

“Nonsynthetic synthesis”.

Appearance, Caducity and Memory in Gianni Carchia

Tamara Tagliacozzo*

Abstract. Carchia posits the expression “nonsynthetic synthesis” at the foundation of his attempt to return Being to the logic of the event, while the relationship between the logic of the event and appearance—as the place of ineffectuality, of purposeless finality, of pure form and suspension of knowledge—is for him fundamental for the revelation of truth. Aesthetic temporality, as the temporality of the soul absorbed in the contemplation of the nexus of truth and beauty, is temporality *tout court*, since the space of memory, the salvation of appearance, and the dimension of memory are one and the same. The interpretation of the philosophy of Kant, Benjamin, and Bergson is deeply rooted in Carchia’s thought, where—as in his last work, the essay collection *L’amore del pensiero* (Macerata, 2000)—the vision of the almost “musical” presence of transcendence in the heart of immanence is central. The time of memory, where appearance is saved in temporalization, is “messianic time – time of music, of the linguistic idea or of the involuntary image” (G. Carchia, *Name and Image. An Essay on Walter Benjamin*, Seagull Books, 2025).

Keywords: Appearance, Transience, Memory, Gianni Carchia, Walter Benjamin, Immanuel Kant, Henri Bergson.

Riassunto. Carchia pone l’espressione “sintesi non sintetica” a fondamento del suo tentativo di riconsegnare l’essere alla logica dell’evento, mentre il rapporto tra logica dell’evento ed apparenza, come luogo dell’ineffettualità, della finalità senza scopo, della pura forma e della sospensione della conoscenza, è per lui fondamentale per il darsi della verità. La temporalità estetica come temporalità dell’anima assorta nella contemplazione del nesso di verità e bellezza è la temporalità *tout court* come spazio del ricordo, salvataggio dell’apparenza e dimensione del ricordo fanno tutt’uno. L’interpretazione della filosofia di Kant, di Benjamin, di Bergson, si inserisce nel nucleo profondo del pensiero di Carchia, in cui – ne è testimonianza la raccolta di saggi *L’amore del pensiero* (2000), l’ultima sua opera – è centrale la visione della presenza quasi “musicale” della trascendenza nel cuore dell’immanenza. Il tempo del ricordo, dove l’apparenza è salvata nella temporalizzazione, è «il tempo messianico – tempo della musica, dell’idea linguistica o dell’immagine involontaria» (G. Carchia, *Nome e immagine*, 2000, p. 120).

Parole chiave: Apparenza, Caducità, Ricordo, Gianni Carchia, Walter Benjamin, Immanuel Kant, Henri Bergson.

1. Appearance

In the essay “Elogio dell’apparenza”, his contribution to the 1988 volume *Il pensiero debole*, in reference to the “‘nonsynthetic synthesis’ of Kant’s theory of judgment,” (Carchia 1988, p. 87; Engl. 2012, p. 106) Gianna Carchia attempts to “see whether we can attribute a totally different meaning to the being of the copula, which in Hegel’s theory of predicative judgment identifies as a mere moment of an *Aufheben*” (ivi, p. 86; Engl., p. 105):

«In Kant the reflection working in judgment aims at unhinging the predicative synthesis; it is, ultimately, contemplation, and as such a refusal to attribute to the *Erscheinen* it isolates the character of a *Wirklichkeit* which would positively conclude the entire (and nihilistically affected) movement of the Hegelian reflective mediation. In the theory of reflective judgment Kant has definitively stated the artificial character [. . .] of

* Professor of Moral Philosophy, Roma Tre University. Address: Department of Philosophy, Via Ostiense 224-238, 00146 Rome, Italy, e-mail <tamara.tagliacozzo@uniroma3.it>.

the predicative relation. In a way, this had been announced in the Transcendental Analytic, which had led moreover to recognizing as radical foundation of synthetic a priori judgments the nomad faculty of the imagination» (Carchia, 1988, p. 85; Engl., p. 104).

According to the philosopher from Turin, “It is on the tracks of this search for an antipredicative meaning of the being of the copula that a path is disclosed within twentieth-century thought toward a renewed notion of ontology (no longer understood objectivistically in a pre-Kantian sense”:¹

«The rebirth of ontology is tightly connected to the surfacing of a nonjudgmental way of thinking which is *logically weak*. To re-consign Being to the logic of the event by withdrawing it from the logic of predication means precisely to think *mediation as mediation*, beginning in other words from mediation itself and not from the elements that make it up as the point of resolution, as *Aufhebung*. It is a question about the determination of a "nonsynthetic" character of the being of predication, an anti-predicative mediation whose model can perhaps be furnished still by the Kantian theory of reflective judgment, where the judgment is given solely in the suspension of predication, as the locus of nonsynthesis: the untrammelled contemplation of appearances» (ivi, pp. 89-90; Engl., p. 108).

In his 1982 essay, “Le rovine della rappresentazione. Lettura della “Critica del Giudizio” [The Ruins of Representation. A Reading of the *Critique of Judgment*], Carchia discusses the free imagination, which operates in the Kantian judgment of taste in accord with the intellect as a faculty of rules but without a concept, in terms of a non-schematic but symbolic, thus nonsynthetic faculty (in that it disarticulates the synthetic character of knowledge, and in place of synthesis provides a nonsynthetic relation between imagination and intellect) capable of symbolizing morality through the idea of communicability and the ideal of beauty:

«Symbolized morality (the idea of communicability, the ideal of beauty) is not extrinsic to the beautiful but implicit in the reflexive, non-schematized structure of the accord between the representative faculties that constitute it. This reflexive structure centers precisely on the free use of the imagination. It is thus perhaps not unreasonable to discern in this latter faculty the super-sensible foundation, the originary nonsynthetic synthesis to which Kant alludes. This helps us to understand why, at this point in his inquiry, Kant no longer discusses the sublime. The sublime, in fact, represents a complete abandonment of the framework of the representative faculties which, through contemplation, the beautiful limits itself to suspending from their habitual exercise».²

Carchia articulates still more precisely the relation between nonsynthetic dimension and appearance by attributing to the latter, as the subjective finality of the object, without any determined goal, the capacity to lead to a higher, super-sensible reality, freeing the world from its effectuality and suspending it:

«Liberating the world from its effectuality and suspending it for a moment in the free sphere of appearance. This is the comprehensive sense of the Kantian critical-aesthetic project. Just as the free play of the representative faculties is only an ideal potentiality of the faculties themselves (a “state of feeling” rather than knowledge), in the same way, as form, the subjective finality of the object, free of any determinate purpose, is nothing but appearance. An appearance, however, that refers back to a reality higher than the one from which it has unchained itself» (Carchia 1982, p. 157).

¹ Ivi, p. 89; Engl., p. 108. See the observation just above: “An abyss separates Kant’s position, for which in this dynamic what was at stake was the discovery of temporality and therefore of finitude of the logical subject, from Hegel’s, which considers the medial constitutivity of predicative space impossible to explore (without risking falling back into the mystic of the ‘originary’”, p. 107.

² Carchia 1982a, pp. 168-169 (see also p. 161). Moreover see Carchia, 2000a and the collection of G. Carchia’ writings Carchia 2006. See the Introduction by G. Garelli (Garelli 2006), in particular. p. 16: “Again consistent with his Introduction to the Third Critique, Carchia appears to add that it is only in reflecting judgment that mediation can be considered as such, without synthesis, or rather without being sacrificed to the *Aufhebung*.”

Carchia posits the expression “nonsynthetic synthesis” at the base of his attempt to “restore being to the logic of the event,” (Carchia 1988, p. 189; Engl., p. 108) while the relation between the logic of the event³ and appearance as a site of ineffectuality, of finality without purpose, of pure form and the suspension of knowledge, is for him fundamental to the emergence of truth, in a return to the Platonism implicit in Kantian aesthetics (see Garelli 2006, p. 25).

The conception of a “nonsynthetic synthesis”⁴ is found in a youthful essay by Walter Benjamin, an author of crucial importance in Carchia’s early development as well as in the elaboration of his mature thought. In the essay “On the Program of the Coming Philosophy”⁵ (1917-1918; Benjamin 1972-1989b, pp. 157-171; Engl., pp. 100-110) Benjamin critiques Kantian philosophy, but the Kantian system is seen as the point of departure for a “coming philosophy”, an epistemology and an ethics charged with the messianic expectations typical of his generation. In Benjamin, the truth discloses itself in a “rapid image” which in the “now” of knowability reclaims the essentiality of caducity and appearance, and which is authentic and true precisely in recognizing this fact. This is the dialectical image, which is a historical conception, precisely an epistemological construction. It discloses itself in the messianic temporality that joins dream to awakening, myth to its salvation, appearance and truth, in the involuntary act, in “images” of recollection:

«The salvation of appearance and the dimension of memory are all one: here is rooted the connection between temporality and the aesthetic dimension. The appearance constitutive of the space of redemption, and the beauty whose sacrifice would sacrifice the space of truth itself, are nothing other than memory continuously rescuing them from death in the space of historical time. It is precisely this connection, between the sphere of appearance as the sphere of irremediable caducity, and the counter-movement of memory in the involuntary image, that forms the nexus that some of the theses’ most subtle passages struggle to delineate as the world of the spirit, or rather the world of the past» (Carchia, 2000b, p. 116; Engl. p. 120).

Nome e immagine. Saggio su Walter Benjamin [2000; *Name and Image. An essay on Walter Benjamin*] the source of the citation above, is the only all-encompassing work that Gianni Carchia dedicated to Benjamin, who was a constant reference point in all his philosophical reflections.

According to Carchia, the fundamental motif that emerges in all Benjamin’s thought is his conception of the asymmetrical relation between ideas and phenomena, between transcendence and immanence, between the desperate creature-nature of the world of destiny and guilt and the possibility of redemption, of “salvation” (*Rettung*) of the phenomenal in the virtual historicity of the idea—an idea originally derived from Kant, then ever more Platonic and linked to Leibniz’s monad—through its recognition as an originary phenomenon. In the phenomenon of origin, the Goethean concept of originary phenomenon, in which the phenomenon exposes its theoretical, ideal dimension, transforms and passes from the pagan dimension of nature into the Judaic setting of history, thus binding itself to the Kabbalistic conception of the salvation of fragments—in immanence—for the recomposition

³ On the appearance and logic of the event (as temporalization and contraction of the eternal in the present event), in Stoicism in particular, see Carchia 2023 (1983), pp. 14-15: “the event is the disclosure of the concrete world to the universe of signification in an infinitely suspended present [. . .]. [Stoicism] opens itself to being qualified as an aesthetic precisely in positing itself as a logic of the concrete. [. . .] This aesthetic character is also determined by the sole horizon in which it is possible to speak of temporality on the plane of a logic of the event. This plane is that of the present, understood not as one of the planes upon which the historical plane as we understand it articulates itself, but rather as the point of contraction of the eternal in the event posited as an attempt to achieve it entirely and immediately: instantaneous totality, without past or future, where the present is more properly eternity concentrated and temporalized. [. . .] Temporality is nothing but the passage from the same to the same, given the virtual presence of totality in every fragment of being.”

⁴ Carchia explicitly cites Benjamin’s expression in Carchia 1987, p. 87 (see note 22); Engl., p. 87.

⁵ See “nonsynthesis” in Benjamin 1972-1989b, p. 106.

of the shattered world of justice. This *Rettung* leads not to a negation of immanence, but rather to a “discovery of the intelligible in the very heart of sensibility” (ivi, pp. 127-128; Engl. pp. 130-131):

«In all his decisive moments, the scene of this thought situates at one pole a dimension of immanence, a field of dialectic mediations incapable of resolution, trapped in the nexus of guilt-destiny (world of myth, tragedy, bad romantic infinity, infernal modernity). At the other pole sits the heterological dimensions of that which has the capacity to flow away, to escape from this connection of immanence: the idea of the discontinuous, of verticality, of redemption (music, allegory, *Trauerspiel*, now-time). Thus, it is in the heterological moment, in what breaks the connection of immanence, that Benjamin believes we may find the dream of originary unity that precedes the polarity of the same and the other, of immanence and transcendence; a unity prefigured in the irruption of transcendence. As in Kraus, in Benjamin too the origin is the goal, but the origin is given precisely in what discards and disarticulates the false mediations of the world after original sin. It is in the breakdown of false unity that the possibility of reacquiring primeval unity opens up» (ivi, pp. 123-124; Engl. pp. 126-127).

Carchia identifies in Benjamin two fundamental, corresponding conceptions—their connection evident to the most acute critical eye—that situate the dialectic of the poles of the phenomenon and of the idea as monad, an idea which in Benjamin’s later thought will take on the form of a dialectical image. The first of these conceptions is the Judaic-Kabbalistic theological conception of language as the language of Creation and the names given in Paradise, in which language—after the Fall to become an instrument for the communication of extrinsic meanings—is still the language of knowledge. The names of knowing are in fact the sonic reflection of the divine word with which the world was created, and they are ideas. Translations and interpretations of philosophical and literary texts seek to return to this originary language (their model is the interlinear and hermeneutic version of the sacred text), and so does the critique of works of art and the philosophies that present themselves as descriptions of the world of ideas, in their effort to re-establish that symbolic, ideal value of human words and knowledge in a redemptive process of reconstruction of the “pure language” of the names and ideas of Creation. This process takes place through the recuperation of the symbolic potential of human language as name, in the recognition of originary phenomena as exhibiting an idea and as an “incomplete restoration of revelation”,⁶ and in the symbolic representations of art. Philosophy fulfills its task of representing the world of ideas and truth and their relation in rescuing the phenomenon in the idea and entrusting the idea with its role to exhibit truth, beyond the abstraction of conceptual thought and intentional knowledge. Instead, concepts must be utilized to prepare phenomena to participate in the being of ideas. Truth, as a discontinuous gathering of ideas—presented, in 1921-22, as an unquestionable unity of the system of philosophy—never offers itself up within the system itself as a collection of knowledge, but only symbolically (or rather allegorically) in the heart of caducity, beneath the veil of appearance and the beauty of art and natural phenomena, and in the moment of dissolution of this appearance in the rigidity caused by the irruption of the *expressionlessness* (*das Ausdruckslose*) into the work of art. Expressionlessness is a category of language and art; it is the “moral word” and the prohibition of the image, which blocks the life of the artwork and momentarily interrupts beauty. It is the annunciation of the unrepresentable name at the fount of any image, the “caesura” and rupture of the false totality of the work of art; the moment of the emergence of the fragment as image of the transitory, which leads to redemption:

«The reference to the ineffable dimension of the name stands [. . .] on the presumption of its inevitable distance from any representationality and thus of the hypothesis of its merely symbolic exhibition. It is not that the name is the mere absence of image, a simple *nihil negativum*. Rather, it is the seat of any image, the source from which it flows» (Carchia, 2000b, p. 77).

⁶ See Carchia, 2000b, p. 59. First draft of the Introduction to the *Origin of German Tragic Drama*, in Benjamin 1972-1989, 1, 3, p. 935.

2. Caducity

The second conception that Carchia indicates as central to Benjamin is his vision of time and history, which fully corresponds (with a transformation, in the late twenties, of the aesthetic model of history into a political model) to the redemptive vision of language. In history, through “remembrance” (*Eingedenken*), it is the task of the “materialist” historian to recuperate those images from the past that risk disappearing but which remain unconsciously present, and to “save them” from oblivion by actualizing them in the present and making them instruments of liberation for the oppressed masses. As a demystified memory of the dead and of a suffering, enslaved humanity, these images contain a utopian potential to redeem the past. This can take place only in “now-time” (*Jetztzeit*), in the “now of knowability (*Jetzt der Erkennbarkeit*)” (Benjamin 1972-1989, V, 1, p. 578; N 3, 1); that is, in a non-progressive, non-mechanical (not empty) but messianic time of truth, in which an image of the past (of that which has been, *Gewesen*) illuminates a moment in the present that finds meaning in that image and manifests, in a monadic construction, a messianic stoppage of events and thus a revolutionary *opportunity* in the struggle over the past. The materialist historian must be ready to seize this image and recognize it as a dialectical image in which transcendence bursts in and establishes itself—in a state of stillness—in the heart of immanence, as a monadic idea, a name, a musical image that corresponds to a redeemed world and a site of justice, as an idea that appears not in the field of vision, but in “listening” (Carchia 2000b, p. 127; Engl., p. 130), in the “flowing of phenomena back towards the call of their sensory root” (*ibidem*), as the immanent rhythm of “messianic nature”. For Benjamin, the representation of redemption vibrates in the human, sensible representation of happiness, the same happiness that history has of the past.

The idea as the utopia of the Other presents itself—Carchia speaks of a philosophy of the informal in this sense—not in a *Gestalt* but in an *Entstaltung des Gestalteten*, in an “imagination without images” (ivi, p. 130; Engl., p. 134) which is “the refuge of all images ([. . .][GS] IV/1, 370)” (*ibidem*):

«Benjamin’s utopia of the Other is not, therefore, negative in the sense in which this absence of images has often been misunderstood by critical theory. It is not at all devoid of contents and its utopian potential is not given only in critique, by the tension between the existent and that which the existent should be. Perhaps there has been a fear of taking literally what he is saying, because no utopia has ever been constructed out of such a paradoxical positivity. No longer as allegory, in fact, but in pure literality we should take a utopia whose form is that of not having any, whose image is to be the very place of the absence of images» (ivi, p. 131; Engl., p. 134).

Carchia explores the origins of Benjamin’s epistemology in terms of Kant and Neokantianism first in Benjamin’s composition of 1917-1918, “On the Program of the Coming Philosophy”, then in Benjamin’s search for a solution to problems emerging from that text in his dissertation on *The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism* (1919), then again later in the essay on Goethe’s *Elective Affinities* (1922), and finally in the epistemological premise (*Erkenntniskritische Vorrede*) to the *Origin of German Baroque Drama* (1925-1928). One of the principal problems that Benjamin posits in his essay on Kant, as part of a larger challenge to establish a new metaphysical experience not (only) as an *a priori* structure of nature, but in a theological dimension, is the search for that “autonomous sphere particular to knowledge in which this concept no longer characterizes in any way the relation between two metaphysical entities ([GS] II (1) 163)” (ivi, p. 24; Engl., p. 14), the knowing subject and the known object, since it is the “task of authentic knowledge to immerse itself so deeply into empirical experience as to succeed in synthesizing it, such that truth is even possible in the fragile and the ephemeral” (*ibidem*). According to Carchia, in 1917-1918 the “great motif of

the salvation of phenomena is already present at the center of the epistemological premise to the *Ursprung*, and constitutes the true motor of all Benjamin's conceptual development" (*ibidem*). In the *Program*, at the "point of indifferentiation of knowledge, as intended by that 'sphere of total neutrality in regard to the concepts of both subject and object'," (ivi, p. 25; Engl., p. 15) emerges that which, "according to the premise of the *Ursprung*, can only be called 'truth', where ideas can be located. 'Truth is an intentionless state of being, made up of ideas [Benjamin1963].' It is these latter, that is, which can achieve the goal set in the *Program* to make ideas stand as a 'systematic specification of knowledge' ([*GS*] II (1) 162)" (Carchia 2000b, p. 25; Engl., p. 16). In place of the cognitive synthesis of the relation between the subject of knowledge and a known object, there takes place a symbolic "nonsynthesis" between concepts and ideas, where concepts symbolically exhibit ideas (see Tagliacozzo 2013. See also Tagliacozzo 2018).

As Carchia sees it, Benjamin finds in romantic philosophy a solution to the problem of the system left unresolved in his *Program*, which still accepted the possibility of a system of philosophy through "the revision and continuance of the Kantian system on a path that leads philosophy to configure itself as doctrine" (Carchia 2000b, p. 34; Engl., p. 27). "The Kantian effort to grasp the absolute systematically," however, "is opposed to the example of Friedrich Schlegel who, turning the terms upside down, wants to grasp the system in an absolute manner" (ivi, pp. 35; Engl., p. 28). Benjamin is convinced that the system (which coincides with truth) cannot be grasped in an absolute manner, but only indicated symbolically. He makes explicit the problem of the system—entrusted, in his dissertation, to the intuition of the interpreter—in his essay on the *Elective Affinities* and in the premise to his book on the baroque:

«The formula 'ideal of the problem' is often used here as a substitute for the term 'system', but nothing has changed as to its content. It is typical that, in the prologue to the *Origin*, there is an entirely similar argument concerning the transcendental unity of the truth [. . .] Only an allusive, allegorical process is capable of grasping the ideal of the problem, and this finds its concretization in works of art. [. . .] This is to say that the unity of philosophy (and, we can say, also of truth) not only cannot be grasped by philosophy itself, but philosophy cannot even pose itself the question» (ivi, pp. 35-36; Engl., p. 28).

Benjamin's point of arrival is not, for Carchia, the pure and simple liquidation of the system, but the conception of its symbolic representation in the multiplicity of works of art, since "in deciphering the content of truth in works of art, criticism must instead consider their relation, symbolic or otherwise, to the ideal of the problem, to the system, while carefully avoiding the temptation to identify it precisely" (ivi, p. 36-37; Engl., p. 29). It must formulate the content of truth itself as the supreme philosophical problem: "In the same moment that it frees itself from the requirement of systematic construction, philosophy is compelled by its reflection on works of art to consider the thought of the system" (ivi, p. 37; Engl., p. 30). In any authentic work of art there is a manifestation of the ideal of the problem, of the unity of the system of philosophy as truth. Criticism thus must determine the "virtual possibility of formulating the work's truth content, ([*GS*] I (1) 173 [...])" (*ibidem*) keeping in mind that it "does not reside immediately in the beautiful, but rather is mediated through appearances" and that, "the existence of truth is definitively identical with the appearance of the beautiful" (ivi, p. 39; Engl., p. 32). The true offers itself up only under the veil of the beautiful. Thus criticism "will never be able to assume a demythologizing process, as though beauty were the wrapping to be thrown away, beneath which truth shines in all its naked bluntness" (*ibidem*). Rather, it must seat knowledge in works of art in their relation with philosophy as concentrated in the moment of representation, indicating the possibility of virtually formulating the work's truth content as its supreme philosophical problem. In the work of art, truth is never interrogated, but only postulated in the form of an appeal:

«The character of making an appeal constantly inheres in the work of art, and it is the duty of the critic to provoke it [. . .] Precisely because the work [. . .] shows itself as infinitely provocative, the truth in beauty can only appear, but it can never claim to reunite itself once and for all with beauty in any sort of mystic unity [. . .] If the ideal of the problem—the system, the absolute—is able to become concrete once and for all, criticism will come to deprive itself of any value of originality» (ivi, p. 40; Engl., p. 34).

Criticism will run the risk of that stasis which, Carchia asserts, Benjamin found in the romantic pretense of an absolute grasp of the system by means of art. Instead, art must render possible the “transubstantiation of material content into truth content [. . .] (*U* 203; trad. 189)” (ivi, p. 42; Engl., p. 36), in the moment when beauty weakens and becomes conscious of its own caducity. Only in this essential caducity and appearance does the secret of truth appear. The mystery—to become clear in the world of revelation—is concealed exclusively in the most essential, creaturely character of the world of nature and works of art (in their ‘taciturnity’). And there too resides the only hope of redemption.

«Only when it comes to beauty is the paradox that essence is appearance valid. This can lead to a much broader discourse on the philosophy of history, founded on the division of the world into the opposed dimensions of mystery and revelation. [. . .] In this phase of his thought, then, Benjamin holds that beauty can subsist only where, unlike in history, the separation between nudity and covering, the decipherment of the mystery, is not given: in art understood as a manifestation of nature» (ivi, p. 43; Engl., p. 37).

Works of art are taciturn, mute, while “only in revelation lives the power of the name” (ivi, p. 43; Engl., p. 38). Between name and artwork stands the expressionless (the *Ausdruckloses*), where “the sublime violence of the true appears as that which determines the language of the real world according to the laws of the moral world (I (1) 181 [. . .])” (ivi, p. 44; Engl., 39). The expressionless is the moral word, the reference to the knowing name—a reflection of the divine creating word and expression of the Law, which completes Creation by naming things, determining the linguistic and spiritual essence of reality in all its ethical-utopian power. It guarantees, in beauty, the presence of truth in the “messianic” instant in which the life of the artwork—as appearance—halts and grows rigid. It presents itself as caesura, as the muteness of the tragic hero. It is critical power and the Mosaic prohibition of the image that impede essence (truth) and appearance from mixing together. The authority of the expressionless is *moral* because it stands against the will for dominion, the pretense of absoluteness that beauty raises in every manifestation that makes a claim to truth (see ivi, p. 47; Engl., p. 42). The *Ausdruckloses* guarantees, in fact, that the work of art not present itself as a false totality, but maintains its necessarily ephemeral dimension as a symbolic fragment, a promise of justice, a fragile hope for redemption.

3. Memory (philosophy and music)

Carchia deeply investigates Benjamin’s philosophy of language and history in their connections and in the redemptive vision of creaturely nature which they share. Connecting the (reinterpreted) Goethean conception of originary phenomena to the Kabbalistic dimension of history and language, he conceived “history as nature” and “the natural element as a secret prophecy of something authentically historical” (ivi, p. 19; Engl., p. 9).

Against the positivist model of historical reason, Benjamin posits the power of memory, capable of subverting the irreversibility of historical judgment and, with that, “the direction of history itself.” (ivi, p. 153; Engl., p. 159).

In Carchia's view, in late Benjamin the aesthetic paradigm transforms itself into a constellation of political categories, but this aesthetic paradigm never ceases to be relevant, specifically in the concept of the dialectical image as an image of involuntary memory, in the vision of a historical time that opens out from the aesthetic time of memory and the salvation of appearance:

«Just as the *Ursprung* was the space of the mediation and salvation of phenomena in the pure linguistic being of the idea, now, in the 1940 theses, historical time is the distension and articulation of the aesthetic time of the image. What is aesthetic time as the time of the image, properly speaking? [. . .] Only as an involuntary image can it become the go-between in an anamnesis, the field of mediation between memory and redemption. From this point of view one can radically assert that, for Benjamin, aesthetic temporality, as temporality of the soul absorbed in the contemplation of the nexus of truth and beauty, is the very origin of temporality's self-offering, of temporality *tout court* as the space of memory. The salvation of appearance and the dimension of memory are all one: here is rooted the connection between temporality and the aesthetic dimension. [. . .] In the theses of 'On the Concept of History', historical time is a mode of temporality that opens out of aesthetic time: this is the mobile space of the soul which, seeking to slow down appearance and fleeting caducity, manifests itself above all in the rescue of the past, in memory» (ivi, pp. 115-117; Engl., pp. 119-120).

The interpretation of Benjamin's philosophy develops deep in the nucleus of Carchia's thought, where—as in the essay collection *L'amore del pensiero* [The Love of Thought], his last work—we witness the vision of the almost “musical” presence of transcendence within the heart of immanence. He conceives of thought as “Word, intimate bond with Being, a latent rhythm of the things of the world [and] [. . .] the soul as *primum passivum*” (Carchia 2000c, p. 7). Interpreting Bergson, he discovers “the profundity of an entirely new ontological dimension. It is a dimension in which there is no longer a high and a low, an inside and outside, an essence and a belonging, a background and a figure. In the profundity of the chiasmus⁷ essence reveals itself in appearance, but this in turn draws its own light and meaning from the essence. It is the figure; it is beauty that leads us back to this background, without which it could not reveal itself. The figure discloses the background that illuminates it” (Carchia 2000e, p. 35). The very “articulation of (philosophical) reasoning is itself *arte, poiein*, unfolding as truth in its pure flow, in appearance entrusted to contemplation, precisely as beauty, as rhythm, as figure” (ivi, p. 31). The philosophical tradition has expressed this vision through the parallel between music and philosophy ever since the famous Socratic confession in the *Phaedo*.⁸

The time of memory is “messianic time—time of music, of the linguistic idea or the involuntary image” (Carchia 2000b, p. 120; Engl., p.124)⁹. It is a time that cannot help but acknowledge caducity,

⁷ See Carchia G., 2000e, p. 31: “At this point it is a matter of correctly understanding the meaning of the chiasmus highlighted in traditional theory. It is a matter, in other words, of comprehending that the artistic-poetic dimension of philosophy is not supplementary, ornamental, but is co-essential to the search for truth that inspires it, just as, conversely, the intellectual element of poetry is foundational to its very beauty, guarantee of the truth of art. In sum, it is the poetic nucleus of philosophy—beauty—that unveils the truth, while conversely, it is the philosophical nucleus of poetry—truth—that expresses its beauty. Chiasmus is, therefore, the evidence, at first inexplicable, through which the truth of philosophy is unveiled in its beauty, and beauty unveils itself in its truth.”

⁸ See ivi, p. 31: “This aspect of the problem of truth has always been recognized by the philosophical tradition, which has developed it predominantly through the parallel between music and philosophy, starting from the famous Socratic confession in the *Phaedo*: “[...] for I thought that philosophy was the highest music, and my life was spent in philosophy [*Phaedo*, 60-61 a].” Only to music, Benjamin tells us, “belong(s) a beauty no longer arrested by semblance.” [GS, I, 1 191] (Carchia 2000b, p. 47; Engl., p. 43).

⁹ On the concept of history (and memory) see Carchia (1982b), pp. 41-45, p. 45: “The critical spirit, in fact, is not other than history, as a reductive and nostalgic hermeneutics would have us believe. Rather, it is history itself, the worldly history that remembers the original promise of salvation.”

the awareness of which posits a possibility of salvation through memory, which is lightning-fast and never monumental. Co-essential to the human condition is its ephemerality: “Only temporalized history, as awareness of the irremediable caducity of the phenomenal, in the negation that constitutes the phenomenal nihilistically as essence, opens at the same time the space of that memory which will always keep hold of its appearance” (ivi, p. 121; Engl., p. 125). Thus opens a utopian potentiality, a utopia of the Other, “whose form is that of not having any, whose image is to be the very place of the absence of images” (ivi, p. 131; Engl., p. 124). This is the absence of images which Judaism recognizes as the space both of transcendence and of the memory of past generations: space for the soul, *be-nefesh*.¹⁰

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¹⁰ In the synagogue in Rome, the Hebrew expression *be-nefesh* (for the soul) is used, following the prayers, to remember the anniversaries of the dead. With affection and devotion, I wish to remember here my teacher and doctoral advisor, Gianni Carchia.