Aquinas' definition of veil as a sign of “natural subjection” and push it beyond him, Man is himself “veiled” in his “unveiling” in a sense that he is himself marked by the power of God through unveiling their heads. Here we see how unveiling reaffirms the veil, how the command to unveil is simultaneously a demonstration of unmediated or direct subjection to God or more broadly, how command to unveil is itself a gesture of power. I will not discuss Fanon's analysis of the French colonial insistence on the unveiling Algerian women in *A Dying Colonialism*, but I will shortly notice that Thomist theological scheme in a sense anticipates the “secular” uses of unveiling as a direct, unmediated way of subjection, as a technique of power.

Here I claim that outside of the Christian theological tradition and its conceptualization of the face and unveiling, Judicial insistence on the bare face by which one is immediately a subject of Law, subject of Republic and part of, what Thomas called, “principle of the entire race” wouldn't make the same intuitive sense. What is also important to emphasize here is that both unveiling and veiling within Thomist discourse, but also in Paulian, is part of the masculine “movement of the veil”, where unveiled face defines one's belonging to an androcentric hegemony. This “principle of human race” in the Republican France translates into the similarly androcentric model of fraternal community of the nation, which was always predicated upon the idea that the one's belonging to it had to be “abstracted from their difference to participate in a universal order” (Brown 2004, 22). “Universal order” or Republican fraternity not tacitly but explicitly refers to the figure of a brother as its model of equality, which implies that the only way to join the *universality* is to unveil and fraternize. What Aquinas shows to us is that “unveiling” never takes place in a vacuum, but first, it acquires its general sense through the theological system of thought and second, unveiling itself requires (or produces) an approximation to the model subject. Command to unveil one's face is a call for order, it is a question

of security but of the order of symbolic. Unveiling and showing face never takes place in a vacuum and especially not in 2010 France, where it is immediately connected to state sovereignty.

I will conclude this section by restating that both Aquinas' and 2010 French juridical conceptions of unveiling, question of face overlaps the question of sovereignty, in both cases uncovering face is seen to be a gesture that affirms obedience and fidelity to a sovereign. Each Law needs to produce a face of its subject to recognize itself and to make its subjects recognize each other. Against the claim of Law which attempts to establish an essential relation between face and Republican sovereignty, while simultaneously claiming that its principles are exterior to religion, I tried to show that this overlap is already Christian and theological or more precisely, it is a secularized Christian model of unveiling that, paradoxically, serves to reaffirm the sovereign. In the next section by returning to the idea of "exchange of glances", I will explore its underlying assumptions and implications, especially with regard to the "ideal of fraternity".

## Face Exchange and Equality

In the previous section, not only veiling, but also unveiling in a secular French situation is driven by the theological logic and how unveiling and showing face is immediately tied to the question of sovereignty. In this section focus will be not sovereignty, but the scopic equality that "exchange of glances" establishes. Covering one's face, we read in the explanatory memorandum,

is not only about the dignity of the individual who is confined in this manner, but also the dignity of others who share the same public space and who are thus treated as individuals from whom one must be protected by the refusal of any exchange, even if only visual (S.A.S. v. France 2014, 8).

Interestingly enough, here it is not a speech, but a face that establishes the possibility of exchange. What is exchanged here is glances, looks, gazes on faces. I allow you to see my face and you allow me to see yours or I will exchange the sight of my face for the sight of your face; we are dealing with faces. What unites us is at least the trade of our faces. Not everything can be exchanged, but only that which has an exchange value in it and it seems like face is definitely such a value. This political friendship in the trade of faces is what affirms the dignity of each member of the fraternity.

Immanuel Kant provides a classic definition of dignity, where he differentiates it from price and writes that “what has a price is such that something else can also be put in its place as its equivalent; by contrast, that which is elevated above all price, and admits of no equivalent, has dignity (Kant 2002, 52). In the case of Law it seems that this dignity, that which doesn't have equivalent, that which cannot be exchanged is established through the trade of faces. The dignity of each other is only recognized through the scopic exchange of faces. Hence, we can ask again, does one who covers their face have a dignity? To be generous, perhaps Law would answer that they do, but having the face covered, this dignity is also invisible. Moreover, through my face, Law implies, the others recognize themselves as having dignity, because my covering a face is a disrespect and violence towards the other that wants to see on my face reflection of their dignity. I will return to dignity and trade in relation to fraternity at the end of this section. Now let's continue.

There are different types of exchange at work that make dignified living-together possible, but the basic rule or requirement is to make at least visual exchange possible. Here face is something that brings differences to a common measure, it is a sort of a currency. But let's focus on the refusal of visual exchange which violates the dignity of the other as an act of violence. Exchange implies mutuality and the problem here is that of one way relation, when the fully covered woman can see, while she cannot be seen. This leads us to the visor effect. Derrida, in his reading of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, regarding the visor effect of king's spectral apparition writes:

This Thing meanwhile looks at us and sees us not see it even when it is there. A spectral asymmetry interrupts here all specularity. It de-synchronizes, it recalls us to anachrony. We will call this the visor effect: we do not see who looks at us (Derrida 2012, 6).

“Asymmetry” here is a crucial term, since it is supposed to preclude precisely that exchange that makes “symmetrical” living together possible. In this context, face is also supposed to assure certain synchronicity, the habitation of a common time, time of a nation, contemporaneity of brothers. I want to note in passing again that “fraternity” is the word that Law uses and hence my use of the word “brother” only repeats the Law. Why is face connected to time? Because face is life and for example, Ancient Greeks did not use the common word for face, *prosopon*, to refer to dead human faces. If there is no face, voice can come from any time. Face is present. Therefore, for this Western paradigm of face, covering it jams not only the sense of inhabiting the same national space, but also its time.

“Why does the encounter with a face covered by a burqa trigger such anxiety?” asks Slavoj Žižek, acknowledging that only very few women wear it in France and continues,

Is it that a face so covered is no longer the Levinasian face: that Otherness from which the unconditional ethical call emanates? But what if the opposite is the case? From a Freudian perspective, the face is the ultimate mask that conceals the horror of the Neighbor-Thing: the face is what makes the Neighbor *le semblable*, a fellow-man with whom we can identify and empathize. (*Not to mention the fact that, today, many faces are surgically modified and thus deprived of the last vestiges of natural authenticity.*) This, then, is why the covered face causes such anxiety: because it confronts us directly with the abyss of the Other-Thing, with the Neighbor in its uncanny dimension. The very covering-up of the face obliterates a protective shield, so that the Other-Thing stares at us directly (recall that the burqa has a narrow slit for the eyes; we don't see the eyes, but we know there is a gaze there) (Žižek 2011 2, emphasis mine).

What I find important in Žižek's analysis is that for him face functions as an "ultimate mask", as a common measure, a surface that makes otherness commensurate to the same. More specifically, face turns the "abyss of the Other-Thing" into a fellow-man. Nevertheless, what is this "ultimate mask"? Which masks are qualified as masks and which masks as faces? Do all masks lead to an honest face of a "fellow-man"? The problematics of the opposition between face and mask, between masculine and feminine will be answered in a third chapter, but before I will emphasize on Žižek's claim that nowadays a lot of faces are devoid of "natural authenticity." This trope can hardly be dissociated from women, since feminine face is often defined as made up, veiled, artificial, as a seductive abyss that lacks the "natural authenticity", hence it cannot serve as the "ultimate mask" as a face. But since face is profoundly caught in metaphysical significations where it is a servant or an obedient child of truth and presence, we can suspect that ones who don't possess the face must be the ones who are not, first of all, brothers, "fellow-men". To capture this tension, this binarization of face and mask I introduce here the term facial difference by which I mean not simply differences between already constituted, identified faces, but the internal tension of One face, its internal struggle of masks, where only one mask can bear the name face. To put it otherwise, a face is always one, but in order it to affirm its identity and privilege, it has to produce and it cannot not multiply masks that it will reject with a confidence of himself being a model face.

This "ultimate face" makes exchange and trade of faces possible, mutual recognition and equality of brothers. It reassures the dignity of members of fraternity. As we saw with Kant, dignity is beyond price, it is opposite to price and if it still has a price it is a priceless price and this price in the context of this Law is face. For acquiring on the market that what is priceless, dignity, faces are exchanged. This scheme is strikingly similar to the way Derrida in *The Politics of Friendship* puts Aristotelian conception of political friendship which ties together the exchange and equality. As Derrida explains "political friendship is attentive to equality as well as to the thing (the affair, *pragma*),

to the former as much as the latter, to one inasmuch as it also relates to the other. This is what political friendship 'looks to (*blepei*)' and what concerns it. As in a market, in commerce between sellers and buyers. Equality and the thing, the equality of things, therefore the third party and the common measure: an account and a fixed wage [*gage*] are necessary: a salary, a fee, a counter-value (*misthos*)" (Derrida 2005, 204). Here in the case of Republic, Law of fraternity establishes the common currency, common measure as a face, face that is involved in trade, commerce; in exchange of "ultimate masks" between buyers and sellers. The face of a brother is that "ultimate mask" which establishes political friendship and equality. Henceforth, in this model, any equality, between men or between men and women presupposes the "ultimate mask" as face, all else is false and disrupts the trust in the fraternal market economy of faces.

## Conclusion

In the previous sections I provided an exposition of the conceptual terrain, systematic interrelations that Law establishes between the notions of face, fraternity and Republic and their corollary or oppositional notions by which judicial discourse acquires coherence. Related to this, I showed how this conceptuality that grounds the forced unveiling immediately connects bare face and Republican sovereignty, which itself reiterates the theological model of unveiling, albeit in a secularized fashion. In the end, I showed not only how, within the discourse of Law there is an attachment between the face and sovereignty, but also how in the same discourse we see the attachment between the face and economic principle of exchange. This chapter, and the conceptual terrain of the judicial discourse on face that I mapped, will serve us as a map which in the next two chapters will guide us to trace the sources of its privileged tropes, their metaphysical foundations and implied binary oppositions back to the canonical Western philosophers and theologians, both modern



and classical. That way, in this study, I will demonstrate how throughout the Western theological and philosophical canon, or at least, with the canonical authors that I will analyze, there is a specific, Western paradigm of the face which itself, I aim to demonstrate, derives from the nature of the dominant Western philosophy determined, above all, as logocentric.

# Chapter 2: The Face and European Republic

## Introduction

The decisive relation between the concept of “Face” and “Republic” has been forcefully stated by the 2010 French Law. In this chapter I will provide an analysis of two landmark and influential figures, Jean Jacques Rousseau and Emmanuel Levinas, that are closely associated with the conceptualization of these two notions. Politico-philosophical influence of Rousseau over French Republican tradition is well established. Nevertheless, what is often absent in scholarly investigations is the link between Rousseau's discourse of authenticity and republicanism and their relation to the notion of Face. The first section of this chapter will move back and forth between Revolutionary France and Rousseau's *Émile or On Education*, between 1790 Republican ban on masks and Rousseau's paradigmatic articulation of the authentic face of a Young-Man. For the contextualization of the revolutionary ban on masks I will rely on James H. Johnson's essay “Versailles, meet Les Halles: masks, carnival, and the French Revolution” (2001) which will help us to see more clearly the relations between Rousseauistic discourse on social authenticity and its revolutionary juridico-political translation. Therefore, the section will explicate the sexed philosophical assumptions that undergird Rousseau's exaltation of authentic face and the revolutionary onslaught against the masks.

The second and third sections will focus on Emmanuel Levinas, XX century French philosopher famous for bringing the notion of face at the heart of ethics. In contrast to Rousseau, whose influence is indirect and has a shape of Republican heritage at large, the name of Levinas has been repeatedly called for in the preceding discussions on 2010 French Law. I devote Levinas two sections because he is important for two parallel and intertwined reasons: 1) 2010 proposed legislation was preceded by the parliamentary inquiry, which was headed by the Communist member of the

French parliament, André Gerin, who prepared what is now known as *Gerin Report*. The report not only mentioned Levinas, but also directly cited him. And this is because precisely philosophers were the most prominent supporters of the legislation, who actively participated in the relevant discussions that shaped the law (Patton 2014), 2) his ethnocentric and androcentric conception of ethics, centered on the notion of Face, provides us the unique vision to rethink “face” not as visage that is pre-political or pre-philosophical, but rather as an apparatus that emerges from the specific socio-politico-cultural conditions and is indissociable from them. Therefore, deconstructive reading of Levinas will provide us with an insight not necessarily into the negative side of the Law, that is, what it prohibits, but into its positive side, that is, what it attempts to exalt. For this end, I divided the discussion on Levinas between two sections, first will discuss relations between androcentrism and face, while the second one will focus on the relations between ethnocentrism and face.

## Rousseauism, a Face of a Young-Man and Jacobin un-Masking

In 1790 the new revolutionary government of France, six months after the fall of Bastille enacted a prohibition on wearing masks. The immediate reason and the target of this prohibition was the annual carnival, Mardi Gras. Even before the revolution, the event was opposed by the royal and clerical circles. This pre-revolutionary anti-carnival sentiment is captured by the archbishop of Paris, who claimed that the carnival was promoting “license, libertinage, and depravity” (Johnson 2001, 89). Mardi Gras was marked by a vast amount of public consumption of alcohol, the use of masks and costumes that mocked the powerful of this world; music, and an increase of petite crime. This peasant carnival albeit detested by the throne and clergy, nevertheless, it was tolerated as the profane joy of lowborn people. Against this background, where the public carnivals and the uses of masks might have been interpreted as collective acts of subversion against the power, Enlightenment

revolutionaries not only had reservations on them, but one of the first legal decisions that they made was to prohibit particularly masks and carnivals in general.

One of the prominent revolutionaries and a member of Jacobin Club, Jean-Paul Marat called it the “festival for slave-peoples”, while the revolutionary journal, *Revolutions De Paris* framed its opposition to it as an opposition to a false consciousness<sup>2</sup>. Masks were now considered as the symptoms of a perverted life under the obscurity of the monarchy, rule of one over the many, rule of the radiant face of the king over the faceless dominion. The meaning of a mask and face within the revolutionary rhetoric traveled back and forth, from literal to metaphorical to the point when the whole political discourse was saturated by the idea and practice of un-masking (Arendt 1990, 106). Full facial transparency came to become an ultimate end itself of revolutionary enlightenment. Despite the dominance of the notion of “unmasking”, it would have made no sense without a corollary and privileged notion of authentic face, without the secularization of its theological meaning. Writer Pierre-Louis Ginguene, contemporary of the 1789 revolution, diagnosing the facial specificity of post-revolutionary moment claims that now “truth marches with its face uncovered and its head held high” (Johnson 2001, 95). Notice here how in this historical moment the conventional distinction between the “literal” and the “metaphoric” collapses, how the uncovered face is both the revolutionary metaphor and its practice.

The 1790 prohibition on masks is a landmark event. The proliferation of the discourse of unmasking cannot be understood simply through its reduction on the immediate historical context, that is, by the reference to the ultimate signified, the “practical necessities” to track down the actual aristocracy in disguise and avert the counterrevolution. What interests me here is the architectonics of the metaphysics of face (presence), that makes possible and enables the discourse of unmasking to

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<sup>2</sup> “For a moment the people forgot their suffering and the crimes of their so-called masters, they didn’t recognize that all the indecent and costly chaos was simply intended to plunge them further into their own filth.” (Johnson 2001)

gain its traction and force. After Derrida, another name for this ethos might be “Rousseauism”. According to Derrida, “self-presence, transparent proximity in the face-to-face of countenances and the immediate range of the voice, this determination of social authenticity is... classic: Rousseauistic . . .” (Derrida 2013, 138). I will return to this articulation of “Rousseauism” later after we take a closer look on one passage from *Émile or On Education*:

*The man of the world is whole in his mask. Almost never being in himself, he is always alien and ill at ease when forced to go back there. What he is, is nothing; what he appears to be is everything for him. I cannot prevent myself from imagining on the face of the young man of whom I have previously spoken something impertinent, sugary, affected, which displeases and repels plain people; and on that of my young man an interesting and simple expression that reveals satisfaction and true serenity of soul, inspires esteem and confidence, and seems to await only the offering of friendship to return friendship to those who approach him . . . A child has only two marked affections, joy and pain. He laughs or he cries; the intermediates are nothing for him* (Rousseau 1979 230, emphasis mine).

Here Rousseau opposes two faces of man: one with a mask and another with face. The first face is “impertinent”, rude and one might even dare to say, violent and the other “satisfied” and at one with the soul. Both are faces but only the second deserves its name. What makes face to be the face is its obedience to the soul that stands behind it and uses face to express himself, rather than to hide. What is important here is the association between friendship and the face of the young man, that is opposed to the mask, that alienates from the soul and from the others. On the one hand, here we already see the outlines of the linkage between authentic face and the political friendship determined as fraternity. The latter idea after the revolution will become a cornerstone of French Republicanism. On the other hand, both figures of “young man”, masked and facial are distinguished from an ambiguous figure of an Infant-face, one that knows no “intermediary”, it is either absolute joy or its opposite. In this way,

an infant-face is not yet the face of Rousseau's "Young-Man" that invites friendship, nevertheless it is a primitive face, pure and true, albeit the one who knows only two expressions.

"Book IV" of *Émile or On Education* from which I quoted the paragraph opens with the reflection on the coming of age "crisis". For Rousseau sexual difference in children are not yet visibly present, boys and girls have "the same visage, the same figure, the same complexion, the same voice" (ibid, 211). Nevertheless, sexual difference has a form of teleology, natural inclination towards one develops through "stormy revolution" of passions announcing the coming of age of Man. This revolution finds its first expression facially, "his face develops expression and takes on character" (ibid, 212). Eyes, "the organs of the soul", that in childhood spoke nothing, now becomes vehicle of language and expressiveness (ibid). These passions themselves, originary ones, ones that come first and can be distinguished from imposed passions, "are the instruments of our freedom; they tend to preserve us" (ibid). Precisely these natural, first, primitive, even revolutionary and free passions are expressed in the facial "holy innocence" that has to be carefully protected from the seductive masks of other men (ibid, 236). Stakes for protecting the carefully raised Young-Man, his facial "holy innocence" against the masks is immediately political, because Rousseau's overall project in *Émile* is, first of all, to provide a pedagogy proper to the natural goodness of men. His pedagogy and a figure of a Young-Man is an integral part of his criticism of the "the spectacle of society" (ibid) or the society of the spectacle. What has to be protected in Young-Man is the natural child in him, child that is stranger to the masks (ibid, 63).

In this ideal pedagogico-developmental line the trouble of sexual difference has to be carefully negotiated. He instructs us, his readers, that, "The first sentiment of which a carefully raised young man is capable is not love; it is friendship. The first act of his nascent imagination is to teach him that he has fellows; and the species affects him before the female sex" (ibid, 220). Young-Man is vulnerable, he should be raised "carefully". He is vulnerable to sexual difference, he should be protected to the

extent that in the first phase of his education he should come across only to fellow-men. Young-Man knows only the face of a fellow man, he makes up his friendly face and develops his friendship with other men. Love and sexual difference, face of a woman, comes after he carefully consolidates fraternal ties. I will notice in passing that elsewhere, for Rousseau, the threat for the young man is that he might get seduced by the masks over other men (ibid, 236), who represent the current state of society that he is challenging. In this context, oppositional figure of a carefully raised Young-Man, one that was made to follow the linear developmental temporality, is the man given over to the women. These men “would have sacrificed fathers, mothers, and the whole universe to the least of their pleasures” (ibid). Political stakes here cannot be higher. Woman distorts Young-Man’s proper and authentic relation to the parents and the world. Seductive face of a woman is the grave danger to the coherence of a Young-Man and the perfect Republican fraternity.

Moreover, it has to be noted that the Jacobin war on masks carried sexual undertones.<sup>3</sup> Ordinance of the 1790, which points to the forbidden dissimulations, mentions the word “travesty” on which H. Johnson writes that “the remote sexual associations clinging to the . . . term *travestir* probably intended” (Johnson 2013). In general travesty meant disguising oneself, but it was also used in theatrical contexts where it indicated male actors playing the female roles, that is, a certain “cross-dressing.” Sexual journey of a new fraternal Republic doesn't end with the prohibition of masks. In 1793 Convention explicitly prohibited “drag”, that is, the practice of men disguising as women.

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<sup>3</sup> In 2006 French politico-philosophical collective Tiquun published a neo-Rousseauistic manifesto “Preliminary Materials For The Theory of a Young-Girl”, where a figure of Young-Girl stands as a model figure of a contemporary desubstantialized consumerist capitalism. Tiquun’s characterization of a Young-Girl is the true Rousseauistic nightmare. Tiquun describing the faux-face of a Young-Girl writes that she “wears a mask, and, when she confesses to doing so, it is invariably to suggest that she also has a “true face” that she will not, or cannot, show. But this “true face” is still a mask, a terrifying mask: the true face of domination” (Tiquun 2012, 110-111). Here also, as we already saw in case of a Jacobin rejoinder against masks, mask is itself a symptom of domination. When Jacobins prohibited wearing the masks, what they claimed is that masks are the essence of the Ancien Regime, of domination and of servitude, while in the Revolutionary Republic, Young-Man stands upright and with the face uncovered. One shouldn't forget that the French Revolution hasn't granted women the right to vote, therefore, it was essentially a project of a fellow Young-Man, of their friendship as fraternity. Tiquun’s manifesto here is exemplary because it crystallizes the other, not completely articulated side of Rousseau’s Young-Man.

Punishment for this crime was no less and no more than — death. Young-Man, that is, *fraternité* of a Republic to bloom, his sexual and gender coherence, his face must be protected at all costs. Derrida who characterized value system of Rousseauism, as privileging face-to-faceness, proximity and natural authenticity, extrapolates and generalizes his characterization of it unto “the Anarchistic and Libertarian protestations against Law, the Powers, and the State in general, and also with the dream of the nineteenth-century Utopian Socialisms, most specifically with the dream of Fourierism” (Derrida, 2013, 138). For Derrida another word for Rousseauism is Platonism that shares the same value system, same metaphysical assumptions. For him Rousseauism is itself already an inheritor of Platonism. Here we see that this Rousseauism of face-to-face and honest society is on the one hand reinvention of a logocentric Platonism of Polis, Platonism of face-to-face dialogues, of self-presence, of privileging the voice and the face, but also that which shapes the powerful European democratic imaginaries of the following centuries. Throughout the coming sections and chapters, what I will show is that canonical Western philosophy is always on the side of the face and against the mask, even when it is suspicious of the former. After this brief digression, by which I wanted to emphasize on the generalizability of what we are reading and analyzing here, let’s continue.

What marks the post-revolutionary emphasis on uncovering faces and anti-mask laws exceptional and symptomatic, similarly to the 2010 Law, is that both laws upheld the absolute value and necessity of the uncovered face. At the same time, both events, separated by centuries, go beyond their immediate historical contexts and are irreducible to them and point towards a more general privileging of face that is characteristic of a philosophical tradition from which they emerge. Neither the first law be satisfactorily explained by the reference to the practical necessities of a revolutionary struggle against the undercover aristocracy, nor the second one only by the reference to the boiling islamophobia. None of these factors can be neglected, but they solely couldn't have made them possible. At least, with the same argumentation which upholds the uncovered face and identifies it



with Republic and Republicanism per se. Beyond this analogy, which I hope I will show throughout this work that is more than an historical analogy, what I tried to show in this section is that, at the center of the political thought and the system of values that goes by the name of Rousseauism of uncovered faces is the face of a Young-Man as opposed to the masks. Furthermore, this facial politics is also indissociable from the problem and the trouble of sexual difference that is installed at the center of Rousseau's thinking of a Young-Man. This tradition, Rousseauistic in its character, codes the facial transparency on the side of masculine. Or at least, the privileged example, the model of the authentic and friendly face, of fraternal face, is figured masculine. The Young-Man defined against the masks and the feminine makes the logic of uncovering, of unmasking, of unveiling integral part of masculine facial economy.

## Levinas, Face of a Brother and Inverted Face of a Feminine

The 2010 French Law on prohibition of full-face coverings was preceded by the expert hearings regarding the multiple aspects of the proposed law. One name that haunted those discussions was Emmanuel Levinas. He was evoked as a philosopher whose oeuvre could have provided the ultimate philosophical justifications for the proposed law. Levinas is famous for his philosophical conceptualization of face-to-face encounter which for him is a condition for ethical responsibility. Simple encyclopedic gloss over his central philosophical tenants can provide a sense why his name and not others appeared in the discussions that preceded the Law. Rather than hastily pointing to the necessary, genetic or causal link between Levinasian legacy and the French law, let's first take a closer look at how Levinas conceptualizes the relationship between face and fraternity. In addition, we will see what is the specific example, his model that he evokes to demonstrate his philosophical concept of face. In the case of Rousseau, this model was the face of a Young-Man.

In a now famous 1986 interview, “The Paradox of Morality: an Interview with Emmanuel Levinas”, Levinas is asked whether the commandment ‘Thou shalt not kill’ applies to animals. That is, whether an animal has a face and therefore whether there is an ethical responsibility towards them. This is important for us, because we need to know whether the face, and specifically philosophical conception of face that Levinas puts forward, is attributable to all other beings or there is an internal criteria by which faces are distributed to these and not to those beings. And if there is an internal criteria that in advance restricts who and what can be attributed face, than we are opening a sort of a Pandora’s box, where the attribution of face might be restricted by the various *centrisms*. Let’s read what Levinas has to say:

I cannot say at what moment you have the right to be called ‘face’. The human face is *completely different and only afterwards do we discover the face of an animal*. I don’t know if a snake has a face. I can’t answer that question. A more specific analysis is needed” (Levinas 1986, as cited in Bernasconi, Wood; emphasis mine).

Here Levinas relies on a traditional, metaphysical opposition between human and animal, where the first is granted what is denied to the latter and in this case, it is face. More precisely, if the other is also granted face, it is only through the model of the face, that is, of human face. There is a priority of a model over the likeness, resemblance. This is strikingly similar to our previous reading of Aquinas who claimed that the Man is the image of God, he is the model image and an expression of the essence of humanity. Only afterwards woman is the image of God as a deviation from the model. Nevertheless, Levinas is hesitant to grant the snake a face even by the analogy to the model face. What seems at first sight paradoxical in Levinas’ thinking is a seeming contradiction between his attempt to build a non-violent, that is, non-ontological ethics that is “obsessed” with the alterity of the Other as face and at the same time to deny the face, to deny the proper alterity to the animals in general. To put this in

Derrida's words, the animal that was denied face by Levinas is "too other to be our brother or neighbor, not enough other to be the wholly other" (Derrida 2008, 117).

Let us pause here for a moment. What we are dealing here is the most classic and foundational gesture of Western philosophy. Again, to refer to Derrida, "from Aristotle to Lacan, and including Descartes, Kant, Heidegger, and Levinas . . . all of them say the same thing: the animal is deprived of language" (ibid 32). What is "language" in Derrida's characterization might be also "reason", "face", etc. What is specific to Levinas is that he chops the alterity of the Other to the extent that the epiphany of Face is that only of a human, particularly that of a *brother*. Internal criteria which guides his distribution or economy of faces is, first of all, anthropocentric. Levinas' supposed non-violent ethics repeats the foundational violence of Western philosophy, that is, of marginalization of animals and auto-founding itself vis-a-vis animal. Here comes our second issue, the second violence which is the determination of the alterity of the Other as Face with the figure of a brother. For example, not with the figure of a sister. In advance, I have to admit that the aim of this treatment of Levinas is neither to engage with his philosophical oeuvre in total, nor to dismiss it by referring to his more than explicit biases<sup>4</sup>, this is by no means my interest. What I'm trying to do here is to explicate the architecture of this specific anthropocentric and, especially in the case of this study, androcentric reading of face which organizes around itself the notions of fraternity, figure of a brother and the necessity of paternity that Levinas himself authorizes.<sup>5</sup> Now let's take a closer look to a passage from Levinas' *Totality and Infinity*, that finely encapsulates the relation between faces and the paternal function that non-successively, non-chronologically establishes fraternity of brothers:

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<sup>4</sup> For the elaboration of the problematic politico-philosophical assumptions of Levinas and its possible remedies, see Simon Critchley, "Five Problems in Levinas' View of Politics and the Sketch of a Solution to Them," *Political Theory* 32, no. 2 (2004): 172–85.

<sup>5</sup> For the project to save Levinas' ethics from Levinas himself, see Robert Bernasconi, "Who Is My Neighbor? Who Is the Other? Questioning 'the Generosity of Western Thought,'" *Ethics and Responsibility in the Phenomenological Tradition*, 1992, 1–31.

The very status of the human implies fraternity and the idea of the human race. Fraternity is radically opposed to the conception of a humanity united by resemblance, a multiplicity of diverse families arisen from the stones cast behind by Deucalion, and which, across the struggle of egoisms, results in a *human city*. Human fraternity has then two aspects: it involves individualities whose logical status is not reducible to the status of ultimate differences in a genus, for their singularity consists in each referring to itself. (An individual having a common genus with another individual would not be removed enough from it.) On the other hand, *it involves the commonness of a father, as though the commonness of race would not bring together enough. Society must be a fraternal community to be commensurate with the straightforwardness, the primary proximity, in which the face presents itself to my welcome. Monotheism signifies this human kinship, this idea of a human race that refers back to the approach of the Other in the face*” (Levinas 2011, 214, emphasis mine).

According to this passage, “human race” as a genus albeit a true statement from a certain biological point of view does not tell us much about the “fraternity” or “human race”. He sets his monotheistic conception of fraternity to the Greek conception of “humanity united by resemblance”. Fraternity here is opposed to the determination of humanity as a genus, since the latter is founded upon a resemblance while the former requires radical separation, alterities of the others. This separation, exteriority of face of a father is the necessary condition for the true fraternity to emerge. To clarify this point, for Levinas, simple possession of face or visage is not enough for the fraternity. The other to be recognized as face has to be mediated by a third face, which is of father. Therefore, transformation of humans into brothers is only possible through the paternal function; only through the common father it is possible sons and consequently brothers, to recognize fraternity of each other’s faces. We can already see here the primary value attached to the “commonness”, but also to the face-to-faceness which creates a condition for the brother to recognize the other face. It’s true

that Levinas wants to destabilize the supposedly Greek conception of human city that emerged out of “diverse families” and “struggle of egoisms which results in a human city”, but paradoxically enough he anchors his ethics again in a familial scheme and in the face-to-face proximity.

This is consistent with Rousseau’s Young-Man with his welcoming face in the proximity of a face-to-face zone. Consistent precisely because what makes Rousseau’s young men to converse is their shared, common natural sincerity, “holly innocence”. For Levinas what provides the ground for fraternity in face-to-faceness is the father, what provides the ground for fraternity in Rousseau is the nature. This structural fraternity, for the ways they use analogies and figures, between Rousseau and Levinas will get firmer when we introduce the most symptomatic aspect of Levinas’ philosophy, that is, Eros and feminine face; two closely attached and co-articulated concepts. As we saw with Rousseau, woman functioned as a danger for the young-man, since if exposed prematurely, woman would halt the composition of brotherhood, that is, an authentic community with faces uncovered and held high. In his treatment of a feminine figure we will see the extent Levinas is inscribed and is inscribing himself within the paradigmatic construction of authentic male face and inauthentic, masked face of a woman. According to this paradigm, the question of face is immediately related to larger questions of fraternity and hence, society and politics.

As Stella Sandford notes, for Levinas:

“Eros, as intimacy and the shunning of sociality, is alien to ethics, politics, law and so on, because eros without fecundity is 'closed'; only fecundity 'opens' eros to social fraternity which... is the human of humanity...”, and she goes on quoting Levinas, where he distinguishes erotic and just, asocial and social, where the intrusion of the father is conceptualized as a moment when intimacy transforms into sociality, “this is the primary

sociality: the personal relation is in the rigour of the justice which judges me and not in the love that excuses me” (Sandford 2000, 73).

This observation is crucial here, since in Levinas’ heteronormative world, feminine and eros is indissociable. This has several important consequences for us: first, erotic relation between man and woman is in itself asocial and even anti-social and anti-ethical and irresponsible since it only “excuses”, which means that according to Levinas’ phenomenological analysis, if there is not a father, which commands “Thou shalt not kill”, in erotic man-woman relation one has only forgiving attitude of lovers towards each other. Second, which derives from the first, erotic relation itself doesn’t generate neither ethics nor politics unless the father function is involved, that instead of “excuse” brings commandment not to kill. To put this in Rousseauian idiom, without father’s intrusion into the myopia of Man-Woman love relation, individuals that yet to become sons and brothers will fail to recognize each other’s faces. Even worse, and here we should remember how Rousseau warned us, that those Young-Men “would have sacrificed fathers, mothers, and the whole universe to the least of their pleasures.” In other words, the Republic fails when Young-Man is left facing a woman without father’s attendance, stuck in intimacy where lovers only forgive each other and there is no society or justice and hence, brothers in the horizon.

Let’s continue reading Sandford, now when she is summing up Levinasian conceptualization of feminine “face.”

“The ambiguity of the feminine beloved (l’aimée) — analytically indistinguishable from the ambiguity of eros itself — means that her ‘face’ gets lost or shadows over. If the face is like the *calm surface of a motionless pond*, the movement of eros is a rippling and ‘troubling’ of this surface” (ibid, 54, emphasis mine).

Here again, let's remember that Rousseau described the countenance of a “carefully raised” Young-Man “as simple expression that reveals satisfaction and true serenity of soul.” What feminine “face” brings is trouble and this trouble is indissociable from a trouble of sexual difference and consequently, from the political trouble. What is interesting in Sandford’s reading is that face of a woman is either “lost”, faceless or that it brings darkness to the calm picturesque surface of a motionless pond.<sup>6</sup> In other words, feminine face, which is not a face of a carefully raised Young-Man or of a Brother, is not a face uncovered with which the Republic lives with its head high. Feminine “face” is an “inversion of a face,” as Levinas puts it (Levinas, 2011, 262). It is the opposite of a Presence of an honest face of a Brother, of a Young-Man, her face is “less than nothing” (ibid, 260).

To be fair to Levinas, he doesn’t dismiss the Eros, he even considers it essential (after all, how can one be against eros as such?!), nevertheless, without a “fecundity of a Father”, it leads to abeyance, it doesn't accomplish in fraternity, that is, in humanity proper. However, what I showed in this section and what is relevant to the understanding of a contemporary, but not so new, French motto that “republic lives with a face uncovered” is that the face, the uncovered face, friendly face which makes “living together” in a Republic possible is a face of a Young-Man, of a Brother. French and Republican or French-Republican (and perhaps even Western) trope of “uncovered face”, implies but doesn’t state, that the value of face, through and through, is determined by the masculine economy of faciality, by the phallogocentric metaphysics that constitutes itself vis-a-vis the “inverted face” of a feminine, of a woman, which it has to overcome. As Derrida sums up, within the discourse of Levinas’ *Totality and Infinity*, “the face is presence, ousia” (Derrida, 1978, 101). This way he locates Levinas’ metaphysics of face within a long history of a canonized Western philosophy, without at the same time dismissing

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<sup>6</sup> This analogy between face and landscape might remind us to Deleuze and Guattari’s insistence that the abstract machine of faciality also operates as a landscapicity and abides to the same logic (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987).

its singularity, in an intellectual tradition whose philosophical articulations have sometimes been indistinguishable from common sense (Derrida, 2008, 56).

## Paternal Function or The Face within a Face: Can Non-Europeans See the Face?

In this section our focus will shift from androcentrism of Levinas' conceptualization of face to ethnocentrism which haunts his ethics and which hasn't been left unnoticed by others (Critchley 2004, Bernasconi 1992). For this we will take a closer look at what might be called a "paternal function" or what Levinas calls "monotheism" in order to show how he restricts his conception of face with ethnocentric assumptions. The long passage from *Totality and Infinity*, that I quoted in a previous section, ends with the emphasis on monotheism. let's read that line again: "Monotheism signifies this human kinship, this idea of a human race that refers back to the approach of the Other in the face." Levinas' inspiration for his ethics is clear and refers back to the Abrahamic thought. This is particularly interesting because so far it seems that "monotheism" is a name of transcendence of Being that accomplishes itself in universal fraternity. The father of monotheism is a necessary condition for the fraternity to be possible; monotheism *itself signifies* this accomplishment. This father, this particular father of monotheism is that "third party" that breaks into the asociality of primitive or erotic face-to-face relation. Furthermore, and this is important, "the third party looks at me in the eyes of the Other . . . " (Levinas 2011, 213). In other words, this "father of monotheism", this "third party" is a *face within a face* of the other that's looking at me and demands and commands justice. For the "living together" qua fraternity, a simple face-to-face encounter is not sufficient. Seeing the visage of the other is not enough to recognize a face in it, to recognize a humanity. It is a face of a father within the other's face that ensures our filiation.



Let's clarify my interest in monotheism. Monotheism which for Levinas signifies fraternity through the mediation of father implies only one God, only one father. What is important here is that he not only chooses the familial metaphors of “father” and “brother” while granting them privilege over “woman”, but also he identifies universal fraternity with the “monotheism”, which immediately excludes all who doesn't submit to the same law. In 1986 Levinas gave an interview where, aside from the autobiographical reflections, he comments on his relation to the ideas of Europe, Greece and monotheism at large. He says, “When I speak about Europe, I think about the gathering of humanity. Only in the European sense can the world be gathered together!” and to specify what is the specificity of Greek language, he says that there “one begins in the clarity of an unequivocal sign and only then can the way to what is secret appear. That is the eternal youth and the great maturity of the Greek language” (Levinas and Robbins, 2001, 138, emphasis mine). What is interesting here is that Levinas provides a certain monotheistic reinterpretation of “Greek language” and afterwards “Europe”. This is because for him only under this and not under any other fathers, if there are any except European one, that the world can come together. Clarity of unequivocal sign, presence, *ousia*, one can even say, face emerges only in Europe, as the legacy of a merger between “Judeo-Christian” and “Greek” elements. Not even of Islamic, which is the largest monotheistic religion after Christianity. “Buddhism” in Levinas' parlance stands as something that is radically alien to Europe qua Jew-Greek, despite Levinas admitting that he knows “nothing of Buddhism” (ibid, 164). Therefore, the selecting of the word “monotheism” is this “devil's gateway”, where ethnocentric possibilities of reading it starts to seep into his thought.

One can already see here how face is already determined by what is “European” and is tightly attached to a particular Western odyssey. Only in Europe, only through Europe can one recognize each other's brotherly faces. Let us pause here and read another response by Levinas from the same 1986 interview. He says that “one can express everything in Greek. One can, for example, say

Buddhism in Greek. Speaking Greek will always remain European; Greek is the language of the university. With this I am thinking neither about the Greek roots of words nor a Greek grammar. The way of speaking in the university is Greek and cosmopolitan. Certainly, in this sense, Greek is spoken at the University of Tokyo. It is central, because Greek is not one language among others” (ibid, 137). Levinas in another interview, in 1989 returns to this thread again and “confesses”: “How is that for a confession? I always say—but under my breath—that *the Bible and the Greeks present the only serious issues in human life; everything else is dancing*. I think these texts are open to the whole world. *There is no racism intended*” (ibid, 149). He reiterates the similar statement in a 1991 interview, quoted by Hamid Dabashi, where he says: “I often say, although it is a dangerous thing to say publicly, that *humanity consists of the Bible and the Greeks*. All the rest can be translated: *all the rest — all the exotic — is dance*.” (Dabashi 2015, 256, emphasis mine)

Let's pause here. Overt European exceptionalism of the last two responses is clear. What is interesting is the logic and axiomatics behind this racism, behind this exceptionalism which privileges and defines the exception at the expense of, through and by the subalternization of the Other in Spivak's sense. “Greek”, “Jew-Greek” or “European sense” here is presence, absolute and untranslatable. “Rest” can be translated into “Greek”, but “Greek” itself resists translation. Only through “Bible-Greek”, that is, through “Europe” it is possible to encounter the Presence, that is, Face in its ethicity. I use the compound of ethics and ethnicity, since Levinas associates universalism of the father to specifically Jewish thought which is essential for the possibility of ethics he articulates. Therefore, fraternity and its conditions of possibility that Levinas was trying to expound is, first of all, a fraternity of Humans, of Sons and specifically of Europeans. There is no humanity without Europeanization! “Only in the European sense can the world be gathered together!” (The second exclamation mark is Levinas’ own). In order to clarify, the problem of Levinas with animals was that he denied them face; here the case is that no one, except through “Europeanization”, can see, in a

Levinasian sense, the Face. This is because, for Levinas, Face becomes recognizable only through a “Third party”, “illeity”, “Father”, “Europe”, etc. which installs itself within a face of another as an ethical demand.

The very question that will bring us close again to our main problem of this study is the following: Whose faces will be recognized as legible faces for justice? Who is attributed the capacity to recognize universal fraternity in face? To put it differently, when the face is demanded to be uncovered, as in 2010 French Law, in order for fraternity to be possible, which visage can pass the face-control and more importantly, whether the uncovering of face presupposes a making-up of a face? Let's leave these questions in suspense for a moment and read what Hamid Dabashi responds to Levinas who, out of exceptional European generosity, invites “the world” to Europeanize and gather in the idea of Europe:

The problem is that if humanity were to follow Levinas’ decree and gather in Europe *to become human* they would not be welcomed there – and would first have *to shave their beard, take off certain items of clothing, change the color of their skin, chop off part of their nose, alter the pigmentation of their eyes, and Almighty only knows what else to become human*. Staying what and who they are, how they were born, they are no human – in the eye of the ethical philosopher who famously sought the sight of *the (European) knowing subject* in an encounter with “the face of the other” (ibid 256, emphasis mine).

In this telling passage, Dabashi points to how the face, phenomenal face, *the certain face*, stands between the Other and the supposed Host. The Other is the Face, as Levinas pointed out, but it is impossible to relate to the Other without, I’d dare to say, a certain ontology of face. As Derrida reminds Levinas, he “must ceaselessly suppose and practice the thought of *precomprehension of Being* in his discourse, even when he directs it against “ontology” (Derrida 1978, 177). Therefore, Levinas must assume and offer an interpretation of Being as presence

or face. As a specific face. Here I claim that there is a thin line between ethics and justice based on the (necessarily) particular face and the facial violence or face-control that Dabashi points out. Moreover, and by this we will respond to our central question that we raised: joining the facial community of brothers, that is, uncovering in a certain manner, in an European manner of France 2010, itself requires a production of a certain face. The movement of uncovering is indistinguishable from the movement of facialization; It is a productive, hence necessarily violent process. Thus, it is not only explicit androcentrism that dominates Levinas' conceptualization of face, but also ethnocentrism and this is the interpretation which he, as an author, certainly permits.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I marked the two landmark figures whose conceptualization of face, if not directly shaping the latter's contemporary Western articulations, at least they are reflective and responsive to its modern articulations. We saw how, from 1790 Law to 2010 Law, from Rousseau to Levinas — paradigm of face is dominated by androcentric and ethnocentric determinations. I have to emphasize that neither Rousseau nor Levinas are the masters of their own discourses. They are themselves dominated by the philosophical tradition that asserts primacy of the face, its corollary notions of truth, authenticity, presence, proximity, brother and republic. What dominates their discourses, what restricts them is what in the next chapter I will call philosophical face-centrism or prosoponcentrism of Platonism, where with Plato face stands as a *sine qua non* of his logocentric philosophy. Another concept that I will introduce in the next chapter will be facial difference, which I use to mean that all the examples, all the models of faces that we so far described are characterized by privileging a certain face as opposed to the multiplicity of what are denied the qualification of authenticity and truth.

Moreover, I will show that prosoponcentrism simultaneously operates by the incessant re-establishment of facial difference in order to protect the Oneness of true face, one that immediately expresses soul or nature. As we already saw with discussed authors and discourses, face is immediately political and is ultimately attached to the idea of fraternity. In the next chapter I will provide a reading of Aristotle's paradigmatic articulation of political friendship, where I will show how the democracy and fraternity, with a symptomatic exclusion of woman, is established in the register of facial difference.

# Chapter 3: Theo-Philosophy of Face

## Introduction

This chapter is united by the concern on Greco-Christian or Philosophico-Theological context that establishes the conceptual coordinates not only for the 2010 French juridico-political discourse on face, but also for the discourses that we, in the chapter two, named “Rousseauism” and “Levinasianism”. Throughout the previous chapter, I was alluding to the philosophical “Platonism”, by which Derrida was contextualizing Rousseau’s revolutionary thought as an inheritor of Greek philosophical tradition and particularly that of Plato. The words “Greek”, “Christian”, “Philosophical” and “Theological” carry with them an immense corpus of texts within the Western history of philosophy. Nevertheless, in the coming sections I chose three figures, Aristotle, Plato and Tertullian. This selection is justified by their landmark status within the Western canon as we know it. On the one hand, the importance of the first two for the Western politico-philosophical thought can hardly be underestimated, since the most fundamental concepts of politics, philosophy, etc. by which the West makes sense of itself and organizes itself are provided by them. On the other hand, Tertullian is credited to be “the first theologian” of Latin Christendom, who with his knowledge of classical Greek philosophy, played an important role in the processes of philosophization or Hellenization of incipient Christian thought, despite that he was opposed to a prevalence of such strands.

The first section of this chapter is devoted to the readings of Aristotle’s model of political friendship and its attachment to the figure of a brother. This figure is opposed or rather contrasted to the figure of a mother, whose characteristic exceptionality is, as we will see, that her filiation or *philia* doesn’t require proximity, face-to-faceness, exchange and reciprocity; her face is in shadows. To a lesser extent, in the same section I will also briefly discuss Ancient Greek mythical figure of Gorgon,

which is a generic name for a mythical monster sisters with petrifying gaze, who turns the ones looking at their face into stones. By juxtaposing the figure of a mother besides the figure of Gorgon, I will draw their analogy in terms of their defining non-reciprocity, non-exchange, absence of the possibility of face-to-faceness. With this analogy I want to point out how the two feminine faces, Gorgon and Mother, one that is too present and the other too absent are in a stark opposition to the Aristotelian brothers whose relations are grounded on reciprocity, exchange and face-to-faceness.

The second section is devoted to the articulation of what I call Platonist prosoponcentrism, that is, face-centrism. There I will provide a close reading of Plato's *First Alcibiades* and Allegory of Cave from *The Republic*, where I will demonstrate how Plato establishes the essential relationship between face and speech, where both are *sine qua non* for soul-to-soul interaction. Throughout this work, I showed how the Western philosophers have been attributing face a privilege where soul or nature, hence humanity and fraternity resides. By the term prosoponcentrism, with the paradigmatic example of Plato's discourse, I want to show how there is a special, specific and privileged relationship between Western philosophy and human face. The term prosoponcentrism will establish a basic commonality between many of the canonical thinkers, ones that we discussed and many more that we were unable to discuss, of Western politico-philosophical tradition. If my interpretation of Plato will be convincing, we will be able to see more clearly how come that the certain philosophical prosoponcentrism, that underlies, for instance, 2010 Law is, simultaneously, ethnocentrism and androcentrism; how the face in a Western philosophical discourses are invested by the republican and democratic, but also with theological interests.

In addition to that, I will propose another term facial difference, which I propose to be indissociable from prosoponcentrism. The minimal definition of facial difference in this tradition can be characterized by the formula - *face is always one, rest are masks*. With this I mean that throughout our discussions of multiple landmark figures, what unites them is not only the privileging of face, but also

determination of a model face, one that is a mirror of nature or soul, and the rest that are differently characterized as mask-like, seductive, petrifying, dark, withdrawn, etc. Nevertheless, these binarizations are never stable, and this will be my argument throughout our readings of Biblical verses on the faces of God and Tertullian's polemics against masks and seductive faces of women. There I will show how in a paradoxical manner, emblematic of what I call *facial difference*, characterization of a feminine face, one that reveals by hiding and seducing, is analogous to the ultimate face of God which as well reveals by hiding and seducing. This is not to say that Christian discourse *opposes* face of God to the face of Woman, but that both, to use Derrida's term, are characterized by a certain infinitization. This paradoxical logic, where the lowest and the highest become indistinguishable in terms of their characterization, but not in terms of values attached to them, is at work in Tertullian's discourse where, as we will see, spectacle, in a broad sense, is called to be overcome by the higher, divine spectacle.

## Aristotle's Democratic Brothers and The Mother

In this section I will show how the Aristotelian conception of face, *prosopon*, is implied in his paradigmatic articulation of a political *philia* qua democratic brotherhood and how the exchange (of glances) between brothers is a precondition for their equality. In addition to that, I will contrast the figure of a brother to Aristotle's figure of a mother who presents the possibility of a *philia* that is not of exchange, reciprocity, proximity and face-to-faceness. For the sake of further distinguishing the feminine difference from the brotherly face I will briefly introduce the Ancient Greek female mythical figure, Gorgon, which I conceive as analogous to that of a mother in terms of non-reciprocity, non-exchange, but from the opposite, bestial angle. Thus, in the first place, let's allow Aristotle to speak for himself and define the word *prosopon*:



In man, the portion of the body between the head and the neck is called the *Prosōpon* (Face), a name derived, no doubt, from the function it performs. Man, the only animal that stands upright, is the only one that looks straight before him (*prosōthen opōpe*) or sends forth his voice straight before him (*prosō, opa*). (Aristotle 1937, 217)

This is the definition Aristotle provides us in *Parts of the Animals*. In another manuscript, *The History of Animals*, also devoted to zoology Aristotle reiterates his anthropocentric conception of face, but adds onto it physiognomic descriptions of facial types:

The part below the skull is named the face, but only in man, and in no other animal; we do not speak of the face of a fish or of an ox. That part of the face which is below the *bregma* and between the eyes is the forehead. Persons who have a large forehead are sluggish, those who have a small one are fickle; those who have a broad one are excitable, those who have a bulging one, quick-tempered. (Aristotle 1965, 39)

Let's pause here and pay attention to the definitions that Aristotle provides. In the first place, for him, face is exclusively that of human. He associated human face with standing upright, erect which is immediately associates it to a certain phallogentrism of his cultural context, but also of ours. Furthermore, and this is equally important, face is the unity of sight and voice that are directed forth. To understand his physiognomic emphasis, I will note that in Ancient Greece, the word *prosopon* which here means face, also meant mask and it was used signify masks in general. Therefore, typology of faces that Aristotle here provides can also be understood as a kind of masks that are indicating a different, finite number of facial types within the genus human. I will briefly mention here that when *prosopon* was used in the context of masks, it was distinguished from two other types of masks, that were Gorgoneion and Mormolukeion, both derive from the names of female mythical beasts, the first from Gorgon and the second from Mormo (Robichaud 2018, 26). I find this distinction between generic masks and the masks of female beasts, this singling out itself indicative of a specificity of

female faces as it was conceived in a mythical register of Ancient Greece. As Agamben notes, Gorgon, that is, “the prohibited face, which cannot be seen because it produces death, is for the Greeks a non-face and as such is never designated by the term *prosopon*” (Agamben 1999, 53). I will not dwell into the figure of Gorgon further, but I will notice here that what I find interesting is that feminine face here is a non-face in a sense that she does not exchange glances; she does not reciprocate or allows to be faced. Let’s move onto Aristotle’s paradigm of friendship.

Before we approach to the announced figure of a mother, I will go through his conceptualization of several types of friendship which will provide us a context, where we will see the specificity of this figure. In *Nicomachean Ethics* Aristotle lays down the conception of *philia*, which is often translated as “friendship”, but which has much broader sense than we are acquainted to it in twenty first century. This articulation of friendship had an immense influence on the dominant Western conception of friendship in its multiple mutations. Aristotle points out that *philia* is simultaneously beginning and the end of politics, of polis, of city, of political life of a community. It is the beginning since *philia* is a relation that binds people together, but it is an end as well since it is oriented towards the *perfect philia*, towards its ideal. Furthermore, Aristotle distinguishes between friendship based on “utility” or “pleasure” or both *and* friendship based on the Good. In the case of the former, friend is a means to a mercantile or erotic end, in the case of the latter, friend is the end itself. Both friendships allow the possibility of Polis, but only the latter is the perfect. Rather than going through the whole problematics of *Nicomachean Ethics*, I will emphasize several symptomatic passages that will directly link us up to our previous discussion.

For Aristotle *philia* or friendship is immediately political and it founds *Politeia* or according to various translations, Republic, City or State. Therefore, he writes that “friendship seems . . . to hold cities together . . .” (Aristotle 2014, 142). More specifically, what he calls the rule of *property owners*, that is, timocracy has another name and “most people usually call it a polity” (ibid, 153). In Aristotle’s

typology, corrupted form of timocracy is the democracy, that is, rule of the *demos*, but he quickly adds that the line separating timocracy and democracy is thin; therefore, fall from timocracy to democracy is not as grave as fall from kingship to tyranny or from aristocracy to oligarchy. The domestic metaphor or domestic example that corresponds to the *Politeia*, that is, City, Republic or State is that of brothers (*politeia d' hē tōn adelphōn*). Aristotle opposes numerical equality to proportional equality, where the latter is established between those who are in a hierarchical relation. Hence, superiors and inferiors are reciprocated in accordance to their status, that is, proportionally. To put it short, the model of democracy as outlined by Aristotle is based on his conception of numerical equality and the non-hierarchical relations of brothers. Nevertheless, I have to note that democracy is not the most favorable form of governance for Aristotle, and this distrust of democracy is something that goes along with the history of western philosophy up until modernity.<sup>7</sup>

Furthermore, Aristotle claims that among the corrupt forms of government, tyranny, oligarchy and democracy, only in the last one do we encounter the most justice, “because the citizens are equal and so have much in common” (Aristotle 2014, 158). Thus, in the Aristotelian model, democracy is indissociable from the friendship of equals; the latter is a condition of possibility for the former. However, where are women in these domestic models for the *politeia*? Aristotle explains, “The friendship of man and woman also seems natural. For human beings naturally tend to form couples more than to form cities, in as much as the household is antecedent to the city, and more necessary, and reproduction is more widely shared with animals” (ibid, 159-160). Here, and this is true for the whole *Nicomachean Ethics* with one exception which I will soon come back to, friendship with a woman is conceived only in relation to her reproductive function, only within the sphere of *oikos*,

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<sup>7</sup> “There are in the end rather few philosophical discourses, assuming there are any at all, in the long tradition that runs from Plato to Heidegger, that have without any reservations taken the side of democracy. In this sense democratism in philosophy is something rather rare and, in the end, very modern. And perhaps not even very philosophical.” (Derrida 2005, 41)

household. Thus, only in relation to the necessity, to nature (*phusei*) do women appear in friendship with a determined household function. The relation between man and woman is functional and serves the goal of reproduction, hence this relation; this *philia* is alien to the proper political friendship, to the proper political deliberation or choice (*proairesis*) which, again, is modeled on the figure of a brother.

Moreover, and this is important, since this specification brings us closer to the figure of a mother, Aristotle tells us about friends who cannot occupy the same place, *topos*, who cannot act together, converse and face each other: “For friendship can survive many losses, but when one side is removed *at a great distance* - as god is - then it is no longer possible (ibid, 152, emphasis mine). Friendship withstands many obstacles, but its absolute limit is distance or more precisely based on Aristotle’s previous characterization of this limit — *aprosegoria*, which Derrida translates as non-allocation, non-address. Here we should remember that Aristotle in his zoological manuscripts, defined face as a unity of speech and sight. Therefore, we have a good reason to think that *aprosegoria* also logically implies lack of face-to-faceness, absence of face at distance. What is equally important here is that this mute distance, in a manner characteristic to “Platonism”, dogmatically excludes the possibility of writing, of a letter or tele-communication in general. One can perhaps even ask, in passing, what would be the Aristotelian or Levinasian, or more broadly, Platonist position on modern telephone? In any case, what interests me here is this political friendship that founds Republic and democratic fraternity in co-presence, in proximity and in face-to-faceness. To make it more clear why the democratic thought has been so invested in face-to-faceness of brothers, I will only notice, for the sake of comparison and contrast that Byzantine Emperor has often been presented and represented either through invisibility, “hiding the ultimate bearer of power” (Douzinas 2000, 821), or through the excessive visibility that would effect blindness.

I already announced the one exception of friendship where a woman figures and not exclusively in relation to a husband. Aristotle's discussion of it immediately comes after the one on distance and its *aporia*. According to Aristotle, distance, as Gods are distant, implies the end of friendship, but this possibility of end itself derives from the essence of perfect friendship, that is, from the best wish for the friend to be God. In other words, in a perfect friendship a friend wishes his friend to be God and being God implies absolute distance and an end of friendship. This paradox is named by Aristotle as *aporia*, the word which derives from *aporos* and literally means impassable. Wishing a friend best, that is, to be God himself is an end of friendship, but what is fascinating in the passage that immediately follows the one we already discussed is that Aristotle associates such an unique or even impossible tele-*philia*, friendship or love at distance, to a mother-child relation, to woman as mother, that for Aristotle exemplifies this impossible relation that he compared to the distance of Gods.

Even when a child, for his or her best interests, is handed to the other to be raised even when the child might never know about her, "she loves him because she knows him" (ibid, 153). Here the exchange, reciprocity, mutual recognition is excluded. Aristotle continues his description of motherly *philia* and again emphasizes the non-reciprocity of this relation, which is itself an essence of perfect friendship, because "It seems enough for her to see the child doing well, and she loves him even if, because he does not know her, he gives her none of the things appropriate to a mother" (ibid). Here we should remember that the example of mother's *philia*, comes after the comparison to the *philia* towards God. In this context Aristotle is meditating on the best wish for the other, on the distance that the essence of perfect *philia* implies, which simultaneously and paradoxically is the limit of *philia*. Precisely in this context, as opposed to the brotherly friendship, mother's *philia* to her son gets detached from conversation or dialogue, co-presence and face-to-face proximity. This *philia* between mother and child is exceptional within Aristotle's conception of friendship and perhaps even apolitical,

idiotic which doesn't lead to the City. This motherly *philia* does not require face-to-face reciprocity, face-to-face equality, mutual recognition and "exchange of glances", it pertains to the essence of perfect friendship, but also to its impossibility, its impasse.

In the beginning of this section, I mentioned the mythical figure of Gorgon whose anti-prosopon, anti-face disallows face-to-faceness. Here I want to point towards the analogy between mythical female figure of Gorgon and Aristotelian figure of a Mother in terms of their feminine non-reciprocity, non-exchange of glances, in terms of their unseen faces that in the case of Gorgon signifies the deadly gaze, while in the case of a Mother it signifies the infinite love. Exchange of glances, that I referred in the first chapter where it was said to be a minimal condition for fraternity, in the case of these two female figures is excluded. The Gorgon and the Mother name the feminine limits of the masculine economy of faciality, of friendship determined as brotherhood, where brothers exchange glances and recognize each other as brothers. Derrida, when trying to demonstrate once again political stakes of friendship, recalls Aristotle's *Politics* and sums up his argument, that

the telos of the State (*polis*) is the 'good life (*to eu zēn*)', and the good life corresponds to the positivity of a *living together* (*suzēn*). 'This is nothing other than friendship in general' (Derrida 2005 199, emphasis mine).

I'm stressing on "living together", which Derrida himself emphasized by putting Greek word into brackets, precisely because 2010 French Law repeatedly emphasized it in order to show how the notion of living together is incompatible with hidden faces. In Aristotelian context, "living together" is grounded on friendship, and in the context of democracy, on fraternal friendship and their face-to-face proximity which shapes up the Republic that is oriented towards "good life". In this scheme, while mother is excluded from politics, she is simultaneously included within the definition of perfect friendship as the model of *philia* at distance, *philia* without a face-to-faceness, as a defaced excess of fraternal friendship which is necessary for its definition, but also that which is its exemplary limit. This

paradoxical Aristotelian conception of feminine *philia* and its position with regard to the ideal of fraternity has been reactivated in a post-revolutionary French Republican discourse, specifically by defining feminine as the absolute *philia*, as a nonreciprocal love for the other by which, paradoxically, Michelet explained why the women are not ready to fraternity, hence to the right to vote (ibid, 238).

To conclude, two figures, brother and mother, if not opposed, at least they are contrasted to each other by means of the former being associated to reciprocity, mutual recognition and face-to-face proximity, while the latter to non-reciprocity, to unseen and unknown face, to distance, which makes her both an excess of model of democratic brotherhood and simultaneously, an image of perfect, therefore, impossible *philia*. This Aristotelian and let's say, Greek model of political friendship had a profound influence on the French idea of fraternity. 2010 French juridico-political, but also theological and philosophical, discourse accuses primarily women, but also everyone else for, what I would call, the Gorgonic violence towards the others who destabilize the facial economy of modern public space. It accuses those who are present spectrally, those who know, who see, but simultaneously, are not seen, as the figure of the mother is left unknown and unseen by her son. I use the term Gorgonic violence to indicate a certain fraternal, masculine, perhaps even a democratic fear, that equates equality to a scopic exchange and registers the distortion of this economy as a violence. 2010 French and Greco-Aristotelian, but also revolutionary French economy of faces, exemplified by Rousseau's attack on masks, eschews the possibility of "living together" (*suzen*) without faces, marks it as an excess or violence towards the social prosopon, towards the sharedness and reciprocity of faces. This juridico-political discourse registers the ones without prosopon, and now I use this word with the meaning of authenticated, verified face, for failing short of the "ideal of fraternity" and the name of this failing short is excess or lack.

## Logos with a Face: Plato's Mirror-Eyes

It can be easily demonstrated that in the canonized Western thought, from Plato to Aristotle, from Augustine to Aquinas and from Hegel to Levinas Western philosophers and theologians ascribed a human face, to say the least, an anthropocentric exceptionality and privileged locus where the soul, spirit or humanity of humans resided. This "European" or "Western" intellectual tradition, which Dipesh Chakrabarty characterized "as the only one alive",<sup>8</sup> has been profoundly shaped by the logocentric and phonocentric Platonist discourse precisely because, as Derrida suggests, "'Platonism,' . . . sets up the whole of Western metaphysics in its conceptuality" (Derrida 2004, 82). Ancient Greek androcentric culture did not rigorously distinguish between face and mask and as Robichaud sums up, in his study of the Platonic notion of *prosopon* and its influence on Renaissance humanism, "the distance from the early Greeks is evident. Their masks display while Romans and ours conceal" (Robichaud 2011, 28). What is crucial here is that Plato, the teacher of Aristotle, not only breaks with the Greek cultural context, where the face is understood as a socially coded surface without interiority; but that he establishes face as a necessary element for his phono-logocentric metaphysics.

This fundamental aspect of his metaphysics has been largely ignored. In his magisterial study of Plato's *Phaedrus*, Derrida largely focuses on Plato's phonocentrism and his distrust of writing and draws implications of this binarization, while what has been missed in deconstructive approaches to Plato is the fundamental place that "face" occupies, along with live speech, in his metaphysics. I

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<sup>8</sup> "[T]oday the so-called European intellectual tradition is the only one alive in the social science departments of most, if not all, modern universities. I use the word "alive" in a particular sense. It is only within some very particular traditions of thinking that we treat fundamental thinkers who are long dead and gone not only as people belonging to their own times but also as though they were our own contemporaries. In the social sciences, these are invariably thinkers one encounters within the tradition that has come to call itself "European" or "Western." I am aware that an entity called "the European intellectual tradition" stretching back to the ancient Greeks is a fabrication of relatively recent European history. Martin Bernal, Samir Amin, and others have justly criticized the claim of European thinkers that such an unbroken tradition ever existed or that it could even properly be called "European." The point, however, is that, fabrication or not, this is the genealogy of thought in which social scientists find themselves inserted." (Chakrabarty 2000, 5)



already noted how Aristotle excludes the possibility of tele-communication among friends, but there it is not explicit, except in his definition of *prosōpon* as the unity of sight and speech, what are the conditions of possibility that make this exclusion possible, what are the metaphysical assumptions that allow Aristotle to dogmatically exclude the obvious possibility of a letter and what are the political implications of this exclusion. The question of friendship and face is immediately a political question. Friendship as fraternity, logos, face and politics are all intertwined and herein I will show how this is played out in the discourse that I, after Derrida, use to call “Platonism”, which itself provides a metaphysical undercurrent for the relevant claims of Aristotle that I already discussed.

In the Socratic dialogue known as *First Alcibiades*, which for centuries was considered as a gateway to Plato’s thought, Socrates engages into a conversation with Alcibiades, a young man aspiring to rule the Athens. Socrates advises Alcibiades that the point of departure for any good ruler is for him first to know his own self, his own *psukhe*. Plato here puts the Delphic motto “know thyself” at the center of his teaching and claims that knowing oneself is only possible when soul rules over the body. Plato uses the word *arkeon*, which is also used in relation to authority, political rule on which he is alluding (Plat. Alc. 1 130b). Further, he emphasizes the absolute possession of the body by the soul and again he uses the politically charged word *kurios*, which means master or lord. Within the context of their conversation, word (*logos*) becomes the instrument of *psukhe*, it becomes a means for the soul-to-soul conversation (*tē psukhē pros tēn psukhēn*) (ibid. 130d) After this clarification, Plato further emphasizes that this conversation, this use of words serves the end of not speaking to the face (*prosōpon*), but to the soul (*psukhe*) (ibid. 130e). As Robichaud suggests, this is the quintessential platonic moment, where Plato breaks with the Greek cultural context and affirms the primacy of that which stands behind the face, that is, soul (Robichaud 2018, 36).

Nevertheless, neither God nor Soul can be immediately accessed. Self-knowledge is attainable only through conversation, dialogue. It is an antidote (*alexipharmaka*) of ignorance and bad rule (Plat.

Alc. 1 132b). Plato does not stop here and proposes a privileged example, exemplary example, the paradigm of self-knowledge. Socrates is slowly introducing the element of face which will soon become central. Thus, he writes, “I rather think there are not many illustrations [*paradeigma*] of it to be found, but only in the case of sight” (ibid, 132d), that is, as we will see, *paradeigma*, the privileged example for Delphic motto “know-thyself”, which is an antidote, *alexipharmakon*, the face-to-faceness; it is a necessary condition for the soul-to-soul conversation, for politics proper, for just politics. Plato further explicates the Delphic “know thyself” through Socrates asking Alcibiades, “would it not be, that the eye should look at that by looking at which it would see itself?” (ibid). Upon this question, Alcibiades responds that the answer to this question might be mirror, since precisely in the mirror eye can see itself. Socrates doesn’t deny it, but pushes further to unpack his proposed paradigm. let’s read the whole paragraph, where Socrates asks:

And have you observed that the face of the person who looks into another's eye is shown in the optic confronting him, as in a mirror, and we call this the pupil [*korēn*] for in a sort it is an image of the person looking? (ibid, 133a).

Let's pause here. The old Greek word for eye-pupil is *korēn* which was also used to signify *girl*, *doll* and metaphorically, *of colony* since what one sees in the eyes of the other is an objectified self (doll); it is immediately an exercise of power, power over the self, “self-colonization” and aristocratic rule over woman which for Aristotle, defined a relation between man and woman. As Derrida notes in *Plato's Pharmacy*, knowing-oneself is a call for order (Derrida 2004, 69), for oneself and for the city.

After this passage, Plato switches register and now writes about the region of the soul where its virtue is located, that is, wisdom (*sophia*), which he claims to be the divine part of the *psukhe* (Plat. Alc. 1 133b). Plato here doesn’t mention but in *The Republic*, he specifies that the soul resides in the head. Hence, the house of wisdom is the head itself and this is precisely what justifies his privileged example to be immediately related to the face of the other. Afterwards, Plato drops this paradigmatic

example and proceeds into the further elaboration of Delphic motto, where he explicitly connects it to *self-control* (ibid, 133c), to the moral faculty of distinguishing good from bad (ibid, 133d). This is not an unfamiliar trope, since defacement, facelessness is often associated to the loss of responsibility, of morality by which anonymity is threatening. Aristotle himself explicitly claims that the wicked man, bad man are falling short of perfect friendship precisely because “wicked people have no constancy, since they do not even remain similar to what they were” (Aristotle 2014, 154). In this process of acquiring self-knowledge of the soul, of that which is constant and perhaps even serene (remember Rousseau's friendly face of a Young-Man who reveals the serenity of soul and Levinas' feminine face that disturbs the calm surface), this certitude is pivoted upon the *psukhe*-to-*psukhe* relation through word and face.

So far Plato explicitly ascribes face-to-faceness the position of a privileged example to unpack his conception of soul-to-soul conversation and therefore of self-knowledge and good politics. What is more surprising, because it has often been ignored and more important, because it establishes face at the center of Plato's metaphysics, is the famous allegory of the cave. Let's read the relevant passages where Socrates addresses Glaucon:

“Imagine human beings living in an underground, cavelike dwelling, with an entrance a long way up that is open to the light and as wide as the cave itself. They have been there since childhood, with their *necks and legs fettered*, so that they are fixed in the same place, *able to see only in front of them, because their fetter prevents them from turning their heads around . . .*” (Plat. Rep. 7.514a-b, emphasis mine).

I won't finish the whole paragraph, but only notice in a simplified manner that the allegory demonstrates the condition where humans have access only to simulacra and not to ideas that grant the objects its true sense. Though, what is important here is that for Plato conversation, dialogue, soul-to-soul intercourse is impossible without face-to-face encounter. A little bit later Plato entertains

the possibility of those prisoners being able to have conversation (ibid, 7.515b). To my knowledge, this Platonic necessity of face for the philosophy has largely been left unnoticed by philosophers, except the French Hellenist Françoise Frontisi-Ducroux, who, regarding face-to-faceness, claims that “what is normally a preliminary step to the relationship that Socrates intends to establish with his interlocutor becomes *the condition sine qua non* in the myth of the Cave from the Republic” (Frontisi-Ducroux 1995, 25, emphasis mine) and further she draws a parallel between Plato’s prisoners and “deaf-mutes” “who can only converse face-to-face. All in all, for the Greeks, it is as if conversation [*entretien*] is impossible unless the interlocutors see one another [*entrevue*]” (ibid).

If my interpretation is right, and Platonic phonocentrism is *impossible* without prosopocentrism and goes along with it, implications of this insight is significant. Nevertheless, because of the limitations of present work, I won't be able to follow its various consequences that it might have on our understanding of what constitutes “Platonism” and the specific architecture of Platonic metaphysics whose influence Derrida has been tracing in what makes-up “Greco-Christian” politico-philosophical context of Europe. But, I will point out, and this is crucial here, that prosopocentric condition of Platonic logocentrism can give us glimpses to understand the reasons why in the Greek context and afterwards what came to be known as Europe, “face” came to be so closely attached to the notions such as: individuality, autonomy, authenticity, friendship/fraternity, Republicanism, etc. And all of them simultaneously have been determined against the different hypostasis of Other faces, including against feminine face or feminine facelessness, against masks, which, in prosopocentric scheme, is the other word for a false face. In light of the vehement support and campaigning of philosophers for the 2010 French Law, but also in light of Rousseau, Levinas and others, one should pose the question regarding the relation between Western philosophy and face, regarding the face as a condition of possibility for the philosophy; but also regarding the relations between philosophy, Republicanism and face, since as we already saw, in this tradition, face and

politics are indissociable. In the end of this section one can rewrite Agamben's proposition, "the face is . . . the only possible city" (Agamben 2000, 91) as *the face is a democratic republic of brothers*.

## The Face of God and the Masks of Devil

In the town Gadarenes Jesus encountered a possessed man. No one has been able to bind him even with chains and he lived among tombs, cutting himself with stones and crying out the day and night (Mark 5:5). "Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" "My name is Legion," he replied, "for we are many."" (Mark 5:9). In this symptomatic passage, demon or "unclean spirit", as in the canonical King James translation, is a multiplicity vis-a-vis the One. Devil is immediately associated with multiplicity and the fact of multiplicity residing inside a human soma, body eventually leads to a self-destruction ("cutting himself with stones"). Rather than man being One with himself, he is many ('about two thousand' Mark 5:13); rather than having One name, his name is "legion". Underlying binary opposition between One and Many is clear here, as it was in the case of the "wicked man" of Aristotle who never stayed the same. Bad difference in the case of a possessed man is spatialized (multiple coexists in one space), while in the case of a wicked man temporalized (multiple unfolds in time). This is also true about the depictions of Evil as Satan, demon or Lucifer in Christian art. As Luther Link explains, the Devil has "many masks, but *his essence is a mask without a face*. The apparent face of the Devil from the ninth century to the sixteenth is usually banal: it is a pasteboard mask with neither personality nor feeling behind it. Perhaps that is why the face of the Devil seemed harder to sketch than the face of Jesus" (Link 2013 15, emphasis mine).

In the early church Latin Christians used the word "person" to distinguish the members of the Holy Union, father, son and holy spirit. While Greek Christians used the word "prosopon", which they later dropped for a more technical term "hypostasis" which was deemed to better express *the*

*difference* in unity of the Holy Trinity. What is interesting in the rejection of the word “prosopon” is the process Hellenization or philosophization of Christianity, which drops the more ambiguous and “metaphorical” term for the strict metaphysical, “conceptual” term in order to suppress, contain the excess of meaning that the prosopon contained in its Greek context. Nevertheless, the initial use of “prosopon” or face becomes clear once we take a closer look on both Old and New Testaments, where the use of Hebrew “panyim” (face) and its Greek equivalent “prosopon” is extant and often also denotes the *presence* of God.

In his first epistle to Corinthians, Saint Paul writes that "for now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Corinthians 13:12). In Paul's times, that is, in the year 1 instituted after the birth of Christ, “glass” was the word to indicate a mirror, where one could see the face of God reflected only dimly. Mirror or a "looking-glass" here stands for the incomplete representation of an original presence. The face of God seen in the mirror is still not to see God directly, face-to-face, without mediation, him being self-present before one's eyes. On the one hand, Paul is transparent before God, his face is known, and on the other hand, his knowledge of God is only through the mirror reflection, removed from a full presence of face. Here the facial articulation of asymmetry is explicit, that is, the relation between God and Paul is asymmetric because God sees his face, while Paul doesn't. It is not a friendly encounter between equals, but a relation that is not a relation.

Paul here only reiterates the Old Testament trope, where the Israelites have been barred from seeing the face of God.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, the face of God has been seen, for instance, by Moses to whom God spoke “as a man speaks to his friend” (Exodus 33:11). I'll skip the undecidability of interpretation regarding whether this meeting suggests an equality between Moses and God. What interests me here is that the Biblical words, “as a friend”, implies a specific model of friendship where face-to-faceness

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<sup>9</sup> “But He said, “You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me, and live.”” (Exodus 33:20)

defines reciprocity and equality (or semblance to it); sharing the truth of the other in proximity, in a mutual presence and facial uncovering. Even if Moses and God are not equal in face-to-faceness, even if Moses hasn't seen the face of the father, but that of son, face-to-faceness here still implies that it is a necessary condition for reciprocity, for friendship, for equality. Face-to-faceness and friendship here imply each other. Therefore, Saint Paul's frame of reference within which the face acquires its significance is already set up by the Old Testament itself. To put this symptomatic exception aside to which I will soon return, in the Old Testament God calls for Israelites to seek his Face,<sup>10</sup> since the face of God is barred from the eyes of Israelites, therefore the quest of the faithful is precisely to seek this face-to-faceness with God. What interests me here is this paradox, contradiction by which Old Testament refers to the face of God, where he reveals his face, but also hides; where one is never certain whether this face was of the God as Father or God as Son or whether there is even a face of God at all.

Tertullian of Roman Carthage occupies a singular position within the history of Latin Christian Church. "The most skilled rhetor" and "admittedly an extremist" of his time, as historian of late antiquity Peter Brown characterizes him (Brown 2008, 76), has been qualified as one of the Church Fathers who built up the conceptuality of Latin Christianity. Among historians Tertullian is credited for launching one of the first systemic Christian attacks on theater and theatricality (Barish 1985, 64), which places him within a Platonist tradition of "condemnation of mimesis" (Diamond 2003, 65). What is more important for us, and this hasn't been left unnoticed by modern feminist scholars, is his association of women with theater and masks (ibid, 66). We already saw with Rousseau his opposition to masks as something seductive from which young man has to be protected. This line of thought of

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<sup>10</sup> "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14)

associating women with theatrical deception that Tertullian develops in the early centuries of Latin Christian Church has been taken up by many other canonical Christian theologians who came after him. Furthermore, It has to be also noted that Tertullian is credited for cementing the Christian vision of women as fatally attached to sexuality and the threat of seduction (Barish 1985, 82). But what hasn't been paid due attention is specifically his interest in woman's faces. Before I approach Tertullian's symptomatic passages upon the question, I will briefly discuss, what one might call, his theological theory of faces, which bears a direct relevance to what we already discussed in this section and provides us a proper context to better understand his criticism of women and particularly of their faces.

I already pointed out that there is a paradox within the Old Testament which asserts that the encounter with the face of God is either impossible or deadly and, simultaneously, that impossible face of God has been seen more than one time and those who have seen him lived. This of course hasn't been left unnoticed and it has been exploited by the early Monarchianist Christians who rejected the Trinitarian doctrine.<sup>11</sup> Within the context of fierce debates Tertullian was compelled to resolve this tension and defend Trinitarian doctrine against Praxeas. What I'm interested in here is not the Trinitarian doctrine itself, but his hierarchization of faces. After a short theological exegesis, Tertullian comes to a conclusion against his opponent and asserts that the face that was seen by Moses, Jacob and others was not a face of God as Father, but a face of God as Son (Tertullian 2011, 150). From here, and also through the analogy of Christ's saying that Father is his head, he deduces that the true face of Christ is the face of Father (ibid 151). In other words, and this is important, God reveals his face while hiding and at the same time, maintains his seductive power by the promise of the face. It is as if God shows part, but doesn't reveal all; it is as if God shows masks, but promises face; it is as if God shows his face, but it is not his face. This logic is strikingly analogous to that of the figure of a

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<sup>11</sup> Giorgio Agamben (2011) provides a nuanced account of the early Christian debates around Trinitarian and Monarchical doctrines, their political stakes and contemporary repercussions.



feminine seductress. Thus, let's see how Tertullian sees women in general and their faces in particular and only afterwards we should return again to this analogy that I just outlined between God and seductress.

In another treatise *On the Veiling of Virgins*, Tertullian declares that virginity cannot be obtained by women through baptism and conversion to Christianity, rather that sexuality and therefore seductiveness and danger is the fatal destiny of women of this world. Thus, Tertullian calls for women to veil, since they cannot be free from their sexual difference. In this way, he reinjects women into a Paulian cephalic scheme and reasserts that a man is the head of a woman, therefore they have to veil. What is different from Paul is that Tertullian delves deeper into the interpretation of woman's face. Elsewhere he calls women "the devil's gateway" and accuses them for destroying the "God's image, man" (Tertullian 1999, 132). Stakes cannot be higher for Tertullian and thus he needs to shed light to the problem of facial difference, or if this shedding of light is impossible, at least he has to delimit, name the danger that comes from women. Trouble that the facial difference of women creates is that the men, made in the image of God has to be again and again protected from the false and seductive faces of women. Tertullian needs to name the danger only in order to fortify and protect the inherent instability of vulnerable male subjectivities, that are themselves anchored in and sustained by the *promise* of a face of God. In this context, Tertullian describes woman's face:

[women] dye [or change] their hair; and fasten their hair with more wanton pin; professing manifest womanhood with their hair parted from the front . . . they consult the looking-glass [*speculo*] to aid their beauty [*formae*], and thin down their over-exacting/fastidious face [*faciem morosiore*] with washing, perhaps in addition vamp it up/falsify/give new appearance [*interpolent*] with cosmetics [*medicamine*] (Roberts 2007, 173, translation modified).

What is striking here is how *medicamine* which is translated as drug and cosmetics turns into a poison by which women falsify, change their faces. Instead of their faces being modeled on the image of God,

they consult a *speculo*, looking-glass, mirror that aids their *formae*, shape, beauty. In other words, there is a secret pact between feminine and the mirror, between feminine and the false face that the mirror reflects as opposed to the facial hierarchy that leads, through man, to the face or presence of God. Through the aid of *medicamine* women reveal their faces while hiding. To put it more broadly, in this facial hierarchy, woman's face occupies the liminal space between face and mask or face and facelessness, which paradoxically makes her face as seductive as of God.

This paradoxical logic, where seductiveness of women's artificial faces are structurally identical to the ultimate seductiveness of the face of God, becomes more clear when we take a look at Tertullian's tirade against shows in general and theater in particular, where he denounces the figure of actor as being "faithless for his face [*infidelis erga faciem suam*]" (ibid 98), where the "disfiguration of the human countenance [*humani oris*] is nothing less than the disfiguration of God's own image [*divinae imaginis*]" (ibid, 87). And right at the end of his polemics, Tertullian twists the plot, and makes paradoxical, even spectacular claim:

What nobler than to tread under foot the gods of the nations — to exorcise evil spirits — to perform cures — to seek divine revealings — to live to God? These are the pleasures, *these the spectacles* that befit Christian men — holy, everlasting, free. *Count of these as your circus games . . .* If the literature of the stage delight you, we have literature in abundance of our own — plenty of verses, sentences, songs, proverbs; and these not fabulous, but true; not tricks of art, but plain realities. Would you have also fightings and wrestlings? Well, of these there is no lacking, and they are not of slight account. Behold unchastity overcome by chastity, perfidy slain by faithfulness, cruelty stricken by compassion, impudence thrown into the shade by modesty: these are the contests we have among us, and in these we win our crowns. Would you have something of blood too? You have Christ's (ibid 91, emphasis mine).

In this passage Tertullian calls for overcoming of pleasure by holy pleasure, overcoming of spectacles by everlasting spectacles. Here, Tertullian should have added — because everything we read on the faces of God and Woman logically suggests this — that seductiveness of the face of woman should be overcome by the holy seductiveness of the face of God. What this tells us again is that the face of a woman is either conceived as that of Beasts or Gods, but not of brothers in their transparency. The face of a woman here is conceptualized as infinite, as that of God, and precisely this is the reason why they are conceptually identical, but in terms of values, they are differently judged. And precisely here we should read what “latter-day Tertullian” (Diamond 2003, 209) Jean Baudrillard has to say on woman, make-up, God and seduction, and this will provide us a broader context in which we can locate what we read throughout this section:

[T]he woman with *makeup*, who is absent to herself, an absence of a focussed look, the absence of a face - how can one not be swallowed up in it? . . . The beautiful woman absorbed by the cares that her beauty demands is immediately infectious because, in her narcissistic excess, *she is removed from her self, and because all that is removed from the self is plunged into secrecy and absorbs its surroundings* (Baudrillard 1991 77, emphasis mine).

Here the face and makeup are mutually exclusive, makeup implies the absence of face, it is a pure appearance without depth. It is what Tertullian called in relation to the face of woman - *interpōlo*, which according to the Latin dictionary means “*to give a new form . . . or appearance to any thing; to polish, furbish, or dress up; to spoil, corrupt, falsify; to vary, change*” (Charlton, Charles 1879, emphasis in original). When Baudrillard writes that woman is removed from the *self*, what this means in the context of Tertullian’s Christian theology is that woman is removed from the *image of God*; she is not simply faithless to the image of God and therefore her face as actors are who put masks on their faces, but that she is essentially marked by this facial difference, by sexual difference that makes her face essentially seductive. As we saw with Aquinas, men are *more* the image of God than woman and in Tertullian’s

discourse, this difference is consolidated in his description of faces of women. This “narcissistic excess” that Baudrillard mentions is the *speculo*, the mirror that Tertullian writes about. And the mirrors set against each other, pure appearances without face as the ultimate signified, is precisely their infinite self-absorption without a telos, without an orientation towards the truth.

Right before the passage that we read from Baudrillard he writes of the fascination of esotericism, of something that reveals by hiding, and right after he mentions “a woman or strip-tease artist” (ibid) as an example, he provides another, perhaps ultimate example of this structure of seduction which is, “to be sure, God” (ibid). Thus, and this is my central claim in this section, the face of man anchors his confidence, vis a vis the face of woman, in the face of Jesus who, at the same time, is the face of man. And the face of Jesus himself is the face of God who never shows his face, who reveals it only partly, “through the glass darkly”, as Paul puts it. Thus, the ultimate face, the face of God, from which springs the confidence of man only exists in absence, only exists as a promise, as a partial object like that of a face of a seductive woman, whose acquires her seductiveness by means of the appearances, by means of deferring without an end. Therefore, what this theological discourse symptomatically suggests is that the face of a woman is itself a reminder of a traumatic *possibility* that the face of God, with his seductions, with his deferrals and avatars, might never even exist. And the reason what allows Tertullian to raise the spectacle against the spectacle is precisely his faith in the promise. Not faith in truth, but the faith in the promise of truth, of face-to-face encounter with God and because the promise is a promise and not the truth itself, it leaves the room for doubt, for fear that the simulacra might be the only truth there is, which in this discourse, is the ontological fate of woman. Here I stop and end this section with Tertullian’s own exclamation, “quanta perversitas!”

## Conclusion

In this chapter we travelled from Plato to Tertullian, from Greek philosophy to Christian theology where I showed how the facial paradigm privileges masculine faces as the only ones fit for the political or religious communities, only ones fit for brotherhoods. Fraternal face stabilizes itself against the faces of female figures, sovereign face is set against bestial face, opposition that underpins the basic politico-philosophical conceptuality of Western thought on friendship, on living together, on politics, etc. As we saw, Platonic but also Aristotelian political thought is organized with the facial paradigm, which conceives face and face-to-faceness of brothers as the precondition for philosophy but also for equality. With the analysis of Tertullian we have also seen that these facial oppositions that drive the Western facial paradigm, when pushed to the extreme deconstruct themselves and are inherently unstable. In this chapter I provided a more broad contextualization of the themes and concepts that we mapped in the exemplary 2010 French politico-metaphysical exaltation of face. I traced them back to their Greek and Christian elements, to a certain “Platonism” that broadly unites two and the Western politico-philosophical thought in general. In the end, I showed that the concept of equality and reciprocity is modeled on the example of brothers, on their uncovered faces that reflect each other; it is a model of fraternal equality, of *fraternité* that eschews the darkness or its identical opposite, seductive luminosity of feminine face.

# Conclusion

Throughout this study I showed how within the context of canonical Western politico-philosophical thought face is not only thought but also conceptualized as a politically highly relevant phenomenon. In the preceding chapters I demonstrated that the dominant Western politico-philosophical thought carries with it the *facial paradigm*. The latter, on the one hand, privileges face as the locus of individuality, soul or authenticity in general and on the other hand, it determines the model-face through androcentric, ethnocentric and anthropocentric assumptions. Furthermore, I showed that this facial paradigm is inherently unstable and by means of binarization it ceaselessly tries to secure its own coherence, that rests on the relative or absolute exclusions of what it deems to be false or non-faces.

The findings of this study opens up an new angle from which we can better understand not only the 2010 French Law, canonical Western philosophy, its political and juridical thought, binary oppositions between the human and non-human, masculine and feminine, etc. but also it allows us to think, in the conditions of pandemics, the general Western reluctance and distrust to face-masks. Moreover, this study might as well pave way to further studies of political anxieties that the spread of “deep-fake” face-simulating technologies trigger, which is often framed as a threat to democracy itself. As if, and this was part of my argument, democracy has never been more threatened than when the facial paradigm becomes inoperative. As if, democracy has always been about the certainty and authenticity of face-to-face encounters.

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