

Between Heteronomy and Autonomy. The Presage of Intention

ELISA GRIMI

What is right and what is wrong? What is good and what is bad? The history of philosophy has been studied with such questions from the first research for the definition of *arché* up to now; such questions throb in the human soul since birth. After all the problem of good is philosophy's problem. Aristotle is convinced that moral life implies the capacity of man to recognize and apply certain criteria of behavior intrinsic to his very nature. Curiously he mentions the fact that to "be just" it is not sufficient to do "what is just", in fact it is possible to do this also for extrinsic reasons, for example because we are obliged, by some law or opportunity. The just man instead does "what is just", "on the basis of a choice, and having as end the very actions done", and therefore he acts according to the autonomy that is proper to him¹.

In this short essay the main issue is the concept of autonomy in relation to heteronomy in morality: we will analyse the problem of the subject's will referred to acting. I will underline how in intention the antithesis between autonomy and heteronomy disappears, almost as a property of an *actus essendi*.

1. Heteronomy and autonomy. Concept definition.

The concept of autonomy, like its opposite *heteronomy*, was explicitly introduced in the history of philosophy by Immanuel Kant. For Kant, take as reference the *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, the principle of human autonomy resides in will, i.e. in its "being law to itself", which means in its independence from any other external motive². Kant considers heteronomous any other principle that excludes that will should originate actions from a

¹ Aristotele, *Nicomachean Ethics*, VI, 1144, 1, 14-22.

² Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, section II, English translation by J.W. Ellington, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, section II, 3rd ed., Indianapolis: Ind. Hackett, 1993.

self-made law, and therefore makes will depend on external motives³. The autonomy of will expressing freedom was also sustained centuries before by Thomas Aquinas:

"[...] Whoever acts of himself (*ex seipso*) acts freely, but one who is moved by another does not act freely. Therefore, one who avoids evils, not because they are evils, but because of God's commandment, is not free. But one who avoids evils because they are evils is free"⁴.

The free subject, for Aquinas, may therefore be obliged by moral law only if he himself recognizes objectively to be obliged by himself. The difference of the Thomist perspective compared to the Kantian one is that moral law given to man has meaning not in force of its autonomy, and therefore self support, but in relation to the agent's knowledge of what he is doing and his capacity to act or not. In such perspective the autonomy of man witnesses the fact that he is created in the likeness of God⁵.

In the *Grundlegung* Kant states that "freedom and self legislation of the will are both autonomy"⁶. As these concepts are reciprocal they cannot be used one to explain the other, nor can they be (used as) substantial fundament. In the Kantian perspective law and moral freedom are taken as starting points, depending respectively on whether the subject is considered as member of the noumenal world, or belonging to the tangible one and – at the same time – to the intelligible one. From the epistemological point of view though it is curious to observe that moral law is necessary to be able to achieve a critic of freedom. In the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* Kant names as specific autonomy of the faculty of judgement the *heautonomy* meaning that such faculty does not give to nature a determining law, but gives to itself a reflective criterion to interpret nature itself.

If on one hand Max Scheler and Nicolai Hartmann relativize the Kantian concept of autonomy because secondary to the concept of value, which means of the person, on the other hand the position of Maurice Blondel

³ For the definition of autonomy and heteronomy see Mordacci & Pagani (2006) and Moschetti & Pagani (2006).

⁴ Aquinas, *Super II ad Corinthios*, q. III, l. 3, n. 112; translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Benziger Bros Edition, 1947.

⁵ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, Ia, IIae, prologus.

⁶ Kant, *Grundlegung...*, section II, 52.

describing autonomy and heteronomy as reciprocally subordinated becomes relevant. The normative authority results from the Blondelian perspective not extrinsic but constitutive of the moral subject according to the form of objective interiority. Of the same opinion is also Tadeusz Styczen, for whom the primacy of autonomy is reinterpreted in terms of the rational right to question oneself on duty's reason.

Finally we should mention the analysis by Martin Rhonheimer: in his text *Legge naturale e ragione pratica* he elaborates three different meanings of "autonomy": autonomy in a "personal" sense, in a "functional" sense and in a "constitutive" sense. We wish just to mention the recent studies conducted between philosophy and theology on the concept of autonomy, "eternal law" and "natural law" (see for example Alfons Auer, Franz Böckle, Karl Wilhelm Merks).

From a comprehensive view we may already sense how the binomial notion autonomy-heteronomy is crucial not only for an anthropological conception. In fact we have seen that from the evaluation of the autonomy of will derives a conception of the human being that depends from an heteronomous world, or is instead self-originated and in this case would exclude an heteronomous perspective. It is interesting to understand the correlation of autonomy and heteronomy to focus on the concept of "intention" to which the Irish author G.E.M. Anscombe dedicated a complex and elaborated essay published in 1957. Before going through some of this work to understand how autonomy and heteronomy are entwined together, along with Blondel's perspective, we consider this the right time to analyze in detail the concept of intention with reference to the different concept of "intentionality".

2. Intention and intentionality⁷.

2.1 Intentionality.

The issue of intention differs deeply from the issue of intentionality and is often mixed up with it. In the history of culture the terms intentionality and intention are continuously mixed, while on the other hand the term intention represents a *mental state* (state of mind) and allows to explain the act, intentionality is a *property of the mind*, a feature of mental states that is not necessarily manifested in an act.

⁷ This paragraph is an extract from my Grimi (2012), p. 119-129, with some small changes and additions.

As Eddy Carli says⁸, the topic of intentionality has taken shape starting from the fundamental problem of the nature of thought and it has been developed and set at the centre of philosophical argumentation in the XX century in the Husserlian school. With Franz Brentano the concept of intentionality was considered with great attention and regarded as a psychic phenomenon of an immanent object⁹. What defines intentionality is not the intended thing but the manner it is intended: in its representation in fact the thing is simply present to the conscience, in judgement it is asserted as true or false, while emotionally it is either loved or hated. There are then different ways in the intentional life where the same object, whether real or not, presents itself to the conscience, though remaining the same object. Such perspective was taken up again by Edmund Husserl who defined intentionality like the proper way in the relation between subject and object, "the own peculiarity of mental processes *to be consciousness of something*"¹⁰. Then the problem is not anymore that of the being of a thing but of its meaning, or more so of giving a meaning that from time to time is configured in the conscience.

In analytical philosophy the notion of intentionality of Brentanian origin was then introduced by Roderick Milton Chisholm, who, like Brentano, held intentionality ontologically irreducible to physical reality. Chisholm's purpose was to resolve problems set forward by intentionality through the instruments of the logico-linguistic analysis elaborated by Frege and Russell. He sustains that psychic phenomena may not be described without resorting to intentional enunciations, identified by a logico-linguistic type of criteria. Jaakko Hintikka, who criticized the directionality of intentional acts, took up again the intentionality issue reduced an intensional property, i.e. intended as the capacity of prospecting at the same time different sets of possible states. In the scenario of analytical philosophy there has been a strong tendency to consider as the only correct methods of research the ones pertaining to natural science. It is therefore possible to understand the negative reaction to Chisholm's statement on the reality of intentional states and the following

⁸ Geach (2004): "If we think that mental contents are all objects of our conscience, then we think that our comprehension, for example, of the word *red* will be nothing other than our contemplation of the mental image of *redness*, with which we confront the things we see, if they are red. Wittgenstein questioned the need to have such a mental image before we may understand the instruction *imagine a red spot*"; See. L. Wittgenstein (1958).

⁹ Brentano (1874).

¹⁰ Husserl (1983), I, § 84, p. 200.

numerous attempts of a "naturalization" of intentionality, which means that entirely physical systems may show intentional states. So sustain the eliminationists, who deny the existence of intentional states and affirm vigorously the validity of neurosciences as the instrument to evidence the total unreliability on the scientific level of intentional states such as for example faith or desire: only the neurobiological properties of our bodies exist and for this reason it does not make sense to identify cerebral states with intentional ones, nor necessary to admit the very existence of mental phenomena. To sustain this point of view we must mention Willard Van Orman Quine who wrote on "the indispensability of intentional idioms and the importance of an autonomous science of intention"¹¹. Daniel Clement Dennett recalled the Quinean position of the instrumentalistic-functionalistic type: for him what is described in intentional language does not describe any real phenomenon. That some behaviors be explained through an intentional vocabulary, does not bring us necessarily to assume that in the mind there are certain entities corresponding to beliefs and wishes¹². But then what is the use of such description of behavior if it does not correspond to anything real? For which reason Dennett went further on to a view of "moderate realism", whereby intentional assertions describe real models. In the tentative to neutralize intentionality, Fred Dretske e Jerry Fodor present a realistic tendency, according to which intentional states, for the fact that they have a proper causal power, are real, like physical entities.

Furthermore there has been the strong tendency to reduce intentional phenomena to the natural science ontology, but Marco Buzzoni¹³ underlines also the presence of some opinions that press on one hand to recover the Brentanian definition of intentionality and on the other hand to abandon the naturalistic dogma in its most radical version. An example of this is John R. Searle's position, who in 1983 with *Intentionality* develops the concept of intentionality in his theory of linguistic acts, arriving to describe it as the property of some mental states. In fact a "direction of adaption" from the world to the mind or vice-versa is proper of intentional acts. Furthermore the relation intentionality-conscience sustained by Searle is interesting. He holds

¹¹ Quine (1960), p. 221.

¹² Dennett (1987); Dennett (1978).

¹³ Buzzoni (2006), p. 5745.

– despite Dennett and Dretske –, together with Colin McGinn, that intentionality depends from conscience and not the contrary. In addition to Searle, we find also Hilary Putnam and John Haldane taking sides against naturalism and supporting the impossibility to naturalize intentionality. Haldane in *Naturalism and Intentionality* underlines how naturalism be logically incapable of explaining the emergence of intentional phenomena. Critical note: Let's observe after this brief overview, how the problem of autonomy in respect to heteronomy be equivalent to that between conscience and intentionality. The binomial notion considered for the first time explicitly by Kant, as outlined previously, poses the question of the philosophical *primum* and therefore of where philosophy is grounded – if it is at all grounded. Leaving aside hermeneutical perspectives on such matter, we will focus on the concepts of intentionality and intention, showing how the Blondelian position be finally the most remarkable for the very fact that autonomy and heteronomy build each other reciprocally in the life of the subject.

2.2 Correlation between intentionality and intention.

The study of intentionality has a central role in philosophy of mind and in studies on conscience, and dates back to medieval philosophy where the term *intentio*, with its different accepted meanings of tension towards a goal with a voluntary character, was introduced. The notions of intentionality and intention, though different in meaning, are in any case correlated.

In medieval times the term *intentio* does not seem to be a technical notion on which authors feel obliged to define their position, it is not assumed ambiguously, even though it does not have an univocal meaning. As we find in the *Etymologiae* and in the *Libri Differentiarum* of Isidore of Sevilla¹⁴, the versatility of this notion was not regarded as the origin of a problem. Alessandra Saccon in her essay on the topic of *intentio*-intentionality from the survey of medieval philosophy, presents two nuances proper to the term *intention* considered during the scholastic philosophy of the XIII century. The term intention in its more general meaning comes from classic Latin and has its proper sense of extension, of the act of tending (*intentio corporis*) and also of intensity (*intentio vocis*). Furthermore in its meaning dynamism, movement, it finds two applications in the anthropological field: will and

¹⁴ Hamesse & Portalupi (1992), p. 68; Saccon (2000), p. 71-91.

knowledge. With Augustine we catch a glimpse of a second more philosophical nuance: he speaks in fact of *intentio animi* with reference to the act of seeing. In this perspective the term *intentio* is used to indicate attention especially as an expression of spiritual dynamism¹⁵. You can glimpse at the search of God as object towards which tends the human spirit:

"To generate this vision it is not enough that the sense of sight be informed by the object, but also the *intentio* of the subject who observes is necessary. The *intentio animi* is therefore the act of keeping the object in the sense of sight. It is not the object nor the sense, nor the plain seeing; it is where the act of the sensation resides and it is purely spiritual: it has the role of making the knowledge faculty refer to the object"¹⁶.

Considering then the term *intentio* in its strictly philosophical sense, there are three applicable contexts: ethics, epistemology and logic. In an ethical context *intentio* means the finality of voluntary acts and the ultimate aim of existence. In a gnoseological context, Latin translators resort to the word *intentio* to indicate two Arab terms: *ma'qûl*, used by Alfarabi in the comment on the *De interpretatione* of Aristotle to translate the Greek term *noema* and the term *ma'nâ*, used by Avicenna the correct translation of which would be *conceptus*. The term *ma'qûl* corresponds to the psychological phenomenon described in the double relation with extramental and intramental reality, while the term *ma'nâ*, that in turn means *ma'qûl*, corresponds to sense, sensible representation, particular idea not felt by external senses but by the internal ones of the estimative faculty¹⁷, intelligible form, simple concept, pure intellectual representation. Averroè further used differently the term *ma'nâ* with a more complex translation. The term in fact has multiple meanings: sense, formal consideration, determination, point of view, reason on which a thesis or doctrine, motive, cause, argument, concept, theme, specific form,

¹⁵ Saccon (2000), p. 73.

¹⁶ Saccon (2000), p. 74. [Translation mine].

¹⁷ Avicenna, *Liber de Anima seu Sextum Naturalium*, p. IV, c. I, 8, 2-3: "usus autem est ut id quod apprehendit sensus, vocetur forma, et quod apprehendit aestimatio vocetur intentio" [it is customary to call *forma* what is known by the senses and *intentio* what is known by the critical faculty]. The critical faculty derives from the capacity of formulating judgements of convenience referred to the nature of the perceived objects. Through critical faculty also animals are able to elaborate some types of basic inferences; so it will be possible for the lamb to recognize the wolf as an enemy, or for the sheep to see the lamb as a kin to milk. To such faculty then competes to deduct from sensory data useful information for survival both for the individual and for the species to which it belongs.

intelligence of an individual being is grounded; and again from the gnoseological point of view indicates the object studied by a faculty each time at a higher level. Saccon¹⁸ observes further that the terms *ma'qûl* e *ma'nâ* correspond – as expressed in the *Meno* of Plato – to that to which we tend when we think or speak of something, that to which the thought tends¹⁹ and therefore the term *intentio* is not primarily property of mental states to be directed to something or relative to something, but rather the content of a mental state or of a cognitive act. Finally the term *intentio* is used also in the field of logic, in the individualization of the relation between *res* and intellect. Here it is appropriate to refer to the famous medieval distinction between first and second intentions that finds its origin first in Porphyrius and later in Boethius. With Avicenna the *intentiones primae* are assimilated to things while the *intentiones secundae* are the *rationes*, the logic universals, through which thought orders beings in the hierarchy of genus and species. Avicenna himself in fact defined real sciences as the field of first intentions because of the very fact that they consider real things, while logic is the field of second intentions because they have to do with cognitive processes.

Furthermore during the medieval period we find a significant research on the notion of *intentio* in the comment to the *De anima* by Albert Magnus. His is an Aristotileism revisited in a platonic manner, that takes into account the Arab commentators. To understand the way Albert Magnus uses the notion of *intentio*, it is useful to remember the distinction he traced precisely found in the comment to the *De anima*, between form and *intentio*: «Form in fact is properly that which informing grants being in act to matter and to the compound of matter and form. *Intentio* instead we call that for which a thing is signified individually or universally, depending on the different grades of abstraction; and this does not confer being to something nor meaning, when it is in this, nor to intellect, when it is in that, but functions as sign and knowledge of the thing. And therefore *intentio* is not a part of the thing like form, but rather it is the *species* of the whole knowledge of the thing; and then *intentio*, because it is abstracted from the whole and it is the significance of

¹⁸ Saccon (2000), pp. 76-77. [Translation mine].

¹⁹ The interpretation of *intentio* with a reference to the object will be a reflection developed in neo-Scholasticism by authors like Maréchal e Maritain.

the whole, it is predicated of the thing»²⁰. The *intentio* does not belong simply to the critical function and to intellect, as sustained by Avicenna, but the concern of an *intentio* is attributed to each level of knowledge. Albert Magnus, in fact gives importance to distinguishing the constitutive principle of the being of the thing from the cognitive one of the same thing²¹. Each act of learning is explained as reception of a known form, not according to the being of such object but according to its *intentio* and species, through which we obtain a sensible or intellectual knowledge of the object learned. We may therefore speak of *intentio* of sensible knowledge, present in particular in sight and hearing and in intellectual knowledge. Interesting is the latter of which Saccon underlines three specific cases. In the first case we find that intellect coincides with the same *intentio* by which it recognizes itself; in this case *intentio* acquires a different meaning: it is not only what is known inasmuch as known, but the act of understanding seizes itself. There is then a second case in which the *intentio* indicates the intellect's formal and forming activity, rather than the content of its thinking activity, and finally a third case in which *intentio* refers to the rational soul's activity for which like the eye does not receive the material form but its *intentio*, in a similar way we may intend the relation between the soul and all that exists.

Finally we will quote from the pass taken from the *Summa contra Gentiles* by Thomas:

"Now, I mean by the *intention understood* what the intellect conceives in itself of the thing understood. To be sure, in us this is neither the thing which is understood nor is it the very substance of the intellect. But it is a certain likeness of the thing understood conceived in the intellect, and which the exterior words signify. So, the intention itself is named the *interior word* which is signified by the exterior word. Indeed, that the intention aforesaid is not within us the thing understood is clear from this: It is one thing to understand a thing, and another to understand the intention itself, yet the intellect does so when it reflects on its own work; accordingly, some sciences are about things, and others are about intentions understood. Now, that the intention understood is not the very intellect within us is clear from this: The act of being of the intention understood consists in its very being

²⁰ Alberto Magno, *De anima*, ed. C. Stroick, ed. Co. 7/1, Münster, i. W., Aschendorff 1968, l. II, tr. 3, c. 4, 102, 29-30: "Forma enim proprie est, quae informando dat esse actu materiae et composito ex materia et forma. Intentio autem vocatur id per quod significatur res individualiter vel universaliter secundum diversos gradus abstractionis; et haec non dat esse alicui nec sensui, quando est in ipso, nec etiam intellectui, quando est in illo, sed signum facit de re et notitiam. Et ideo intentio non est pars rei sicut forma, sed potius est species totius notitiae re; et ideo intentio, quia abstrahitur de toto et est significatio totius, de re predicatur".

²¹ Saccon (2000), p. 83.

understood; the being of our intellect does not so consist; its being is not its act of understanding"²².

In the quaestio 21 of the *De Veritate* between the objections of article 3 concerning the reflection if good according to reason precedes real, we read the following objection: "Good has the character of an end. But the end is first in intention. Therefore the intention of good is prior to that of the true"²³. Thomas replying underlines how here the term "intention" is used ambiguously, in fact:

"[...] It should nevertheless be noted that when the end is called prior in intention, intention is taken as the act of the mind which is to intend. But when we compare the intention of good with that of the true, intention is taken as the essential character which is signified by a definition. Hence the term is used equivocally in the two contexts"²⁴.

In referring to the term intention in this context, Thomas cannot avoid falling back in the same distinction he makes in observing the relation good-true and of their order. In a Thomist view in fact if we think of the relation between true and good according to the order of perfections, true comes before good by reason, as true is perfective of something according to the character of species, while good not only according to the character of the species but also according to the being it has in reality; in this sense the notion of good implies more things than that of true. We will so obtain the following order of transcendentals considered in themselves: one, true, good. If instead we

²² Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentilis*, IV, 11: "Dico autem *intentionem intellectam* id quod intellectus in seipso concipit de re intellecta. Quae quidem in nobis neque est ipsa res quae intelligitur; neque est ipsa substantia intellectus; sed est quaedam similitudo concepta in intellectu de re intellecta, quam voces exteriores significant; unde et ipsa intentio *verbum interius* nominatur, quod est exteriori verbo significatum. Et quidem quod praedicta intentio non sit in nobis res intellecta, inde apparet quod aliud est intelligere rem, et aliud est intelligere ipsam intentionem intellectam, quod intellectus facit dum super suum opus reflectitur: unde et aliae scientiae sunt de rebus, et aliae de intentionibus intellectis. Quod autem intentio intellecta non sit ipse intellectus in nobis, ex hoc patet quod esse intentionis intellectae in ipso intelligi consistit: non autem esse intellectus nostri, cuius esse non est suum intelligere", translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Benziger Bros Edition, 1947.

²³ Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones Disputatae De Veritate*, q. 21, a. 3: "Praeterea, bonum habet rationem finis; finis autem est primum in intentione; ergo intentio boni est prior intentione ver", translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province, Benziger Bros Edition, 1947.

²⁴ Ivi: "[Et tamen sciendum quod] cum dicitur quod finis est prior in intentione, intentio sumitur pro actu mentis qui est intendere; cum autem comparamus intentionem boni et veri, intentio sumitur pro ratione quam significat definitio, unde aequivoce accipitur utrobique".

consider the binomial true-good from the point of view of the order of perfectables with Thomas good precedes true. This for two reasons: 1) because the perfection of good extends to more realities than the perfection of truth (and here as follows you will find that "all things tend to good but not all know the truth"), and 2) and also those things that for their very nature are brought to perfection by true and good, are in the first place brought to perfection by good and then by truth: in fact knowledge comes after being; for which reason inasmuch as they are part of being they are brought to perfection by good, inasmuch as they know something they are brought to perfection by truth.

Of good we find consistency in a practical field from which the validity of the perspective of a theory of action as that of Anscombe who in the first place takes into exam the subject in action without neglecting its finality. We consider then action by its teleological character, and therefore starting from the hypothesis of a supremacy of the end with respect to that of intention, with Thomas it seems to consist almost of a "scam", of a false move, from the moment that in the same intention there is an intrinsic finality, i.e. the intention in this case would be considered as the "tending to something". It is significant in any case that in the Thomist text we find a definition of intention including that teleological character that will be the centre of the Anscombian argumentation.

3. The intention in the end.

I have chosen to report in detail an analysis regarding what we consider as intentionality and intention, because it seems to me that in such relation we may find again this problem that is hidden between the binomial autonomy-heteronomy and its solution, if only outlined, a first step of the research. Anscombe in the essay *Intention*, of which I will refer different parts in this paragraph, distinguishes between the expression of intention for the future, the intentional action and the intention in acting. The three expressions in fact may contain the intention, in any case we must be cautious because there may be exceptions: for example there may be an intentional act that is not turned towards the future, like an intentional act that does not instead satisfy an intention. Anscombe proceeds then with a close analysis on the concept of intention bound to leave a mark. As Georg H. von Wright states: "Elizabeth Anscombe's *Intention* appeared the same year as Dray's book. It made the

notion of intentionality central to subsequent discussion of the philosophy of action among analytic philosophers"²⁵.

In the first pages of *Intention* Anscombe introduces a very interesting paragraph also on the reflection we are making in this essay on the problem of autonomy. As a foreword please note that she never read very attentively Immanuel Kant, favouring other authors. The summary of paragraph 4 of *Intention* is as follows: "Are there any statements of the form *A intends X* which can be made with fair certainty? Descriptions of a man's actions often descriptions truly substitutable for *X* in *A intends X*. Reasons why we suppose a man the sole authority on his own intentions"²⁶. This passage contains all the synergy of the relation between autonomy and heteronomy: we begin to understand why it is difficult, almost impossible, to speak about one without the other. How in fact can we affirm with absolute certitude that an expression of intention be true?²⁷ If it concerns our own intentions the problem is difficult to pose, unless we give way to the Cartesian splitting of the ego. And here we observe how the role of autonomy be included in the analysis of the thinking subject. But how is it possible to say of intention of another man that it be true? If we do not want to make mistakes it will be enough to report what this person is or was doing; such criterion is of the observational kind. There are cases where we can "guess" the intention of a person simply observing what he is doing, but there may be cases when this is not possible:

"Now it can easily seem that in general the question what a man's intentions are is only authoritatively settled by him. One reason for this is that in general we are interested, not just in a man's intention *of* doing what he does, but in his intention *in* doing it, and this can very often not be seen from seeing what he does"²⁸.

Then it may occur that the act that would confirm the intention, and whereby the intention would be manifest and result comprehensible, be actually interrupted and remain unaccomplished leaving intention to interiority. This

²⁵ Von Wright (1990).

²⁶ Anscombe (1957).

²⁷ Grimi (2012), p. 146. The fourth chapter is entirely dedicated to *Intention*: I reported there a detailed analysis, paragraph after paragraph, of this essay.

²⁸ Anscombe (1957), § 4.

would induce us to think that if we wish to understand in what intention consists we must explore the contents of the mind. This makes us think that if we wish to understand in what intention consists its necessary to investigate the contents of the mind and only in the second place look at what a person actually does physically. Anscombe overturns the procedure and as first step in her research privileges precisely this last factor asking herself in the following paragraph the question "why" of a subject's intentional action. The individual is known through his actions. Anscombe gives a definition of intentional action starting from the question "why". Hers in fact is a philosophy of action that takes as its starting point the very action, the motion of the ego. Strong of a gnoseological base in any case she puts first of all her attention on understanding what be intention, researching all its different nuances. In *Intention* she affirms on intentional actions: "They are those actions to which we apply a certain meaning of the word *Why?*; the sense is naturally, that in which the answer, if positive, gives a reason to act".²⁹

The subject in acting may have an intention. Here is the concept of autonomy. The other's intention may be searched for until the end of time in the other's mind, without though ever reaching it, and, even worse, without ever knowing it. We may get near examining the action, but also in this case something might escape. Anyway if we expect an answer to the question so that the subject perform that action, the intention will finally be revealed. And here is the importance of heteronomy, that is not to be looked into at a second instance, but is the *conditio sine qua non* intention takes shape. The fact that action follows intention, but may vary means that it is conditioned also by external elements. For example my end is to arrive in a certain place. Therefore I intend to follow a certain road because I know it is the quickest. I have remained though for a long time abroad and on my return, not knowing that on that road there are works ahead, actually my intention in the action that has as an end to reach a place X, varies: I must in fact change route to reach the appointed goal. Heteronomy in this sense is totally in charge of the situation.

We must also underline that there may be a mistake in the intention, so there may be one in an action. The mistake yet again proves the synergy between autonomy and heteronomy, cancelling any primacy of one on the other.

²⁹ Ivi, § 5.

We must add further that the intention of a subject can change during the action he is accomplishing and you might ask if it is the same intention to change, or if there are more intentions, considering in fact an action that has not yet reached its goal. We must also add further: we will ask if the goal of the action be only one or if there be multiple goals, if the goal is defined at the very moment or if there is a general one. From these comments we understand how autonomy and heteronomy become one in the subject: the intention is perfective of good in a certain way, in fact it exhausted itself in the action.

4. The presage of intention.

As a conclusion we may then affirm that behind what we can call – referring to the thinking subject – “presage of intention” – is hidden, in that very constitutive epistemological unity, the synergy between autonomy and heteronomy.

In the presage of intention is guarded the reciprocal necessity of autonomy and heteronomy. Both are necessary and sufficient condition one for the other. Anyway in the presage of intention we understand that there is maybe something prior to autonomy and heteronomy, which means – as we would call it with Aristotle – the primacy of the act, that, to be precise, is the primacy of being. But the paradox of the synergy between autonomy and heteronomy, whose dynamics that are building up together and on which we are to reflect, moves in a space of freedom, foreseeable in what I call the *presage of intention*. Something is starting there which makes the subject move, build his thought, elaborate concepts, create, make mistakes, despair, feel joy or hope.

Therefore the conclusion of *Intention* in which Anscombe recalls the page of St. Peter, for which “he could have done what he did not intend to do, without changing his mind, and anyhow do it intentionally”, is not surprising. History’s great mystery. In human fallibility it is clear how not autonomy, nor heteronomy may constitute the resolute epistemological perspective, nor their synergy: there is an extra space, that of true intention or encounter with the divine.

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