

For a philosophical history of 'nosotros' The Latin American perspectives of Juan Carlos Scannone and Ricardo Espinoza Lolas

Para uma história filosófica de 'nosotros'
As perspectivas latino-americanas de Juan Carlos Scannone e
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Ricardo Espinoza Lolas

Tommaso Sgarro  ^[a]

Napoli, Itália

^[a] Università Telematica Pegaso Napoli

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Abstract

This essay is a further contribution to the history of the idea of 'We' in philosophy. The perspectives of the two Latin American authors Juan Carlos Scannone and Riccardo Espinoza Lolas contribute

[a] Ph.D in Filosofia e Storia della filosofia presso l'Università degli studi di Bari, e-mail: tommaso.sgarro@unifg.it

to the reconstruction of a history of philosophy in a global sense that has the theme of *nosotros* at its centre. They are part of the same philosophical tradition, inscribed within the philosophy of liberation, but they interpret the question through contiguous but not directly overlapping characteristics. We are thus defining a modality of approach to the history of philosophy, of its ideas that through the disarticulation of the geo-textual places in which the pronoun *nosotros* becomes concept, idea, interpretative paradigm, goes on to outline some interpretative proposals for contemporaneity.

Keywords: *We. Nosotros. Latin American philosophy. Scannone. Espinoza.*

Resumo

Este ensaio é mais um contributo para a história da ideia de "Nós" em filosofia. As perspectivas dos dois autores latino-americanos Juan Carlos Scannone e Riccardo Espinoza Lolas contribuem para a reconstrução de uma história da filosofia em sentido global que tem no seu centro o tema do nosotros. Fazem parte de uma mesma tradição filosófica, inscrita na filosofia da libertação, mas interpretam a questão através de características contíguas, mas não diretamente sobrepostas. Estamos, assim, a definir uma modalidade de abordagem da história da filosofia, das suas ideias que, através da desarticulação dos lugares geo-textuais em que o pronome nosotros se torna conceito, ideia, paradigma interpretativo, vai delineando algumas propostas interpretativas para a contemporaneidade.

Palavras-chave: *Nós. Nosotros. Filosofia latino-americana. Scannone. Espinoza.*

Resumen

Este ensayo es una contribución más a la historia de la idea del "Nosotros" en la filosofía. Las perspectivas de los dos autores latinoamericanos Juan Carlos Scannone y Riccardo Espinoza Lolas contribuyen a la reconstrucción de una historia de la filosofía en sentido global que tiene como centro el tema del nosotros. Forman parte de una misma tradición filosófica, inscrita en la filosofía de la liberación, pero interpretan la cuestión a través de características contiguas pero no directamente superpuestas. Estamos definiendo así una modalidad de aproximación a la historia de la filosofía, de sus ideas, que a través de la desarticulación de los lugares geotextuales en los que el pronombre nosotros se convierte en concepto, idea, paradigma interpretativo, pasa a esbozar algunas propuestas interpretativas para la contemporaneidad.

Palabras clave: *Noi. Nosotros. Filosofía latinoamericana. Scannone. Espinoza.*

Introduction

In the concluding essay to the Italian edition of Ricardo Espinoza Lolas's book, *NosOtros, Manual para disolver el capitalismo* that I edited, I recalled how a history of the idea of *We* is still to be written (Sgarro, 2023, p. 261). The self-quotation, although always inelegant, is nevertheless necessary to understand the nature of this contribution, which is intended as an in-depth study of the construction of that history. If one carefully scrutinises the horizon of the history of philosophy, in fact, one will realise that the use of the word *We* is difficult, found above all within the dimension of identity, and rarely intended to refer directly to the 'other from me'. Understanding the contexts in which the word turns out to be used with philosophical awareness helps us to construct the coordinates of its historical-geographical dimension and at the same time to generate a new philosophical proposal starting from the idea of *We*. Herein lies the need to define a way of approaching the history of philosophy, of its ideas, rather than through articulation, through the disarticulation of the geo-textual places in which the pronoun *we* becomes concept, idea, interpretative paradigm, going on to outline some current proposals. This is because, on closer inspection, the *We* is a living concept, made up of stories, representative of a relationship that is realised in history and produces its tale; the tale of its time, of the place where it is born. Herein lies the difficulty of the translatability of *us* and its variation as the geo-historical context varies.

In the Italian translation of Ricardo Espinoza's aforementioned book, it was considered important not to translate 'nosotros' with the corresponding Italian word. A choice that had a semantic reason in the first place; *Noi*, in fact, even with a capital letter, does not allow for a full translation of the 'philosophical-linguistic' play of the Castilian *NosOtros* at the basis of the Chilean philosopher's reasoning, while the word *noialtri* (which would be its literal translation in Italian) is little used. The translation of the lemma with *noi altri* was also not very functional, losing that unity of the word that is instead a fundamental fact for understanding Espinoza's thought. Moreover, it should be emphasised that the literal translation into Italian creates not a few problems of an interpretative nature, given that in all the two versions mentioned it recalls an identity and self-referential element rather than a dimension of openness to the Other, in antithesis to what *NosOtros* wished to indicate as a philosophical-semantic construct, since as the *Vocabolario della lingua italiana Treccani* writes they have "a reinforcing and at the same time limiting function of the pronoun *noi*"¹.

There is then a precise philosophical reason that convinced us not to translate the word from the original idiom, unlike the English translation of *NosOtros* with *WethOther*, which takes place in a profoundly different context, being present in the entry "Revolution" edited by Ricardo Espinoza himself for *The Marx through Lacan Vocabulary* (Routledge), where it would have been impossible for reasons of space and opportunity to delve into the nature of the lemma *NosOtros*. What must emphasised with great importance, however, is how the use of the word and its conceptualisation are strongly linked to Ibero-American philosophy and its tradition; in it the word *nosotros* takes on a peculiar historical-philosophical value. The first person to define the particularity of the Castilian word in its specific philosophical value was José Ortega y Gasset in the text *El hombre y la gente*, a long gestation piece of writing that would not be published posthumously in 1957 in Madrid:

¹ <https://www.treccani.it/vocabolario/noi/>

The Portuguese and French instead of 'nosotros' say 'nos' and 'nous', by which they simply express the coexistence and closeness between those to whom the 'no' and 'nous' refer. But we Spaniards say 'nosotros' and the idea expressed is quite different. Languages must express community and collectivity, nostridades, the plural. But many languages are not content with just one form of plural. There is the inclusive plural, which is limited, like *nos* and *nous*, to including, but in contrast to this there is the exclusive plural, which includes several or many, but makes it clear that it excludes others. Well, our plural *nos-otros* is exclusivist. It means that we do not simply enunciate the pure community of me and you and, perhaps, other you, but a community between both or more than both, me, you and these other you; a community in which you and I form a certain collective unity: in front of, outside and, in a certain sense, against others. In the we-others we declare ourselves, yes, very united, but, above all, we recognise ourselves as other from the others, from them (Ortega; GASSET, 1964, p. 153).

For Ortega, therefore, it is not a matter of simply opening oneself to the other in a passive manner based on the innate altruism of the human being, but it is necessary to define a new category that he calls *nostrismo* or *nostridad*, which is "the first form of concrete relationship with the other and, therefore, the first social reality" (Ortega; Gasset, 1964, p. 152). We perceive the other as the similar with whom the relationship of knowledge is perfected, until it ceases to be this indeterminate other and becomes a *you*: "I and you, I and you, act on each other in a frequent individual-individual interaction, both mutually unique" (Ortega; Gasset, 1964, p. 153). In the 'clash' with the 'you' in the dimension of the 'we' one discovers, according to Ortega, the 'I', the dimension of one's own identity as something real.

The Spanish philosopher influenced Ibero-American reflection, especially through the dissemination of his philosophy by José Gaos, but it was from the works of Francisco Romero (1952) and Leopoldo Zea (1969) that the theme of *nosotros* had its first, coherent philosophical exposition, deeply linked to the theme of Latin American identity. It is no coincidence that one of the most important journals of the South American continent published in the first half of the 20th century, published between 1907 and 1943 in Argentina, and which saw Romero himself as a regular contributor from 1918 onwards (Dussel, 1970), had the name 'Nosostros'. It will be in the second half of the 20th century, however, that the question of the South American *We* in comparison with the European *Them* will take on philosophical value, as is evident in the critical theory of Arturo Andrés Roig (1981) and in the thought of Juan Carlos Scannone. The close link between historicity and philosophy determines one of the peculiar aspects of this development and is characteristic of the *philosophy of liberation* (*filosofía de la liberación*), the most radical current expressed in Ibero-American philosophy. Liberation and historical-philosophical identity go hand in hand; Salazar Bondy says it very clearly: "our genuine and original philosophy will be the thought of an authentic and creative society, all the more valuable when the Hispanic-American community reaches higher levels of wholeness. But it can begin to be authentic as thinking about the negation of our being and the need for change, as awareness of the inevitable mutation of our history" (Bondy, 1968, p. 117).

Juan Carlos Scannone: the ethical-historical horizon of 'nosotros-people'

In the reconstruction of the philosophical history of the idea of *We*, the work of the Argentine philosopher Juan Carlos Scannone (1931-2019) represents a point of comparison between the European and Latin American traditions, that is of reconnaissance value and of great hermeneutical interest. In the article *Un nuevo punto de partida en la filosofía latinoamericana* (1980), he describes the particular nature of the word *nosotros* derived from the union of the words 'nos' and 'ostros', the basis of the Latin American philosophical tradition founded on *estar*, *ser* and *acontecer* (*beingness*, *being*, *happening*) understood

ethically and historically. This would mark the difference between the philosophy of the South American continent and that of the West, which has 'being' and 'happening' as its founding elements, as logical-rational elements. Western subjectivity would thus be based on the personal and individual dimension of the Cartesian 'ego cogito', 'I am', while South American subjectivity would be based on the communitarian dimension of 'we'. The experience of the Latin American 'we are' (*nosotros estamos*), which Scannone retrieves from Carlos Cullen's 1978 work *Fenomenología de la crisis moral. Sabiduría de la experiencia de los pueblos*, is instead immediate and irreducible because it unites in itself at the ethical level what the conjunction 'e' (and) does at the logical level; in the experience of 'we', 'I', 'you', 'he', 'she', form a community without reducing each other, a unity in distinction, 'totum sed non totaliter'.

In his 1989 essay *Ser, estar, acontecer. El horizonte tridimensional del pensar filosófico latinoamericano*, Scannone defines the internal articulation of the three original dimensions of *beingness*, *being* and *happening*. The dimension of *estar* (*beingness*) has its roots in Latin American popular wisdom and religiosity, yet it is not to be understood in a distinct manner from the two horizons or dimensions explicated by Western philosophy "that of the question of being (inherited from Greek philosophy) and that of ethical-historical *happening* (more typical of the Judeo-Christian tradition)" (Scannone, 1989, p. 75). *Beingness* indicates the presence of the human being in that real, physical and geographically universal totality that is 'mother earth', giving this category an ethical-historical dimension that is lacking in the abstractly understood western categories; these three original dimensions are not, however, mutually exclusive but, according to Scannone, are in a reciprocal mediation and in a priority of order that is not necessarily chronological. The Latin continent would therefore be its decisive place to make it possible:

the philosophical reinterpretation of each of them and their triumvirate, [...] and seems to correspond to the inculturation of the Western philosophical tradition into Latin American culture. In short, it can be said that the resulting three-dimensional horizon implies rootedness in the earth (in its reality, symbolism and sacredness), *ethical-historical orientation*, and speculative understanding mediated by this orientation and rootedness (Scannone, 1989, p. 75).

According to Scannone, this reflection on the *being* of America, which sees in 'nosotros estamos' the element of popular wisdom, cannot be considered a merely theoretical category, but represents a peculiarity of Latin-American thought that can be globally useful, because "the universalisation proper to language should be understood neither as an abstract universal, nor as a universal, [...] but as a situated universal" (Scannone, 1980, p. 31).

Beginning with a text presented at the Congreso Internacional de Filosofía in Córdoba, in September 1987, entitled *Hacia una antropología del 'nosotros'*, the Argentine philosopher began to compare his personal elaboration on the idea of the *We* with that of some authors who have treated the theme from a western philosophical perspective, with the declared objective of a philosophical understanding of the 'we' that takes into account the Levinasian metaphysics of ethical otherness, in order to found a humanism of the 'we' that does not exclude, but includes and goes beyond the humanisms of the 'ego', of the human being in general and of the 'other' as human being. Scannone's reflection actually will go much further beginning to lay the foundations for an ethical-political definition of the *nosotros-pueblo*, an indispensable prerequisite for the realisation of human liberation. For the Argentinean, neither Hegel nor Husserl have fully understood the meaning of 'we'; the former in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* speaks of the 'I that is we' and the 'we that is I' but thinks of intersubjectivity starting from the subjectivity of the 'I', that is, from self-reflection in the subject-object relationship; writes Scannone the 'we' "is constituted by the interrelation (without reciprocal

relativisation) between the I, the you and the unlimited he within an ethical and historical community of communication" (Scannone, 1987, p. 430). In the *Fifth Cartesian Meditation*, on the other hand, Husserl bases his transcendental intersubjectivity on the ego and the other is *alter ego* by analogy with the ego and is thought of by the ego, thus remaining in the field of the egológico approach of modern European philosophy. For the Argentinean instead, the *we* must be thought of from the ethical and historical relationship between 'I-you-she-he', and Scannone, while acknowledging Apel's overcoming the limit of the modern egológico approach reproaches him for not having gone beyond the same transcendental philosophy that proposing to deal with community and communication between historical subjects "requires a re-comprehension of the meaning of 'a priori', so as to give space to the historical novelty, gratuitousness and ethical transcendence of the other (i.e. of the I, of the you and of the unlimited 'he' within the *we*)" (Scannone, 1987, p. 431). Marco Maria Olivetti² would also take a new step forward by accepting the *We* as an ethical community of (real-ideal) communication, understanding ethicality not only in a transcendental sense but also and above all on the basis of the irreducible ethical otherness of the other according to Levinas. Like the latter, however, while recognising the irreducible otherness and ethical transcendence of the other, the authentic understanding of the *We* cannot be said to be satisfactory. As in the aforementioned 1980 essay, but in a more radical manner in its conclusions, it is once again starting from the Spanish signifier *nos-otros*, that Scannone recovers (from his point of view) the authentic sense of the *We*:

this cannot be fully thought of without ethical otherness (even if it is also historical and social) [...]. The ethical otherness of the 'we', as a relation without relativization (between 'I', 'you' and 'he'), prevents, criticises and rejects any attempt to totalise the 'we'; [...] the understanding of the 'we' as an ethical-historical community goes beyond intersubjective relations conceived only as private or intimate between 'I' and 'you', between the self and the other, because the 'we' includes the unlimited 'he', whose consideration gives foundation to that of the 'human being' in general (Scannone, 1987, p. 432).

From Scannone's perspective, this is the way to an understanding that is both personalistic and communitarian; a 'nosotros' ethical-historical community rethought from the ethics of otherness can found a humanism of 'We' capable of including and surpassing the humanisms of the human being in general, of the abstract 'I' and the abstract 'other' human being. This ethical-historical community expressed by 'nosotros' has a radical practical correlate and does not stop at the purely theoretical dimension, affirming itself historically in the concrete form of the *people*: "the true us is an ethical-historical nosotros. It is ethical because it is a collective subject that neither presumes nor homogenises differences, but ethically respects its otherness within the 'we', insofar as it exists, [...] a 'relation without relativisation' in a community, avoiding the risks of the totalisation of the 'we'. It is also historical because its ethics must materialise in the effectiveness of its historical praxis in the real mediations mediated by freedom" (Fresia; Maddonni, 2021, pp. 109-111). This is the essential prerequisite for proposing an intercultural ethics from the Latin American continent, generated by the ideas of community, of people. The latter at the centre of the Scannonian theological dimension (*teología del pueblo*) is the subject of the social movement for liberation, of the oppressed that the teleological horizon of the *ethical-historical nosotros*. The ethical dimension cannot, for Scannone, be reduced to the moral dimension, but implies both the political and the geo-cultural dimensions, "both aspects are implicit in the concept of 'nosotros' as a *people* (organic community)" (Scannone, 1980, p. 32).

² Marco Maria Olivetti was an Italian philosopher and historian of philosophy

In a 2011 essay entitled *El nosotros ético-histórico: hacia una ética en perspectiva latinoamericana*, moving again from the critique of the positions on the 'We' of Western authors, deepens with the contribution of Apel's reflection the question of ethical rationality starting from the 'we' of Latin American ethical-historical experience, laying the foundations for a reflection on Latin American intercultural ethics that takes into account the personal, interpersonal, communitarian, public, and institutional dimensions and their historical-practical effectiveness. Not only that, according to Scannone the 'ethical-historical nosotros' can provide a fruitful angle to reread also the entire historical-philosophical process on the question of 'We'; this is because ethical rationality as principle, reason and condition of possibility of human action as human, such only if it is free and autonomous, unfolds starting from the *logos* that founds and specifies it. The *logos* within it presupposes the other and thus "it can be said that ethical rationality is that of communication in freedom, community and otherness, which founds, regulates and judges human action as human, that is, to the extent that it is free, rational and meaningful and, therefore, communicative" (Scannone, 2011, pp. 80-81). The unfolding historically of the *nosotros* thus implies the entire narrative of the history of philosophy because it is the emergence of the 'ethical a-priori' of human being; far from falling within a philosophy of history as for many other Ibero-American authors of the 20th century, Scannone tries to give unity and urgency to a question that emerges from the historical-practical mediation of the human being and that cannot be tackled only from a theoretical aspect. If the *logos* is in fact original to the human being, the communication (*dia-logos*) is actualised in history. The *nosotros* does not presuppose the community of communication but practically determines it since: "the *logos* that founds and specifies ethical rationality [...] implies at the same time universality and respect for the irreducible otherness of every other and every other, that is, it implies universality and difference" (Scannone, 2011, pp. 80-81). Therefore, what the *ethical-historical nosotros* is constructing is the unity of difference as a space of encounter between different cultures; after all, the condition of *mixture* is defining of the history of Latin American peoples and an essential element to understand the importance and evolution of the issue we are dealing with for the philosophy of the continent.

Ricardo Espinoza Lolas: the NosOtros body/political-people

Ricardo Espinoza Lolas within the trilogy of writings released between 2016 to 2020 (*Hegel y las nuevas lógicas del mundo y del Estado. ¿Cómo se es revolucionario hoy; Capitalismo & Empresa. Hacia una Revolución del NosOtros; NosOtros. Manual para disolver el Capitalismo*) tries to break the classic paradigm of the South American revolutions of the 20th century, with the intention of renewing the sense and use of certain words. The question today is for Espinoza to decline the 'nosotros' not in an ideological, nor geo-identitarian way, but starting from the complexity of today's human being in a real, material, historical perspective.

This perspective has led the Chilean philosopher to work not only intensively from a theoretical point of view, but also from a historical-practical point of view, on the construction and organisation of a network of scholars at an intercontinental level committed to deepening and thematising the *nosotros* as a scientific paradigm of analysis and construction of historical reality. Like Scannone, who sought to construct an intercultural philosophy starting from Latin America and opening it up to a universal dimension, Espinoza produces a reflection that aims to read the situation of the current capitalist phase on a global level, but which is historically planted in the history and facts of the South American continent. Marking the need for Espinoza's exploration of the dimension of *nosotros* in political terms, after an initial

sketch more of a convivialist brand (Espinoza; Barroso, 2018), was the internal situation in Chile. In May 2018, the first edition of *Capitalismo & Empresa. Hacia una Revolución del NosOtros* appeared (the second edition would be released in January 2020); between 2019 and 2020 the Chilean nation sees street clashes and demonstrations flare up. The 'estallido social', begins on 7 October 2019, mainly in Santiago, against the increase in metro fares and against the caravan, which are part of an already largely unstable situation, strongly marked by large-scale corruption of the political system and a voracious capitalism producing deep social imbalances³. The protests are vehement and on 20 October, the government Piñera proclaims state of emergency and decides to call in the army to quell them, introducing a curfew in Santiago. What would follow in the following months would be the chronicle in the press and social networks of serious episodes of physical abuse by the public force, with the final toll of at least 17 dead, hundreds injured and thousands of protesters arrested, in the violent repression deployed by the Piñera government⁴. The Chilean protest was neither organised nor ideological, 'born from below', in the streets, in the neighbourhoods, and aimed at a radical reform of Chilean society starting with overcoming the current national constitution drafted by Pinochet. On 19 December 2021, Gabriel Boric, supported by the leftist coalition Apruebo Dignidad, was elected President of Chile, winning against the Republican José Antonio Kast, candidate of the extreme right. With the election of the youngest president in Chile's history, the approval of the new ecologist and feminist constitution, of which the new president was one of the promoters, seemed within reach. In 2020, 80% of Chileans had called for the drafting of a new constitution⁵, but on 4 September 2022 in the referendum for its approval with 61.9%, the new constitutional charter did not pass the ballot test. Surprisingly, Chile not only retains Pinochet's Constitution, interrupting the constituent process born from the 'social estallido', but in the elections on Sunday, 7 May 2023 to elect the 50 members of the new Constitutional Council, the body that will have to draft a new Constitution, the ultra-conservative 'Republican Party' led by former presidential candidate José Antonio Kast won by obtaining 35.4 % of the vote, while the centre-right coalition Chile Seguro obtained 21.1 %. With 33 out of 50 seats, well over half, in the hands of the right, 22 of them from the party of the admirer, by his own admission, of the Pinochet dictatorship, the writing of Chile's new constitution is in the hands of the country's ultra-conservative forces.

The historical reconstruction of this surprising counter-reformation drift in Chile is necessary to understand the genesis and current evolution of the reflection, still all in progress, on *nosotros* in the Espinozian intellectual itinerary. In 2016, the first conference of the 'Red NosOtros' was held in Paris, with the aim of building a space for cooperation in research, capable of bringing together different generations of researchers from different cultural and geographical backgrounds. Two years later, Ricarda Espinoza Lolas closed the text *Žižek reloaded. Políticas de lo radical*, edited together with Óscar Barroso, with the short epilogue *La Fiesta del Pensamiento: NosOtros*. The 'We' was presented here in the graphic form that highlights the two words 'We' (Nos) and 'Others' (Otros) of the Castilian lemma. The text celebrates the social, convivial and friendly dimension of *NosOtros* as a prerequisite for a radical refounding of philosophical-political analysis. A clear change is given by the internal revolts in Chile that offered the possibility of observing a moment in which "the Chileans in their multiple popular

³ Cf. *Protestas en Chile: 4 claves para entender la furia y el estallido social en el país sudamericano*, <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-50115798>

⁴ See Amnesty International, *Ojos sobre Chile: Violencia policial y responsabilidad de mando durante el estallido social*, <https://www.amnesty.org/es/latest/news/2022/10/un-cambio-con-justicia/>

⁵ Cf. *Chile rechaza rotundamente la nueva Constitución*, <https://elpais.com/chile/2022-09-05/chile-rechaza-rotundamente-la-nueva-constitucion.html>

expressions took to the streets and generated a historic change: an irruption of the power of the real in the contingency itself, and with violence, and that sought the common good of all, even of the opponents" (Espinoza, 2022, p. 276). Espinoza begins to wonder whether what is happening in Chile can be considered as a Revolución del NosOtros, which cannot be framed in the scheme of the Ibero-American revolutions or movements of the 20th century because it is not determined by an organised vanguard within a precise ideological dimension. In any case, it was necessary to give the word NosOtros a full awareness of its historical-political character; Espinoza writes in the Prologue to second edition of *Capitalismo & Empresa*: "we are carrying out the Revolution of NosOtros; that is, a 'historical-social texture' that will give us the strength and vision to materially build, from neighbourhoods to institutions, a better world with more density and human dignity in a Planet that is becoming increasingly miserably flat and narcissistic" (Espinoza, 2018b, p. 14).

The shift from reasoning about the 'I' to reasoning about the 'We' arises as an emergency that has in the Chilean situation only a contingent factor, but which actually aims at a more general reflection on the current phase of world capitalism as a producer of annihilated subjectivities, of mere 'we', and not of 'We Others' (NosOtros). The NosOtros not only has to do with a problem of geopolitical identities, but tries to escape the logic of cultural entities of origin, tradition, and the merely communitarian dimension as in Scannone. It has to do with the liberation of the psychic superstructures that today dimension the capitalist self, from that idea of the self-made man that has permeated the political culture at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries. The purely theoretical dimension of the reflection on the NosOtros is set aside, turning to the theme of subjectivity as a historical-material device that leaves no room for its ontologisation.

The third volume of Espinoza's trilogy, *NosOtros*, does not follow the logic of 'classic' revolutionary narratives. *NosOtros* is a device that appropriates the Hegelian dialectic as a necessary dynamic for the affirmation of reflection, breaking with the logic of the 'immediate in itself'; mediation becomes an expression of the material-historical human-world relationship, not a logical mediation, but a living, aesthetic, existential one. Reflection does not only have to do with the cognitive dimension of the world, but with the human being in his most comprehensive relationship with the historical-social fabric that defines him. This occurrence of the human being in the world entails the need to think of a new paradigm that allows us to understand what it is today: "the best structural definition of the human being is that of being a NosOtros; and the best operational definition is that of being a revolutionary animal; it is impossible to be a human animal and not revolutionise the system that constitutes it" (Espinoza, 2019, p. 157). Espinoza attempts to offer instructions for the activation of the human being from within a system that annihilates the very nature of the human being, that of 'being revolutionary'. A deactivation of the capitalist self that is the first movement necessary to make the NosOtros happen, to make the Other within Us happen. The experience of the Other cannot be put on a merely logical or purely ethical level, but requires an aesthetic approach to the world. The place of NosOtros is not this or that continent, this or that nation, but it is every city, with its history, its colours, its smells. It aims to overcome the logic of the signifier 'people' that has been put in crisis by the speed with which words and their meaning are now being piled up and devoured, in the everyday in history, in reality: "because the meaning of 'people' has already been devoured by Bannon and the planetary fascist company" (Espinoza, 2019, p. 191).

Therefore, the neutral acceptance of the definition of people in its relation to *nosotros* cannot suffice, as it does in Scannone; it is not enough to connote its ethical-historical matrix if it is not understood on the plane of real determinations: "each of NosOtros is part of a material fabric that physically connects us on a historical level" (Espinoza, 2019, p. 96). The Other that happens in *We*, confronts us with our

historical-material narrowness but also with the fact that subjectivity is not a logical-metaphysical but a historical-material option; the Other is made of flesh, bones, lived experiences, of the places where it is encountered. Therefore, it is not enough to attest to the historical nature of the nosotros, rather it must be made history through the NosOtros, in a kind of reversal of the philosophy of history, where universality no longer belongs to history itself but to the subject as a nosotros-body before it is ethical: "history is felt from the body; from the political body of a NosOtros history is made and, at the same time, the passage of the material history of each of us is felt" (Espinoza, 2019, p. 112). This leads him to have to search for the signifier nosotros-people within the real, beyond the simple theoretical plane.

For Espinoza, the failure of the Chilean constituent, which is the background to the elaboration of the concept of nosotros, would be to be found in the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, the consequent annihilation of social spaces of a physical nature, the management of fear through the means of sanitary control, the radicalisation of the existential dimension of waiting that becomes psychotic when it is waiting for the simple re-entry into the capital system. Thus, the Chilean, in the entry *Espera* contained in the collective book *33 conceptos para disolver las medidas político sanitarias en la pandemia* (2021) writes: "the pandemic of COVID-19 has left us radically alone in the face of our own existence, because wherever we are and wherever we find ourselves, 'we are' radically alone with NosOtros; and the Other pierces us. [...] What can we expect from each other? The pandemic has shown something very sad: the lack of hope" (Espinoza, 2021, p. 163). The suspended time of the pandemic has redefined in a gloomier sense the dimension of subjectivity in capitalism, the waiting has reinforced the labyrinthine dimension of what it is to be human today. Espinoza proposes a psychopathological and not a sociological reading of the construction of subjectivity in its relation to power in the capitalist world; he saw in the pandemic passage a phase of tension that is equilibrium, because it is based on the realisation of the material and mortal fragility that configures the human being and that health capitalism with its means of security would like to annihilate: "in the Pandemic we must wait; it is time to wait... Wait for what? We really have to wait for ourselves and not lose ourselves in us... [...] There are many forms of waiting in the Pandemic, but they all point to the waiting that constitutes us as a radical emptiness, and it is this waiting that we must try to understand as an abysmal expression of the emptiness that we are" (Espinoza, 2021, p. 165).

The waiting has many faces, but somewhat like the Kierkegaardian 'vertigo of freedom', this situation has placed the human being in front of the emptiness of his own existence, showing him the intimate truth of the conflict between his freedom and what he must be. In this waiting we should expect nothing determined, and in the void before which we are the human being feels the Other vibrate, the non-specific resonance of one with the other as Other. That of the pandemic was a waiting from which to expect nothing because the waiting of the concrete brings the human being face to face with capitalism in an even crueller form than before. Waiting, however, has something perverse about it and yet the exit from it has nothing to do with the rejection of law, with the rejection of lockdown restrictions in open polemic with Giorgio Agamben⁶ and Roberto Esposito (2022). In this waiting, no bond of love with the Other is possible except in a kind of perversion that aims at absolute love beyond the Law; in this way, however, we produce harm to ourselves as 'NosOtros', because waiting has to do with a social pact and a submissive dimension in which "waiting despairs and becomes only a constant staging of transgression" (Espinoza, 2021, p. 168). It is in this tension between love towards the Other and the coercion of the Law that this waiting is grafted, poised between existential apprehension arising

⁶ <https://www.quodlibet.it/giorgio-agamben-l-invenzione-di-un-epidemia>

from the frustration of the missed and sought love encounter with the Other and the breaking of the law of consumption, which goes to define a precarious way out of the capitalist labyrinth that: "operates in a fused and incestuous way between the awaiting and the awaited" (Espinoza, 2021, p. 170). Waiting as transgression marks, along with waiting in the face of our freedom, the modality of the pandemic human being, which cannot be understood merely as a contingent moment, but as a historical-material passage as a decisive moment in the qualification of the 'NosOtros' that we are. The human being, in short, can be de-finite precisely because it is finite, but this does not mean that it can be ontologised, crystallised in an absolute human nature; the Other always acts on it as the Other, as what happens to him/her in history. If, for Espinoza, it is the Oedipal dimension that opens us up to the world of Capital: "the pre-oedipal places us in a certain transgressive bond in which waiting becomes more pleasant and at the same time more painful when the child merges with the mother. And if finally in the perversion of waiting there is a formal leap of gratuitousness in waiting, we are in front of the liberating waiting that I would call: love" (Espinoza, 2021, p. 170). This love, which already played a key role in the text of NosOtros by defining the only possible space for the encounter with the Other outside the Capital system (Espinoza, 2019, pp. 145-159), shows itself in the relationship of distance between bodies; a new dimension of love as it has emerged since the times of the Pandemic and in the post-pandemic world has to be thought of in order to overcome capitalist psychoticisation and define a theory of the real for the NosOtros of today.

In the recent essay *The Revolution of the WeOthers (NosOtros)... Around a Theory of the Real for a Material Historical Politics of Our Times, in Is politics possible today?* (2022), Espinoza recognises in the theme of the body the political element, the key, for the activation of the NosOtros; the distance in which the real is defined is that between bodies that move, that change, that desire, historical bodies, material bodies, bodies that love: "and this is because the real happens as distance, that is, as what allows us to be always in movement, in transit, with each other, with everything, in the real itself; breaking all the limits that seek to enclose us in external and dead categories such as the self or the nation state" (Espinoza, 2022, p. 271). Distance is thus constitutive of reality itself, and the measure of distance between bodies is the space of power and its governance. For Espinoza, this body does not possess a universal, metaphysical dimension, but is always a sexualised body, a body in history, which experiences distance as a performative act of itself; a NosOtros that is a sexualised, mortal and historical dynamic structure that is articulated in a permanent liberatory tension. The critique of the mythological figure of Theseus is used to define this foundational distance of the real in terms of countervailing power, seeking a new semantic space for the word people as a necessity of the post-pandemic phase, that of isolation and expectation. Espinoza is clearly not interested in the mythicisation of the people as occurs in populisms, but is called to its re-signification by the consideration that the NosOtros in order to be real, and not a mere ethical signifier, needs a social space where the distance with the Other can be realised: "Theseus as a people, but of a people that must be thematised in a more finished form, at the height of these times and with a vision of the real, at the same time, structural as a constitutive and dynamic distance, as movement itself in all its fleeting, contingent becoming, which never closes in any way whatsoever" (Espinoza, 2022, p. 277).

In reality, it is a question of activating the human being for what he is, namely an animal that, following Xavier Zubiri's lesson, precisely through distance formalises the real. In this lies precisely being human: "the very distance of the real: it is our radical sexual mortality" (Espinoza, 2022, p. 282). The recognition of what being human properly is imposes the recognition of NosOtros as the theme of the relationship between mixture and border. The human being is a mixture derived from his historical-natural-sexual nature, but this triad that keeps him in constant transition also defines him in his being

constantly placed on the border. Espinoza adopts the words of Gloria Anzaldúa, in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987):

Borders are designed to define the places that are safe and those that are not, to distinguish the us (us) from them (them). A border is a dividing line, a thin stripe along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague, undefined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. Its inhabitants are the forbidden and the banned. There live the crossed: the cross-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the problematic, the street pimps, the mulatto, the mixed race, the half-dead; in short, those who cross, who pass over or cross the boundaries of "normal" (Anzaldúa, 1997, p. 42).

Espinoza's *NosOtros* contains within it both the 'We' and 'They' and aims to recognise that liberation, what in Chilean parlance is the escape from the labyrinth of Capitalism, passes through the recognition of the transition that the human being as *NosOtros* is, first and foremost as a body. The recognition of the body as *NosOtros* in transition is not an egoic act, which can take place alone, but needs the *people* because only they can question what is instituted, normalised, crystallised: "in the tumult, in the revolt, the people as people express their own real movement; and this movement indicates to us the arrival of history, the irruption of history, with all the pain that this may entail" (Espinoza, 2022, p. 275). It is about a constituent, new, real power that rests on the pain of the encounter between the self and the Other; an encounter that is made in suffering; the construction of a people in the becoming of history, not of a people to come, but of something that is already there, that does not seek a Theseus to emerge, but that moves as a political body not ontological, abstract, but material, real, alive: "And we love one another "in the same boat" of our bodies tattooed through our socio-history and which opens us up to a possible emancipation that revolutionises everything; and so we pervert what we have been told about each other, because everyone is from an Other" (Espinoza, p. 291).

Conclusions

Having chosen to delve into two South American authors was not an arbitrary choice but a necessity within a precise methodological-historical dimension. As José Ortega y Gasset wrote, one cannot believe that:

history is made by showing the influence an earlier idea had on a later one. This is a pure metaphor. An idea of yesterday does not influence an idea of today, strictly speaking, but the former influences a human being who reacts to that influence with a new idea. It is vain to want to make history if one avoids talking about men and collectivities of men. In short, the history of philosophy will have to annul the supposed dehumanised existence in which it offers us doctrines and immerse them once again in the dynamism of human life, showing us their teleological functioning in it (Ortega; Gasset, 1964b, p. 393).

Bearing this Ortegian note in mind, in order to understand the scope of the philosophical investigation around the "We" it is necessary to delve into the textual contexts, both the well-known and the lesser-known, through a reconnaissance that is reconstruction and not mere doxography. It is necessary to trace elements within the history of philosophy capable of representing the coordinates of a philosophical proposal that moves in the space of a word that comes alive, made up of faces, stories, places. For this, a mere study of the 'history of ideas' is not enough, even if it presupposes and draws on research in this field, but of an in-depth historical-philosophical study of the philosophical positions and traditions that have sublimated the concept of 'nosotros', but to be recovered in the historicity of the philosophical discourse where they emerge. It is undeniable that the development of

Ibero-American philosophy can represent a privileged place of investigation to avoid any slide towards an empty, abstract, self-referential historiographical narrative; that unitary experience for the Ibero-American continent that was and is the 'philosophy of liberation', presents the opportunity to historically address the role and scope of the concept of 'nosotros' within it, while offering the possibility of comparing it with the Western tradition in which it nonetheless originates. As José Gaos has written: "this History of Ideas is only a part of the only History that actually exists: that of human history in its totality, in its integrity, which is that of all its 'real' and 'ideal' factors, individual and collective, in all their reciprocal connections" (Gaos, 1996, p. 279). If the reflection on the 'We' has been attested in European philosophy within the problematic of the 'gift' with Jean-Luc Marion (1997) or the convivialism of Alain Caillé (2011), in Ibero-American philosophy it was first recognised as an identity paradigm, then as an ethical-political device. In his *Politics*, Aristotle (1253a 19-24) sees in the 'we' the subject who has the more general task of protecting the city as the object of political action and collective well-being, while it is Hegel who defines the coordinates of the modern dimension on the 'we' in the *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Sgarro, 2023, p. 236-239). Of this history, therefore, which is not universal, but global, which reconnects theoretical positions and fact of reality, the philosophy of liberation with its thematisation of the question of we/nosotros is an integral if not decisive part.

Authors such as Scannone and Espinoza are just two examples of a philosophical proposal capable of broadening its scope despite being born in a specific place and period. Two authors who are part of the same philosophical tradition but who interpret the question of 'nosotros' through contiguous but not directly superimposable elements; the *ethical-historical nosotros* Scannone, the *bodily-political nosotros* Espinoza, the characterisation of the space of the we through the element of *difference for the Argentinean*, that of *distance for the Chilean*, the dialoguing community as real space for the one, the socio-political institutions for the other. Two proposals that, however, do not merely describe from the outside, but are militant in reality, constructive and impactful with respect to the present. The Argentine philosopher was the 'teacher' of Pope Francis, who several times emphasised the importance of moving from the 'I' to the 'we'⁷, publishing in book form in 2013 the speech *We As Citizens, We As People* delivered by Jorge Mario Bergoglio on 16 October 2010 in Buenos Aires, during the 13th Day of Social Pastoral Care, a text that is all about Scannone's lesson on the relationship between *nosotros* and the *people*. On the other hand, the Chilean philosopher is at the centre of a network of scholars who now meet annually to discuss and focus on 'nosotros' as an interpretative paradigm of contemporary reality. The methodological-historical requirement presented is therefore aimed at connoting hermeneutic work not by bending backwards but by looking forwards, towards a history of ideas that moves from the universal to the global dimension, from the ideological to the practical, making 'nosotros' a device capable of speaking philosophically about the complexity of the human being, as a real, material, historical subject of today.

⁷ See https://www.corriere.it/spettacoli/21_gennaio_11/discorso-papa-l-importanza-passare-dall-io-noi-3a7ee01a-541f-11eb-ad41-ddad2172512f.shtml

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