

THE COMPLEXITY OF REALISM AND THE INDEXICALIST APPROACH: LIMITS AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT: The aim of this paper is to present my take on Professor Hilan Bensusan's *Indexicalism* project. I begin by showing how we might see indexicals emerging from the kenotypes, at least as how they are presented by Quentin Meillassoux, which places them inside a broader Categorical Matrix. Then, I endeavour to show how a complex take on Realism benefits greatly from kenotypes-indexicals, which are the very root of the possibility of an ontology of communication. I then present a few positive remarks and some critical observations regarding the construction of the Indexicalism project and its limits, while showing how we might create further alliances towards a new kind of formal ontology.

KEYWORDS: Hilan Bensusan. Indexicalism. Speculative Realism. Metaphysics of the Others. Kenotypes (Meillassoux). Complex Realism (Surematics). Formal ontology.

INTRODUCTION

This paper will be based upon my communication at the *Indexicalism Online Book Symposium*, during September 30th up to October 1st, that was organized by Professor Hilan Bensusan and the *Revista Das Questões*, a local journal of philosophy at our home University of Brasília. My talk at the symposium was named “Indexicals and Kenotypes – or, why signs devoid of meaning matter for communication theory”. At the time I divided my intervention in two parts. First, I was concerned with bringing Quentin Meillassoux's theory on kenotypes closer to Bensusan's indexicals. Then, I offered some general remarks that focused on wider issues of the book *Indexicalism*.

While planning to write this specific paper for *Cosmos and History*, I re-worked

my presentation with some clarifications as it became clearer and clearer to me that those wider issues were, in fact, the core of my assessments towards Professor Bensusan's indexicalist project. During these long years that we have been in touch, since before he was my doctoral thesis advisor (2017-2021), we have shared spirited debates that often led to somewhat similar results in the aftermath. Sharing many ontological and political commitments towards pluralism and decoloniality, he presented me with many authors, movements and theories that have become paramount for my own thinking. Despite the many overlaps, we tend to disagree on some important issues that might reflect big picture-like differences on how we prefer to conduct philosophical investigations.

This paper was written on a diplomatic verve, on an ecological-metaphysical standpoint, through which we might preserve differences and flourish by them, even if one ecosystem of differences is not exactly the same as the another. I will begin by presenting briefly what I have been calling *Complex Realism*. Then I will bring Meillassoux's kenotypes to the discussion and showing how it enables us to incorporate Bensusan's indexicals into our *Categoreal Matrix*. I will conclude considering some lessons, limitations and prospects regarding *Indexicalism* and its project of the Metaphysics of the Others for the metametaphysics-building exercise of a territory that might be hospitable to both our theories. This paper, therefore, has a progressively gradual pace, written in an experimental fashion, being divided in two parts and a conclusion.

Part I – Indexicals and the complexity of reality

§1 OVERVIEW OF COMPLEX REALISM

While I was a doctoral candidate, I spent a lot of time reading about many authors that had significant overlaps and continuations between them, even if it was not always that obvious due to geographical and chronological distancing between them. I briefly considered embarking on a genealogical-like project which would track down links between philosophers such as Alfred N. Whitehead, Henri Bergson, Charles S. Peirce, to less-known ones, such as Jean Wahl, Anne Conway, and Nicolai Hartmann. Despite that, the connection between them only hinted at something far grander behind the obfuscating lights of modernity and its supremacist reasoning. While working with important

scholars on Global philosophies, such as Professor Bensusan's proximity to Amerindian philosophical cosmologies; Professor Wanderson Flor as one of the leading experts on African and Afro-Diasporic philosophies; as well as Eastern and Greco-Roman authors, it suddenly became clear that all these shared something in common.

Obviously, it is not a common content-related thesis, part of a cheap universalist view, or even a pseudo-ecumenical approach. They share what I started to call a *Complex Realist* way towards what there is. That means, even if they came from places of self-imposed centrality; or self-granted higher importance, that did not mean they would fight to eradicate the others just because they are not adherents to this or that *Weltanschauung*. The general idea of modes of existence and ontological pluralism were the very beginning of all global cultures. Edward Butler, one of the foremost Pagan Studies scholars of our times, has put this nicely on his paper while referring to polytheistic cultures: "Being is widely, generously distributed. We ask *how* something exists, not *whether* it does" (Butler, 2020).

Complex Realism might be firstly presented as a way to characterize this *ecologization* of metaphysics, to use Bruno Latour's expression (2013), which deals in plurality of existences, Gods, forms of living and civilizatory aims¹. What might be such a novelty for moderns – that there are other peoples with different lives, values, ontologies that are irreducible to their own's – was the starting point of all human collectives worldwide. Wars, diplomacy, alliances and trade became available only through this basal intuition, lost by the moderns' unaccounted certainty that they, and only they, are the motors of progress, of history, of evolution – relegating the Others as less than, as superstitious, as underdeveloped, or, simply, as pre-modern.

It is not enough merely to reject this metaphysical catastrophe. Something constructive must be offered as well. That being said, Complex Realism is an

¹ Every time we talk about ecologization of metaphysics it needs to be very clear that Ecology is not hand-holding on flowery gardens; nor hugging dolphins or trees. Brazilian Amerindians, in their proximity with anthropologists, such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, long have talked about a *metaphysics of predation*. Ecology is also a fight for survival, the construction of alliances and symbiosis, negotiation and compromise between living being among themselves and towards the inorganic universe. Ecology has more to do with diplomatic and ontological work than a collection of well-intended speeches and individualized actions.

attempt to build on that pluralist ontological general framework a way through which we can provide a hub, a forum for different traditions to make alliances, to work and to promote their standpoints. The general flair of this project has only recently been worked out at my work “First Outline of a Treatise on Metametaphysics: Introduction to Complex Realism”². For this idea to take off, we will need to implement what I have been naming as *Categoreal Matrix*. It will work with some metaphysical categories to build this forum in which different traditions might come to feel at home.

Now that we have glanced at the spirit through which my research began, we shall focus specifically on the chosen name. To what does Complex Realism refer? Or, what kind of thinkers, philosophical movements or theoretical schools could be described as complex realists? First, it encompasses thinkers that believe reality is what matters, be it for description, for planning changes, for acclimation, for conformity, for intervention. This means something that includes humans’ minds and humans’ societies, but also lies beyond what humans think and do regarding things. *Realism*, in this view, is a very broad name for an attitude towards what-there-is – which, paraphrasing one of Neil DeGrasse Tyson’s popular sayings, is under no obligation to make sense for you, for me, For-Us.

At its turn, the *complex* at that denomination marks an attitude that generally accepts the Aristotelian lesson that the whole is different than its parts, and is also different from the sum of its parts³. To find the final bedrock, or the final fundamental particle of nature and whatnot, might be interesting for some people, but not for complexity-driven thinkers. Building blocks lose their supposedly irresistible importance since what they are building is, nevertheless, different from what their mere mereological relations are. Complexity-driven thinkers usually see simplicity as misleading, as illusory, as a waste of energy. Or, as we might add, simplicity is a surface-effect of an incredibly complex inside which has become stabilized over time. The “simple” is one explanatory tool among others, not the origin, nor the purpose of the investigation.

Who seems to fit this bill, regarding Western and Greco-Roman thinkers? Names like Plato, Aristotle, Proclus, Gottfried Leibniz, Friedrich Schelling,

² Maciel, 2021. Available at: <https://repositorio.unb.br/handle/10482/41938> (for now, only in Portuguese).

³ Aristotle, 1991, Book H 1045a 8–10.

Edmund Husserl, Alfred N. Whitehead, Nicolai Hartmann; and some contemporary authors associated with them, such as Niklas Luhmann, Bruno Latour and some of those among the Speculative Realists. I have created this umbrella-term of Complex Realism (CR) to find a way to rally all these contributions based on their shared disinclination towards (inter)subjective idealism, naturalism or physicalism, psychologism, and many other errors of similar kinds of “-isms”. For now, this is enough to mobilize the CR-denomination.

§2 THREE BASAL NOTIONS OF COMPLEX REALISM

The *first basal notion*, naturally, is **complexity**. That means, things are not assumed to be simple, to be well-behaved, to be fully rational, or fully irrational. Knowledge is a struggle, an adventure, an exercise of labour and commitment. Complexity does not mean chaos, but it also obviously does not mean order. Its closest categorial characterization is Whitehead’s Category of the Ultimate, i.e., Creativity⁴. It encompasses states and general dispositions of enthalpy and entropy not in a static, photographic-like view: new states and new general enthalpies and entropies are generated by agencies, externalities, feedbacks. That being said, there is no quick and easy way to dealing with complexity: learning **how** to do so, or **when** and **why** to minimize it, **is** the primary motivation for the emergence of any philosophy, theory or practice – in any collective whatsoever.

The *second basal notion* is that **existence is not univocal**. This is shared by all complex realists – in some of them, it is evident, whereas in others this is tacitly assumed. Different *kinds* or *modes* of existence are there, and a CR-approach benefits from this plurality instead of proceeding in the modernist vein of trying to reduce everything into a single, unifying substance, category or type of existence. To use Ian Bogost’s slogan, “all things equally exist, yet they do not exist equally”⁵. If we use existence in an *indexical* way, as does Bensusan, we are able to point to, to categorize, to work ourselves towards *this* or *that* existence without presuming it *is* the same thing; or, that it *is* the same substance, or that it

⁴ Whitehead, 1978, p. 21-22.

⁵ Bogost, 2012, p. 11

is the Same, in any way. Although somewhat different from the specific Levinasian use, the non-univocity of existence is one possible way for us to negotiate with him and his terms against the primacy of the neutral terms, as if existence was one single drone's-eye view from nowhere.

This basal notion might be found more prominently in process-related thinkers such as Alfred N. Whitehead and his eight-categories of existence⁶, Étienne Souriau's intensive and specific modes of existence⁷; and Bruno Latour's fifteen modes of existence⁸ that, despite being more centred in an anthropology of the moderns, it still provides interesting insights for other collectives as well.

Another way of putting it is by resorting to Nicolai Hartmann's "critical realism", as he named his own theory. His *prima philosophia* divides what there is into two spheres of Being, each with many internal differentiations and strata that are irreducible to one another⁹. The Ideal Sphere is comprised of four kinds of beings: mathematical, logical, phenomenological essences and values. They are "ideal" inasmuch they are not affected by time. One plus one is two, regardless of duration or concrescence. On the other hand, Real Beings are those that generate and are affected by time. When we put real things on some sort of ontological centrifuge (which is the purpose of the discipline of the *Kategorienlehre*, the Category Theory), like the blood, it becomes stratified. We can see physical, organic, psychological and spiritual beings, each with their own "density", elements, categoreal laws, descriptions and limits. The *density*, in this case, means that lower strata are "stronger" than those that are superimposed on them, however, they present less variation and freedom to promote novel structural couplings.

We might come to find categories that transcend ontological regions, such as the category of space, which appears in physical beings and in biological beings. However, that does not mean these two kinds of being are the same. Even regarding shared categories, the way in which they are employed is completely system-oriented, object-oriented. Categories might have some overlap, but this is

⁶ Whitehead, 1978, p. 22.

⁷ Souriau, 2015.

⁸ Latour, 2013.

⁹ This division is somewhat omnipresent throughout all his metaphysical works. For a general overview, cf. Hartmann 2019.

not complete, nor presumed, nor assumed – and finding out where these overlaps and their limits are part of the investigation that he named *Kategorienlehre*.

Also, through Hartmann we arrive at the *third basal notion* for complex realism that we name the **double limitation of the investigation**. This is a very peculiar philosopheme that is not evident in other complexity-traditions, but it might be inferred without much difficulty. Let's take another major branch of Complex Realism, those that come from the traditions around Substance Theory and its investigation. Like in Aristotle, Leibniz and Object-Oriented Ontologies (OOO), the substance is under no obligation to make sense to the perceiver. For them, Being is not dependent upon being perceived, being indexed, being pointed at. From this intuition came the notions that revolve around the thing-in-itself, OOO's real object and its withdrawal, and Hartmann's **being-in-itself**. This represents, for a lack of better wording, a “natural” limit to any sort of contact and of cognition. In this last case specifically, under a CR-orientation, cognition is not thought to be fully intelligible or disclosed; or to be eternal, unchangeable or gratuitously stable, but something that we have to work very hard for, and, despite that, it may or may not lead us to new ways of understanding and acting in the world.

That is the first limitation. The second “natural” limit to cognition is the **cognition of the categories themselves**. The philosophical, theoretical and practical understandings of categories are not transparent, are not ready-to-hand, are not present-at-hand. For example, the category of space, which is conceptualized in a myriad of different and even contradictory ways, is a fine example. To use and to understand the category of space involves intuition, metaphysics, science, logical spaces, celomatic cellular interiorities, urbanistic designs, geopolitical strategies, and so much more. Another example is the category of life, which does not mean every life is the same, or that every life needs the same things, or that living beings are only referrable to one specific planet.

Therefore, we have not one, but *two limitations* according to Hartmann. One is the towards the objects, the thing-in-itself as such; the other one is towards categories themselves. Things and categories are not transparent, for they also combine both **trans-objectivity** (what lies beyond what we are able to objectify), and **trans-intelligibility** (what we don't even know that we don't

know), to use Hartmann's terms (2019). Other CR-traditions have worked on this difficulty as well, even if not as textually explicit such as Hartmann's critical realism. Understanding Plato's Good, or Aristotle's Sensible Forms, or Laozi's Dao, or Buddha's Nirvana, is just as much part of the challenge as of the solution. The proper usage of categories is another problem of any sophisticated knowledge that tries to deal with a complex and creative world. A good CR-driven actor must extend herself in a double horizon in her own philosophical, theoretical and practical cultivations: towards the world, the real, the modes of existence; and towards the categories themselves that she uses to sophisticate her dealings with what there is.

Complexity, plurality of modes of existence, and the double limitation of the investigation are the three basal notions present in all Complex Realist philosophies. It must be said that these are *categoreal intuitions*, not a list of definite descriptions and ready-at-hand concepts shared in a hovering universal way. Concepts are not necessary to understand the basic intuition that things are not as simple as one might have initially thought; or that things exist in ways that are not my own's. Whether we call this intuition “ $\mathcal{H}\mathcal{H}\mathcal{H}$ ” or “ $\mathcal{O}\mathcal{O}\mathcal{O}$ ” is something entirely *a posteriori*.

§3 ON KENOTYPES

For Complex Realism to work as a forum, or as some sort of philosophical territory for the ecologization of metaphysics, we need a **Categoreal Matrix**. We have seen the *Category First*, a term which indicates that which is centred around complex creativity and its subsequent plurality of modes of existence. Eight more are needed for a full-on Complex Realist approach, but we shall focus here today on how to communicate about things, about us, about the world, and even about the Categoreal Matrix itself.¹⁰ For now, we shall focus on Quentin Meillassoux's Berlin Lecture, published as “Iteration, Reiteration, Repetition: A speculative Analysis of the Sign Devoid of Meaning” (2016).

I will not write here once again about correlationism and the metaphysics of

¹⁰ There will be a paper and a book chapter on this Categoreal Matrix coming out soon. The paper will be published in the *Revista das Questões*' special issue on the “Fifteen Years of Speculative Realism”, edited by Professor Hilan Bensusan, Professor Charlie Johns, alongside myself and my PhD colleague, André Arnaut. This special issue will be turned into an upcoming book by Punctum somewhen in 2022.

intersubjectivity and how they are problems to be surpassed, but I shall focus on Meillassoux's notion of the kenotype. He comes to it by the latter half of that long Berlin Lecture which presented a reworking of his original 2006 theory, alongside some innovations into how to make *Speculative Materialism* a thing. Meillassoux seems particularly worried about the bad reception his theory had, which hinted at a somewhat anti-scientific stance. If the Hyperchaos could automatically destroy anything, rendering the sciences useless, his theory resembled to be just one more to be presenting a post-modern nihilistic anti-science worldview. That is not the case, and Meillassoux goes to great lengths to prove that his theory is closely aligned to the sciences: even if Speculative Materialism rejects positivism and scientism, it embraces a strong pro-science attitude while positing itself neither as a rejector, nor a vassal, but as an interesting ally to the sciences. This is done inasmuch as Meillassoux wants to repeat the “**Galilean gesture**”¹¹ of providing a complex theory for the mathematization of the sciences. For this, Meillassoux playfully nicknames his own theory as a Speculative “Math-erialism”¹².

Instead of focusing on the traditional Number Theory approach, Meillassoux begins with Alain Badiou's intuition about Set Theory. The “Galilean gesture”, in Meillassoux's interpretation, will involve a way to rework mathematics and the scientific reasoning through his own Speculative Materialist orientation. For that, he brings the idea of **kenotype**. He claims this notion was already present in Charles S. Peirce's works, but he is now working it under a specific denomination. The word comes from $\kappa\epsilon\nu\acute{o}\varsigma$, which means “empty” or “void” in the Greek language. The kenotype does not fall into the general categorization of concepts, since it is a *sign devoid of meaning* that is not derived from the old concept/object dualism.

The English language misses the opportunity of the inherent ambiguity in the French word *sens*, which encompasses both *meaning* and *direction*. This fertile ambiguity is preserved in the Portuguese language, for *sentido* also means “meaning”, in this semantic sense; but it also means “direction”, as in a little arrow, a vector, an *indexical*. Meillassoux's purpose is to show that his kenotype is

¹¹ Meillassoux, 2016, p. 141.

¹² Meillassoux, 2016, p. 154.

necessary to produce hypotheses about what there is, which can be revised and executed without the need for this or that presence. Were it presence-dependant, it would not only fail challenges posed by Jacques Derrida's critique of the metaphysics of presence, but it would presuppose time and place as basis for the kenotypes, which is not the case in Meillassoux's theory. In his approach, kenotypes are mainly employed by Set Theory, for example, for giving a name for a set:

“It is hence this that we call a ‘set’: a sign, itself devoid of signification, and *a fortiori* of any reference. And this is the initial object of mathematics, insofar as the latter is ‘founded’ upon set theory: the pure and simple sign that refers only to itself” (Meillassoux, 2016, p. 160).

He reminds us that this is the source of all numeration in Set Theory, for to count a numerically one kenotype, which named any set whatsoever, whatever elements it may contain, is the origin of arithmetic. In this sense, he differs **primoabsolatory** statements, such as those about the Hyperchaos and absolute contingency; from **deuteroabsolatory** statements, which belong to facts that are there. These are absolutely contingent related to the Hyperchaos' whimsical powers – but, since they already exist, *they are there*, they exhibit “properties independent vis-à-vis the human, implying no ontological necessity” (2016, p. 157). His idea is that formal language, I would add “*formal ontology*”, is perfectly well-equipped for creating deuteroabsolatory statements about factual things, at least while the primoabsolatory Hyperchaos doesn't destroy them on a whim.

Meillassoux differs between natural language and formal language in terms of the way in which kenotypes appear in them. Natural languages usually avoid kenotypes, or employ them for writing senseless things, like the *flhagn* in Lovecraft's literature, for specific aesthetical purposes. However, formal languages not only use kenotypes, but establish specific rules for its usage, such as the employment of variables in mathematics. When we talk about “find the ‘x’”, we are not necessarily meaning the X, the letter found in most Latin-based alphabets. It might be an elephant, a set of irrational numbers, three electrons. This means, formal language does not “lack” anything. Actually, it is the natural language that lacks something: it lacks rules for dealing and employing kenotypes. The suggested conclusion is that kenotypical languages are able to help formal ontologies in producing realistically complex statements about what there is, be

it in a “speculative materialist” fashion, or otherwise.

Now, for ambiguity-preservation purposes around the French word *sens*, which works between semantics and direction, I will quote from Meillassoux’s paper replacing the translation in order to showcase its fertility of the *directionless sign* and the *meaningless sign*. I’ll let the reader try to guess which *sens* means which *sens*.

“The empty sign, *qua* true sign, uncovers for us the remarkable fact that *sens* is contingent in the constitution of the sign, that the sign has no need for *sens* in order to be a sign – and that semiotics (the study of signs) comes before semantics (the theory of meaning), and is independent of it: the former covers a domain that is autonomous from the latter, the domain of the nonsignifying sign” (Meillassoux, 2016, p. 164)¹³

Meillassoux uses this to claim that the arbitrariness of the sign is not exactly as Saussure posited it, but when you repeat a single kenotype 10 or 20 times, you don’t learn anything about it, for it is not tied necessarily neither to *this sens* (meaning) nor to *that sens* (vector). Yet, you can identify that it is the same kenotype being repeated 10 or 20 times, which means you can know something without knowing of what that is a concept. He says this in a way that might partially appeal to Bensusan: it is not about connecting kenotypes to concepts, but it is the case of *disconnecting* the kenotype from any instantiated signification, interrupting the expectancy that every sign needs to have a *sens* (meaning-vector) in order to be.

§4 KENOTYPES, REPETITION, ITERATIONS

Now engaging with Henri Bergson, Meillassoux differs between a quantitative multiplicity and a qualitative multiplicity. The first is a mere juxtaposition; the latter is intertwined by duration. It would be what enables us to differentiate between randomly juxtaposed noises from a melody. Meillassoux enjoys Bergson’s examples, but adds that spatial multiplicity is also possible, not only those mediated by time or duration. For example, the repetition in space also

¹³ The original: “The empty sign, *qua* true sign, uncovers for us the remarkable fact *that meaning is contingent in the constitution of the sign*, that the sign has no need for meaning in order to be a sign – and that semiotics (the study of signs) comes before semantics (the theory of meaning), and is independent of it: the former covers a domain that is autonomous from the latter, the domain of the nonsignifying sign”.

might be just a decoration, like the frieze on the façade of a historical building; or the repetition of something that has meaning, like the repetition of smoke signals that indicate a location in the woods, traffic signs or even architectural elements of this or that school.

For Meillassoux, **repetition** is a finite recurrence that works on a *differential level*: you can only know what a musical tone or a spatial trace is by contrasting them with other tones or traces, for example, to understand what a melody is. However, if the melody is finite, it is ended at some point, and the repetition is interrupted. Therefore, it is not enough to understand the kenotypes, since they are devoid of *sens*, of direction, of semantics. A speculative materialist, a scientist, and other complex realists, must not merely contrast void with void, for it generates nothing of primo- nor deuterioabsolutive philosophical value.

On the other hand, Meillassoux calls **iteration** a recurrence that is *nondifferential*, hence unlimited, because it produces a pure identity of marks without need for any kind of *sens*. It escapes the effects of repetition, since iteration “finds in the mark itself a property= x which is not dependent upon time or space, an which therefore is, in the strict sense, atemporal and nonspatialized even though it might be about a material thing” (Meillassoux, 2016, p. 176). In conclusion, **reiteration**, then, has a *differential* flavour, since it is posited towards that which was iterated – but it is as unlimited as that which it reiterates. If iteration has a primoabsolutive flavour, so to speak, the reiteration has a deuterioabsolutive flavour related to it. Meillassoux writes:

“If we were to derive the absolutive capacity of reiteration, we would obtain: (a) as primoabsolute, the thesis that every possible world can be measured by mathematical multiplicities; (b) the fact that an actual, determinate world (deuterioabsolutive, contingent but independent of us) can thus be the object of such measurements and can be known for what it is specifically (in opposition to any other world), by way of operations inherited from the remarkable property of every world: measurability (access to deuterioabsolutive differences)”. (Meillassoux, 2016, p. 178).

The important conclusion that we draw from this is that **the kenotype does not need to be indexical**. In fact, it *needs to not be* indexical. Instead of presupposing that time, space, here, there, inner, outer or other indexicals are the rock-bottom of reality, Meillassoux shows us that this search for the “fundamental particle” is ultimately dispensable. Be it because of the primoabsolutive primacy

of the Hyperchaos and its absolute necessity of contingency that can destroy *any* thing at *any* time; be it because (f)actual statements about what-there-is are done in a deuterioabsolutive way that might employ indexicals, but they do not need to. The “to what” we are referring might employ time and space with indexical uses, but this is not a requirement for kenotypes in order for them to be the gateway into communication theory.

That being said, the reverse seems very fertile: kenotypes might come to be indexicalized. In fact, it seems that all languages, references, communications and predications need to indexicalize kenotypes. What does that mean? Kenotypes are eligible to be mobilized, to obtain a vectorial feature that allows them to be placed, localized, situated. One of Latour’s ANT catchphrases might be useful here: “**locals are localized, places are placed**”¹⁴. Now, having at least place, they might be contrasted with other things in order to give rise to duration and to the valuation operations involved in the rise of semantics. In our specific CR-interpretation, kenotypes are the ground zero – and, when they acquire *sens*, they are finally on the road to becoming indexicals.

§5 SOME CATEGORIES OF COMPLEX REALISM

The path I chose to write this paper brought us to a very fruitful crossing of influences. Coming from a general CR-orientation that was an umbrella-term for many philosophers and theories, now we may begin to build a more specific CR that works its own **Categoreal Matrix**, specifically in the way of how to refer to things, how to talk about what there is. This is attempted through Latour’s proposal of an **infralanguage** which does not monopolize *sens*-production, but tries to find a way to mobilize intuitions and notions through the instauration of specific reproduction-reference networks¹⁵. The transition between kenotypes into indexicals, and from indexicals to more complex categoreal kinds inside the categoreal region of communication, is the topic of our current session. I restate that CR deals with at least nine categories of existence, one of them is this region of “kenotypes-indexicals-communication” we shall focus now.

The categories here are named only by numbers, and they have some

¹⁴ Latour, 2005, p. 195.

¹⁵ Latour, 2013, p. 160.

nicknames or common usages. For example, the *Category First* being called “complex creativity” is not a reduction of it towards a Whiteheadian-only way of viewing it, for it also needs Luhmann’s complexity-and-contingency approach, and even some of Meillassoux’s Hyperchaos reasoning, in my understanding. I presented this Categorical Matrix on my doctoral thesis by attributing a number in one of the Chinese “High Writing” numerals, which are used in formal, military and financial matters to differentiate them from the simpler quotidian writing of the numerals. The category-numbers have nicknames from more known uses and authors to help the reader to grasp the categorical intuition – nonetheless, the provided descriptions are not exhaustive.

As the Category First was already glanced upon, the ones from Second to Fifth are nicknamed as follows: 2) monads-actual entities-actants; 3) *Eidos*-intelligibles-forms of definitude; 4) prehension-pulsion-impulsions; and 5) nexus-association-network. Categories Second, Fourth and Fifth are usually focused on the “monads”, here taken simply as tiny centres of action; their pulsion and prehensions towards one another; as well as their stabilized prehensions that might form associations, networks and other forms of nexūs¹⁶.

As important as these categories are for many of those that might find a home in the territory of Complex Realism, they are not the centre of what I, myself, consider the most relevant for my version inside that broader CR paradigm. They are not enough to have a properly sophisticated study of what there is. When a nexus folds in on itself, with its beginning and endings connected, it gives rise to the interior/exterior metacategory, like a bunch of cells that, now, are organized in a celomatic way and might become a new eukaryotic organism or even an embryo. At this point it is not just a chain of actors in an open network any longer, but something different has emerged that has a formal border between interior/exterior, between the indoors and the outdoors. What we have seen here is the emergence of an *object*, a *body*, a *system*.

Objects, for my version of CR, need only to attain this connectedness of whatever is internal that distinguishes itself from whatever is external. It might be a mathematical object, a fictional object, a formal object. It is defined not by what type of content it has, or by which materials it is made of, but by the *form of*

¹⁶ Maciel, 2021, T. II, C. 2, Sections §1 and §2.

its difference, by its *limit*. Some objects are real, which means, they deal with duration and localization in the physical world in one specific way or another. Some of these attain even higher forms of organization, i.e., self-organization and autopoiesis, becoming living bodies. Since the term “body” is usually associated with physical and biological objects, it might be useful for many dwellers at the territory of Complex Realism. Be that as it may, the emergence of autopoiesis in bodies links our metaphysics to the more abstract readings of autopoiesis which are not only biological, or bio-centric, but also describes psychological and sociocultural systems (such as Law, Art, Economics, Religion, Science, etc.)¹⁷. For my version of CR, this is the gravitational, the metaphysical centre of our philosophy¹⁸.

Developing this intuition some years ago, I have minutely worked on what I called the “Primacy of the Ontological Principle”¹⁹ in order to build my version of the CR centred on what came to be the *Category Sixth* (C6). That meant that the Whiteheadian “Principle of Process” and the “Principle of Relativity” are of paramount importance inasmuch they are channelled into an individuated ontological entity, i.e., an object, a body, a system. Whitehead enunciates these three principles as some of the Categories of Explanation. Process: “*how* an actual entity *becomes* constitutes *what* the actual entity is. Its ‘being’ is constituted by its ‘becoming’”. Relativity: “it belongs to the nature of a ‘being’ that it is a potential for every ‘becoming’”. Ontology: “every condition to which the process of becoming conforms in any particular instance has its reason *either* in the character of some actual entity in the actual world of concrescence, *or* in the character of the subject which is in process of concrescence”²⁰. Summing up, *Process* generates

¹⁷ I energetically endorse Peter Gilgen’s suggestion, as well as my legal theory advisor’s interpretations, Thomas Vesting, that the category of autopoiesis in the Luhmannian Systems Theory is decidedly a formal category rather than a bio-centric concept. This reductionist prejudice has significantly hindered Luhmann’s theoretical and sociological reception beyond his nucleus of scholars. Cf. Gilgen’s Preface to his translation of Luhmann’s *Introduction to Systems Theory* for the UK public (Luhmann, 2013).

¹⁸ This does not mean that the other categories are superfluous. To use a biological metaphor, it is obvious that for most forms of life, carbon, hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen are the most important elements. This does not mean we can preclude of sodium and potassium, for example, since the nervous system will not function without these elements. Being the centre of the Categorical Matrix does not mean to be alone, to be exclusive, to be in an “either/or” situation. Primacy does not entail the exclusion of other categories.

¹⁹ Cf. Maciel, 2019.

²⁰ Cf. Whitehead’s categories of explanation numbers IV, IX, XVIII in. 1978, p. 22-25. Italics are his.

a C6, whereas *Relativity* mobilizes *this* particular C6 in the world of alliances, predation, socialization, or even to become building block for other processes for other ontologies.

§6 OBJECTS AND SYSTEMS OF OUR COMPLEX REALISM

We shall focus on the Category Third, Fourth and Seventh on this session²¹. Returning to the channelling of *Process* into *Ontology*, and from this into *Relativity*, as we have just covered on the last session, let us investigate how this is general intuition is presented by Whitehead himself:

“The real internal constitution of an actual entity progressively constitutes a decision conditioning the creativity which transcends that actuality. The Castle Rock at Edinburgh exists from moment to moment, and from century to century, by reason of the decision effected by its own historic route of antecedent occasions. And if, in some vast upheaval of nature, it were shattered into fragments, that convulsion would still be conditioned by the fact that it was the destruction of *that* rock. The point to be emphasized is the insistent particularity of things experienced and of the act of experiencing. Bradley’s doctrine – Wolf-eating-Lamb as a universal qualifying the absolute – is a travesty of the evidence. *That* wolf eat *that* lamb at *that* spot at *that* time: the wolf knew it; the lamb knew it; and the carrion birds knew it.” (Whitehead, 1978, p. 43, italics are his).

Now, notice how important indexicals are for Relativity. Not only to talk about real objects, real bodies, real systems (in this case, biological systems), but indexicals are important for referring, for hunting, for escaping, for “localizing locals” of possible food and shelter. The Category Sixth, centred on objects-bodies-systems, is not alone, from our metaphysical standpoint, in the instauration of a more sophisticated CR. We need to consider kenotypes-indexicals-communications, which will be our *Category Seventh*, in order to provide something more refined.

Speaking about hunting and localization, it is somewhat evident that Category Fourth (prehension-pulsion-impulsion) deals closely with many kinds of indexicals. The ancient Stoics’ notion of ὄρμη, often translated as *conatus*, explicitly involves a vectorialization from what is in the interior towards

²¹ As for the two remaining categories: the Eighth is nicknamed “metamorphosis”; and, the Category Ninth, deals with chaos and entropy more closely, connecting to Category First in general terms like “world” or “universe”. Alas, this is not the place to work all this out. They will be left for future papers.

something else. Desire, hope, knowledge, associations and others are categorically dependant on the Fourth to be operative. However, we add something important: relationality is a categoreal whole, which means, it does not need nor require reciprocity, symmetry, rhythms or any answer from the counterpart. This is why Samuel Alexander, Whitehead's Australian realist hero, dubbed this a "Principle of Unrest"²². If the Fourth comes from an indoors, we see how this connects itself to the Category Sixth, when the littlest celomatic interior appears alongside the emergent unities of objects, bodies and systems.

Now, let us focus on the interior/exterior which yields the emergence of a *form of difference*, the Category Third. This difference is bluntly defined as the difference between the difference and its outside. This phrasing is purposely reminiscent of Luhmann's saying that "a system is the difference between the system and its environment"²³. It is a simple trace, like George Spencer-Brown's two-sided form (\sqcap). This is one of the most abstract elements of our kind of CR.

Each of these differences is something in themselves. They might share similarities, but they will, at the very least of the tinniest particle, have different surroundings than another difference. This means asymmetry is the fabric of reality, not some original-sin-like defect to be corrected. For our version of Complex Realism, symmetry is negligible asymmetry under a given purpose. We consider many kinds of differences, such as algorithms; intelligibles (closer to the Stoic-Aristotelian tradition, less than in Plato's *Phaedrus*); Whiteheadian subjective forms, and his theories about the forms of definitude.

Now, when prehensions become interconnected in a mutually significative way, the public matter of fact emerges, the Whiteheadian nexus. When some of these nexūs that are maintained in associative-sociologically relevant way, networks appear. When networks become crucial for the emergence of new objects and new existences that have symbiotic relations to it, we have structural couplings. Finally, when networks and structural couplings vary in relevance, resistance, work, transport of goods, values and prehensions, we have societies. This categoreal deployment from mutually significant interconnection of

²² Whitehead, 1978, p. 28.

²³ Cf. both Maciel, 2021, T. II, C. 2, Section §1; and Luhmann, 2013, Third Conference.

prehensions up to networks and societies is the *Category Fifth*.

However, consider that to “enter a relation”, something is transiting between an interior/exterior, so the Fifth is categorially dependent upon the Third (the form of difference of each and every actant on said network), and upon the Fourth (the prehensions themselves). The dependence upon the Second might be too hard to keep track, since monads or actual entities are too volatile to be studied for macro-ontological purposes²⁴. In object-oriented (*pragma*²⁵-oriented) philosophies, theories, metaphysics, and practices, the Category Sixth becomes the obvious gravitational centre for investigations. Nexūs that begin and end within its own indoors form of difference are already an object, and the association of actual entities, prehensions, forms and even subsystems point at the fact that every object is a “social” object.

This is not a “social constructivist” standpoint in its vulgar understanding for at least two main reasons. First, the form of difference is paramount for what there is since it instaurates the exterior/interior. It is important not only for withdrawal, as sometimes seems to be the case in most OOO writings, but it enables management, through very sophisticated operations of variation, selection, internalization, re-stabilization, of what is welcomed and what is not welcomed indoors. To put it in a somewhat shocking way, a more significant comprehension of this metaphysical category is, in practice, knowing the difference between rape and a sexual relation. It is not just to “enter”, but the *how*, the *when*, and the *who* – all these are questions necessarily system-oriented, object-oriented, body-oriented, *each* with its *own* irreducible form of difference. Levi Bryant seems to have captured this Luhmannian idea in his version of OOO in an interesting way:

“Endo-relations constitute the internal structure of objects independent of all other objects, while exo-relations are relations that objects enter into with other objects.

²⁴ I have elsewhere written: “By “macro” I mean a quark, a cup, a legal codex, the country of Cambodia, or any object in OOO’s general terminology. This is to be distinguished from the micro-ontological level, which is the really intricate realm of a single withdrawing actual entity as the highest level of abstraction possible. Such an analysis dangerously borders the problem of vacuous actuality. As such, we will focus on the macro instead of the micro from now on, and will do so by stating and expanding our preference for the nexus as the beginning of the object-oriented philosophy we are sketching here” (Maciel, 2019, p. 332).

²⁵ Please notice that *πρᾶγμα*, in Ancient Greece, did not mean a subjective belief system, but it meant simply “a thing”, or “a fact”, something oriented to a concrete thing and its circumstances. In the Greeks’ and Peirce’s definition, a “pragma-oriented philosophy” might be many things but the Jamesian version.

Were objects constituted by their exo-relations or relations to other objects, the being would be frozen and nothing would be capable of movement or change. It is only where relations are external to objects that such change can be thought' (Bryant, 2011, p. 68).

The second reason comes from Latour's more ANT-centred phase. He used to write things like: the more "social", the less "social" things are. He prefaced that by separating social-sociology (typically modern and post-Rousseau and Durkheim) and association-sociology (closer to the Romans' usage of *seq-* words). By making a long case for why social-sociology is inappropriate for the study of actor-networks, Latour shows us that the more associated a grouping of actors is, the less open to whatever is outside them they are²⁶. From biker gangs to political cliques, the more the members are closely associated to one another, the less they are likely to accept newcomers. It becomes a necessary part of their ongoing group-identity construction to instaurate and to renew constantly the internal/external form of difference.

This is also evident from other "social objects", in Whitehead's sense, that prehend the same set of forms of definitudes and prehensions, such as the society of cells inside *my* body. They do not deny the sociability of the cells of *your* body, or from Plato's body, but they are *internally mine*, they form *my indoors*. Whiteheadian social objects are built *from the inside out*, much like Latour's associations, and they are not exhaustible by their exo-relations, nor by their endo-relations²⁷.

With that being said, the C6s might relate to one another and form new systems, new associations, new organisms. Symbioses are thus formed, and the emergence, for instance, of social systems, depend categorially on other objects, bodies, systems. A long road goes from mechanic systems, or *trivial machines* in Heinz von Foerster's nomenclature, up to *autopoietic systems*, which might be primarily organic, psychological or spiritual (sociocultural). Amoebas, dolphins, myself, the legal system of Brazil – all are specific kinds of autopoietic systems. What differentiates the primarily mechanical and organic systems in relation to

²⁶ Cf. Latour, 2005, particularly Part I.

²⁷ I have elsewhere worked the idea of a "real social object" as the centre of my philosophy some years past (cf. Maciel, 2019, p. 333 and ss.). Nowadays I have replaced that name with the more kenotypical term "Category Sixth", for it encompasses objects, bodies and systems in general.

other formal systems like mathematical or logical ones is that those have a specific space-time extensivity. It is particularly helpful to name these kinds of objects or systems as “bodies” for most cases and in most kinds of philosophical and sociological usages.

However, the Aristotelian principle still apply, for the emergent unity is not ontologically reducible to its own parts. As Markus Gabriel fortuitously titled his book, *I am not my brain; nor is a car its glovebox*. Now, this becomes even more evident when we are analysing psychological and social systems. In Luhmannian Systems Theory, these kinds of systems require another category in order to be something. The American Legal System is not made of the atoms in the USA’s Supreme Court stairs – rather, its characterization calls for a specific form of existence named **communication**.

§7 WHY KENOTYPES AND INDEXICALS MATTER FOR OUR COMPLEX REALIST ONTOLOGY?

In order to perform the ontological operations of psychological and spiritual/sociocultural systems, indexicals and kenotypes are of categorial necessity. To know *to whom, how, where, when* these differences are oriented, we have primarily focused on the Category Sixth, but it does not suffice for a more complex metaphysics. We have seen that when a difference folds in on itself, the celomatic space that might rally new actual entities, form *nexūs*, and welcome new symbioses is brought forth. For it changes the way the entity relates to itself and to its surroundings. Now, to understand the emergence of psychological and social systems, we need to delve into the specifics of Category Seventh²⁸.

We started with the kenotypes which, when they gain *sens* (direction-meaning), they might be vectorialized, they might be localized, they might be temporalized. In one word, they become indexicals. Monads and social objects can, through their own $\delta\rho\mu\alpha\tilde{\nu}$, vectorialize their prehensions. For example, the cation V^+ prehends the anion Z^- to form the social object “chemical compound \mathcal{Q} ”. It is important to notice that for this \mathcal{Q} , in terms of itself, what matters is *this*

²⁸ It is somewhat obvious that prehensions, associations and even the transit between the indoors of a Sixth demand kenotypical and indexical operations. We shall focus on the Sixth here for it is the centre for our kind of CR, but a Fourth-centred Indexicalism, for example, is also welcomed in our broader CR-territory.

\mathcal{V}^+ and *this* \mathfrak{B} , which were necessary for the emergence of *this* own social object form. This is much like in the aforementioned Whitehead's example: who eats *that* lamb is *that* wolf, not a general lamb being eaten by a general wolf.

However, before they might be thus employed, indexicals evolve from a kenotypical structuration. The kenotype, as can be seen now, has a pure form of difference, which renders it easily conflated with the Category Third. Notwithstanding this similarity, a paper-thin distinction must be made: a pure difference is under no obligation to be identified, to be pointed at, to be mobilized – a kenotype, in its turn, is the translation, transformation, the work of abstraction involved into transmuting²⁹ a difference into something capable of reiteration. The Category Third gives way into the Seventh when something important for Bensusan and for ourselves appears: the other. Not the Lacanian Great Other, nor the (supposedly not Great) Levinasian Other, but any other that performs this work of abstraction that transmutes a pure difference (C3) into a kenotype (C7). This is the gradient-zero for communication theory.

When kenotypes attain or are granted vectorial character, they might enter the long hard road of developing durational, spatial and semantic *sens*, of becoming something *about which* references might be constructed. Reference allows the mobilization of information, of attention, of direction – therefore, it distinguishes itself from what is mobilizes, from what directs attention. To indicate indexicals (or, in Whitehead's terms, *presentation immediacy*), while connecting to efficient causation which comes from monadic, nexual or prehensional levels (at least), is to give rise to the **symbol**. Mechanic and organic systems function with symbols. Autopoietic systems employ symbols in a way to sophisticate their interaction with their surroundings, usually in the form of smells, colours, sounds. The emergence of abstract symbols amplifies, in an exponentially wider way, the capacity for integration between system and environment. For example, to refer to “danger” in merely olfactory ways might not be as efficient in dealing with complexity as employing abstract symbols as a few systems do through sound or visual media.

We do not have much space to enter Luhmann's theory of communication,

²⁹ This term is a reference to Whitehead's Categorical Obligation number 6, named “Category of Transmutation” (Whitehead, 1978, p. 27), which I tend to interpret as the metaphysical instauration for Latour's social-ontological category of *work of abstraction*, or *work of translation*.

but he picks up right at this point³⁰. Symbols, units of data and references, compose the first of three selections: *Information*, in German. This is the “what” is inside this peculiar ontological existent we are discovering, the communicational unit. The second selection is the *Mitteilung*, which I like to play with the words *mit+teilen*, “with-sharing”. This selection is that of the way, the manner, the packing of the *Information* to be shared with whomsoever – which surely resonates with Marshall McLuhan’s known motto of “the medium is the message”³¹. The third selection must necessarily come from any other observant system, which selects *Information* and *Mitteilung* and produces *Verstehen*, the selection of understanding. This triple selection is necessary for a unit of communication to emerge.

Some mechanical and biopsychological systems develop a deeply symbiotic relation with ever more complex communications. Without it, the possibility of alliances, governments, resistances, rallies, and regimentation is unattainable. Through units of communication, ontological evolution allows propositions to be formed in a more stable way. Finally, the *communication of communication* generates not only an exponential gain, but also produces a new stratum of reality: the spiritual. Important for Luhmann and for us is that the basic unit of spiritual reality is communication – which is *detached, dislodged* from “whom” was communicating it. In this wild spiritual ontology, the communication of communication begins to stabilize interactions, organizations and, at later stages, to see functional differentiation through the instauration of self-referential forms. Thus, social systems like Law, Art, Religion, Science and Economy emerge.

In conclusion for this part, there is no sociology, no legal theory, no theology, no scientific theories without kenotypes-indexicals-communication. Even in our particular C6-centred Complex Realism, if we cannot talk about things or communicate about objects, bodies and systems, there is not much of philosophy at all. Keeping in mind the difference between the Third and the Seventh is of extraordinary importance for knowing that forms and objects do not need to be observed – but, if they do, the work of abstraction achievable from them cannot preclude from kenotypes and indexicals. In terms of Meillassoux, the Third is

³⁰ For more information on how he does that, cf. Luhmann, 2013, Lesson 13.

³¹ For a practical example, consider writing fonts. To write “I’ll always be at your side” with round and cute letters is one *Mitteilung* – to write it with pointy and scratchy letters is another thing entirely.

primoabsoluto, the Seventh is deutoabsoluto – both are crucial for a more complex realist understanding of what there is.

Part II – Indexicalism viewed from our Complex Realist philosophy

§1 CRUCIAL PROXIMITIES

All these discussions were necessary for us to better present and delineate our evaluation of Professor Hilan Bensusan's *Indexicalism*. The idea we have talked at length during the time I was his PhD student is that Complex Realism does not need to be focused only on *my* kind of CR. That is why I chose the name Categorical Matrix, since the denizens of this metametaphysical territory might take other categories to be the centre of their own ontological dynamics. My choice to focus on the Category Sixth does not invalidate the others. Be that as it may, the idea of the Matrix and the “territory” demands ontological plurality and an open-mindedness to complexity, contingency and creativity as the metametaphysical commitment we both share.

That being said, Professor Bensusan not only was the first to present to me many of the authors of my personal Pantheon, but we share many commitments to plurality, decolonization, and criticisms of philosophies of totalities. These are problems of metaphysical, political and theoretical-practical importance, as evidenced by the purpose Bensusan's discussion group, *Anarchai* (UnB), that constantly crosses between abstract ontological reasonings into a myriad of political consequences and directives. This is in line with another CR-friendly philosopher, Edmund Husserl, and his close preoccupation with the *Lebenswelt* that has sociological, political and economic implications too.

Another important thing we share with Bensusan is the idea of the “absence of a universe”, close to Markus Gabriel's catchphrase that “the world does not exist”. By these we do not mean that the Earth is an illusion, or that the Milky Way is a “liberal plot”, but that metaphysics that are built on, over, or about Totality are *not* the way to be followed by us both. In *Surematics*, the specific brand of my Complex Realism, we tend to interpret this philosopheme with Hume's help, inasmuch he denounced the notion of a totality of the “system of nature” as an inferential fraud or fallacy. To imagine that all life is the same of a single

totality is obviously fallacious as well: even if we define life as that which needs water, that definition is inherently flawed from the start (it takes the Fourth as if it was the Sixth), a fallacious definition that becomes even more evident when we find hydrophobic bacteria, for example. To imagine a single kind of psychological system, or one single kind of society, in turn, are both ideological moves without any backing from what there is.

The centrepiece of Bensusan's argument, the Other and its relation to what is inside, or "outside the Great Outdoors", we might say playfully, offers many insights as to how Indexicalism and Surematics might interact. This has mainly to do with Bensusan's concept of perception being closely tied to that of presentational immediacy and causal efficacy. We both developed that from Whitehead's theory of perception found in *Process and Reality*³². Professor Bensusan and I have worked this Whiteheadian idea in a way that attaches perception theory to an aesthetical approach to the world, in a somewhat Greco-Kantian way to employ this term. For them, aesthetics was not thought just as art theory, but a theory of subjectal/bodily receptivity and a pragmatic intertwinement of real, ideal, cognitive and metaphysical elements for even the most basic degrees of perceptions up to the most complex ones³³. In this sense, we strongly agree with Bensusan's take that the metaphysics of others "inverts a standard metaphysical order that places perception at the service of intelligibility". For him, the standard order sees senses as mere tools for arriving at intelligence – whereas for us in Complex Realism, "the senses drive thinking" (Bensusan, 2021, p. 159), in order to highlight this crucial proximity between an "ontological aesthetics" and what it might come to enable.

Bensusan's work shone a light on an aspect that, although I had worked on my thesis, I had not fully realized the grander scope of its importance. Receptivity is not just passive reception. Chrysippus, the third leader of the Greek Stoa, criticized Plato, Aristotle and the earlier Stoics on the grounds that they had a doctrine that the soul or the *pneuma* only "gave passage" to the intelligibles. This was the **Typosis** model of perception, like a typographic impression on the soul,

³² Cf. Whitehead, 1978, particularly Part II, Chapter 8.

³³ Cf. Maciel, 2021, T. III, C. 3, Section §2. This characteristic that crosses subject and object with formal principles and pragmatic concretes is named "orthogonality" in Hartmann's works (cf. Hartmann, 2019).

a blank *pneuma*, the precursor of the *tabula rasa* philosopheme. In his turn, Chrysippus, one of the main heroes of my works, developed another model of perception called **Alloiosis**, in which the *pneuma* functioned as a spider in its web, or as an octopus, extending its tentacles and retracting and reaching for many different ways and things at the same time³⁴.

Even though Bensusan's attempt to reinforce this active feature of perception relies too much on "hospitality" as a too general term in my opinion, it is nonetheless of paramount importance. We are hospitable with what comes from the outside, and it involves preparation, work, *interruption*. Receptivity, in Bensusan's philosophy, is a common act that links metaphysics of the other, the epistemology of perception, and the ethics of caring. Being so crucial for perception, experience, causation and metaphysics in general, the Other, whatever is outside the "here", does not invalidate the interior. Bensusan writes that "a transcendent exterior is not a negation"³⁵, and I could not agree more. Receiving what comes must not be seen as a mere passive act: much must be done for us to be seen as a good host, as a good hospitable householder – or even an inn, a monastery, a refugee camp.

Another thread that Professor Bensusan weaves into his fascinating approach of the metaphysics of the others is that it "attempts to consider the outside not as something to be included but as an interruption in the venture prompted by our practices of making things intelligible" (Bensusan, 2021, p. 4-5). This is gleefully received in its highlighting of many Complex Realists' takes on the irreducibility of the other (Latour), the double contingency of Parsons and Luhmann, and a demand for authenticity of ethical actions found in so many authors like Aristotle and even Heidegger. Working through a Levinasian approach, Bensusan develops this irreducibility, understood as a "inevitable recalcitrance" (Bensusan, 2021, p. 82), to the furthest lengths we have yet seen among other CR thinkers. Most importantly, the metaphysics of the others is fully ingrained at the very project of Indexicalism inasmuch Professor Bensusan defines its kind of realism as a "realism concerning the outside" (Bensusan, 2021, p. 9). Thus, the Other is not just a supporting character, but the Belle of the ball.

³⁴ Cf. Ildefonse, 2001, Chapter 2.

³⁵ Bensusan, 2021, p. 9

Yet another crucial connection between Indexicalism and Surematics, which goes a little further than Speculative Materialism, is the transit that is attainable between kenotypes and indexicals beyond the mathematics-centred approach of Meillassoux. Bensusan observes that the phenomenon of using kenotypes to designate a set is not necessarily only mathematical, since reference-fixing “is independent of the truth of a description– and the substantives in the description have an underlying deictic role” (Bensusan, 2021, p. 36). Bensusan further elaborates this with great clarity:

“If there is more than one reference-fixing procedure for one term, or more than one set of deictic operations for one interiority, then a convergence is discovered. To discover that Phosphorus is Hesperus, for example, is to find out something about a single position from different viewpoints. To discover such convergence is not to engage in a view from nowhere, but just to find out that one position can be viewed otherwise. I can then spot the morning star while being aware that it is also the evening star– and that I could see the same thing later in the day from another viewpoint. Sameness, or otherness and exteriority, does not imply totality” (Bensusan, 2021, p. 36-37).

The active avoidance of totality is also something that Indexicalism and Surematics share wholeheartedly. We could digress into the criticism of radical forms of correlationism and their absolutization of this or that correlate, but that has been thoroughly explored elsewhere. Instead, we might see in Luhmann an interesting way of putting this criticism of holisms and totalities when he brings William Ross Ashby into the fold. Luhmann writes that “environmental disturbances are dealt with locally. They do not push the entire system towards change. Instead, there are specific devices or arrangements that are affected” (Luhmann, 2013, p. 122). There is an indexicality involved even in environmental problems. This is developed further when Bensusan quotes Donna Haraway’s *Staying with Trouble*, in which she states that we live somewhere, not “everywhere” – similarly, nothing has the capacity to be connected to everything, but every *thing* is connected to *something*.

One of the most important contributions Surematics has received from Luhmann, Latour and Bensusan is this challenge of thinking in a non-anthropocentric fashion. From different, but somewhat convergent reasons, all four of us strive to avoid holding humans as the most important protagonists, the only valid subjects or objects of study, the top-floor or the bedrock of reality. For

Luhmann, social systems are not “made of” people, they are made of organized communication units, as we saw earlier. For Latour, anything that acts, resists, imports, translates or abstracts is an actant, be it a singular person, the World Bank, a proton, or Darth Vader. Bensusan states that “the distinction between the human and the non-human alien is not metaphysically salient, since what is exterior is not only the “fellow humans”, but “is approached as composed by any others, by the exterior, by what is beyond” (Bensusan, 2021, p. 79).

Moving on, an early philosophical hero of mine was dear old Jacques Derrida. His short book *Force de Loi* was the one that woke me from the “dogmatic slumber” I was under while I enjoyed the unassailable certainties of teenage years. Professor Bensusan’s close proximity to Derrida was one of the bonding factors when we began working together. Bensusan’s writings also have the unorthodox ability of rendering Derrida much more intelligible for me, since my earlier contact with his works resonated with me more on an existential level and on a lure for feelings fashion. On Bensusan’s recent book, the Derridean “Logic of the Supplement”, so crucial for the metaphysics of the others, became very explicit and referrable for my current and future works.

The Logic of the Supplement further resonates with other important influences into Surematics. For example, Systems Theory and OOO. If a Luhmannian system, or a Harmanian object, were taken as complete, adding something to them would be a mere adornment without any real significance for them. For Luhmann, systems might be operatively enclosed, but they are cognitively opened. The enclosure is not only an expression of the form of difference that instaurates an interior/exterior, but also it enables that programs and codes that select or ignore communications come to evolve. For Harman’s more recent theories, the real object being also, let us say, “ontologically enclosed”, does not mean it is eternally unchangeable. Objects are born, generated, they grow, they have a few symbioses, then they attain a long period of stability, and then they die or disappear (Harman, 2016).

For both authors, the completeness of an object is out of the question. Furthermore, their relations to their environments or surroundings are operated by their indexicalized difference, which mediates the indoors/outdoors exchanges. In this fashion, what Derrida diagnosed as the *logic of the complement* is indeed dispelled regarding these systems/objects. It is so since

“being complete”, a notion guided by absence and a lacking of something to be made whole, is discarded as being that ontologically relevant as others might think. Those that defend theories of something lacking and moving that thing towards the complement, usually espouse a tacit gamble not only towards perfection, an inherently improbable and undesirable precept, but also towards *immunity* regarding what is exterior (Bensusan, 2021, p. 122).

On a different manner, Derrida and Bensusan present the logic of the supplement. Instead of presupposing lacking and perfection, “to make room for a supplement is to remove a degree of completeness so that coupling with whatever comes from outside is possible” (Bensusan, 2021, p. 122). Further, he writes

“From the point of view of supplement, adding promotes a transformation, and therefore anything supplemented is neither indifferent to nor necessarily connected to its supplement. In a relation of supplementation, the relata are neither independent nor interdependent; a supplemented item is neither fully present as a determination nor absent” (Bensusan, 2021, p. 123).

This helps to work the metaphysical grounding for Luhmannian structural coupling theory; for Harman’s approach to the theory of symbiosis; for the distinction between a mere multiplicity and a Whiteheadian enduring substance with social order and *nexūs*. Bensusan’s reading even furthers the project of ecologization of metaphysics, since even if ecology has some specific necessities, the whole project of alliances, predation and coexistence is categorially dependent upon the logic of the supplement inasmuch as integration and stagnation are not the goals of ecosystems. In fact, each organism requires this balance between presence and absence, proximity and exteriority, addition and hospitality. This is even further evidenced on his take that this logic of supplement is not only centred towards a humanistic ethical respect towards the fellow humans, but something constitutive, almost transcendental, of the very metaphysical possibility of experience:

“Metaphysical empiricism is a claim about experience in reality– it is not a thesis about (our) access to it. Our access is an example of how experience is in play. It is not only our ignorance that can be remedied with an appeal to experience but also any insufficiency, any absence of ready-mades, any incompleteness. Wherever there is room for supplement, there is room for experience” (Bensusan, 2021, p. 161).

§2 OBSERVATIONS I – TOTALITY AND FLATNESS

I would like to offer now some observations that might engage critically with Professor Bensusan's Indexicalism. As the name suggests, there is an emphasis on the category of the indexical and its deictic operations, which provide the centre of Bensusan's metaphysics. As previously stated, the idea of a Categorical Matrix is not to restrict philosophy to the particular kind of Surematics I am attempting to develop. In fact, the idea of the Categorical Matrix is to provide metametaphysical tools for others' metaphysics-building exercises as well, close in spirit to Rudolf Carnap's own philosophical engineering ideas. In this sense, metaphysics that focus on objects, monads or indexicals are all indeed plausible and fruitful.

That being said, I would argue that, while the focus on indexicals is defensible, it would perhaps benefit from a more systematic approach on this category. Professor Bensusan insists that "being is indexical, and therefore that nothing exists but as *this*, *that* or the like, from a positioned point of view" (Bensusan, 2021, p. 32), a position that is unwaveringly defended against a "substantivist" accounts of reality. However, one must ask if indexicals are all there is to being. Better yet, what is gained and what is lost in an indexicals-only philosophy, or in a predominantly indexicalist-driven approach?

I have accompanied Professor Bensusan for a few years now, and have watched with great pleasure the phases of his philosophical unfolding. He developed an Ontology of Fragments, a Post-Leibnizian Monadology, a Cubist Überrealism, and so many other interesting approaches. It culminated in the Indexicalist project, and on the metaphysics of the others as both its ethical guide and consequence. Despite that, I feel that Professor Bensusan might have heard the enchanting dangerous melodies we all have at some point: first, to identify an extremely important "furniture of the universe", to use an expression he is fond of; and then generalizing *this indexicalized truth about indexicals being extremely important* as what the universe is ultimately "made of" in its "bedrock", or as its "fundamental particle". Would it be possible to conceive of a metaphysics of others without the congruent generalization of Indexicalism?

Questions like these are very difficult to be answered because of the obvious importance indexicals have not only for Indexicalism, but also for Surematics. It just so that we worked hard during Part I to provide the public a metaphysical

generation and growth of indexicals out of kenotypes, an operation that is of insurmountable significance for the very possibility of communication. Without communication as the “spiritual monad”, or as the “sociocultural unit of operation”, the spiritual stratum of reality would not emerge, and systems like Law, Art, Religion, and Science, would never come to be. Even so, despite their pivotal relevance, we still placed indexicals as one of the levels inside Category Seventh. Questioning the limits of Indexicalism does not mean to invalidate or undervalue indexicals. If we take them as being part of a Categorical Matrix, we are actually able to see them being *housed* among other categories of existence.

In other words, in Surematics, indexicals are placed, just like places are placed and locals are localized, as per Latour’s philosopheme mentioned before. They come from somewhere and they might become something else. Engendering them from kenotypes is a work of abstraction that might come through their paper-thin differentiation with forms of difference (C3). Instead of “just being”, we believe indexicals need to be made, to be generated. There is work of abstraction involved, and such worker is anything that is able to differentiate a form, *this form*, from the kenotypical borders of *this* form. Not only that, Surematics is able to investigate *sens*-production (be it by vectorialization, be it by semantics), while also acknowledging its limits, capacities and instauration-abstraction operations of indexicals among other levels of the Category Seventh, and with other categories of the Matrix as well.

This takes us to the main disagreements between Surematics and Indexicalism. We might organize our criticisms as follows: a **critique of the categorial flatness**, and a **critique of the methodological development**. One of the most important characteristics of contemporary metaphysics usually appears under the name “flat ontology”. The idea is that everything equally is, even if everything is not equally (as the *Same*). That might be freeing at some level, but it generates countless problems on others. Why is there a need to state such a thing? Usually to combat anthropocentrism, or Cartesian *res cogitans* vs. *res extensa* theories, and similar approaches. I agree with the criticisms, I reject the solution. If anything, a categorial theory like Nicolai Hartmann’s, or a categorial scheme like Whitehead’s, or even Peirce’s, are always calling our attention to the vagueness of experience, to the importance of notions such as indifference, negative prehensions, limitations of perception and of cognition. Combined with

the rejection of totality, which we happily share with Professor Bensusan, this is enough for a CR-philosophy. This metaphysics would be impoverished if what-there-is was to be reduced to any kind of Same (the one among the traditional Platonic *genera*).

Now we should discuss briefly the term “substantivist”. Professor Bensusan claims that this refers to a position that defends that “any positioned talk must be exorcised in favour of an impersonal view from nowhere, the only way to account for how things are ‘out there’”³⁶. Is this a criticism of substances or of the empty universalism of totality? They are not necessarily the same. While Bensusan does not focus on the description of what is taken to be a “substance”, the subtext points to the idea that it is something that might be eternal, created by an omnipotent deity, or unmovable, unchangeable, *causa sui*, and/or indestructible. Sure, there are metaphysical traditions associated with Abrahamic traditions (Judaism, Christianity, Islamism, and others), but is the category of substance really tied to these specific theology-driven uses? Or, another question, which substance is being discussed here? Aristotle’s substances, himself a Pagan, are generated, corruptible, destructible, durational. They have historic routes of life and death, they have dignity and interiority, they might enter relations, they may be fruitful or barren, be pious or full of hubris. They have an inner life and even social activities exchanging energies (ἐντελέχεια) among other οὐσίαι. Is this such a bad thing?

Furthermore, there is no “impersonal view from nowhere” obligatorily attached to Aristotelian substances or to other Pagan/Polytheistic philosophies. Surematics’ Category Sixth, at this point, is closer to Graham Harman’s OOO, which he claims to be a “weirder version of Aristotle’s theory of substances”³⁷. This helps us to elucidate that the theory of substance actually is not Bensusan’s real enemy, I suspect, since there is no need for them to be portrayed as eternal, unchanging, complete, immune to change or to exteriority. The real problem is with the “substantivist” account, which could be reappropriated here under other names, such as a modern gesture that comes from their monotheist religious context. In this, Moderns rejoice in engaging with the “death of god” folklore,

³⁶ Bensusan, 2021, p. 16

³⁷ Harman, 2011, Chapter 6.

trying to espouse for themselves the same omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent agency on the completely determined world of immune-to-change substances or determinations.

To liberate philosophy from this modern gesture of a post-monotheist anthropocentrism is a task that simultaneously has been advanced under the critique of ontotheology in Heideggerian and Derridean circles. However, the value of Liberation as not only a political, but also a metametaphysical aim of our Complex Realism, brought us closer to the New Religious Studies and the Pagan Studies being developed in the recent years. With these new studies we can become powerful allies of Bensusan's metaphysics of others – others that are not under that “substantivist” or Modern spell. For example, we should note that there is no “creationism”, in the Abrahamic traditions' sense, in practically all world religions. For the Ancient Greeks, e.g., the world was an extensive continuum with particular cosmic epochs (to use Whitehead's phrasing), without a Beginning, with capital B; and without an End, be it both a Providence or an Apocalypse of the Total.

The “substantivist” standpoint Professor Bensusan seems to be critiquing, from a Pagan Studies-aided stance, is the standpoint of the Abrahamic god, supposedly killed by Moderns, who then tried to fill that void with a transcendent subject, or with an absolutized correlate of the metaphysics of their intersubjectivities. However, there are other ways of being in the world. Without that particular god to kill, there is no need to replace this “view from nowhere” – even less to *replace that replacement* with an indexicals-only effort. “Substantivism” might be useful for some in those religions and the moderns, but the other global schools of thought, agency and faith are not restricted to it in any way. These Others existed before, during and after the “modernist parenthesis”³⁸, to use Latour's term, even among the Moderns themselves. We agree with Bensusan's exorcize of that “view from nowhere”, but we dissent on the reasons for it.

It must be clear that for the task of the ecologization of metaphysics, which is the ultimate goal of so many of Complex Realists' philosophies, the point is not to forbid or to exclude the adherents of those religions and/or of Moderns. The idea for a Global Philosophy (or *Earthbound*, to use another of Latour's terms) is

³⁸ Latour, 2013.

not to ban or suppress access, but assuring a pluralist ontology that does not need to play by the rules of those “substantivist” intelligences. Again, even among those religious adherents and modernists, there are people who are not committed to an exclusively “substantivist” standpoint. That means, they indeed must have a seat at the table. Be that as it may, the truest decolonial gesture is in that they shall not impose the rules, limits and goals of the game. Thus, a pluralist ontology will flourish freely despite “substantivist” restrictions, be these intentionally enforced or otherwise.

§3 OBSERVATIONS II – SPECULATION AND TRANSPARENCY

In any way, there are other criticisms that are important for us. The notion of “**speculation**” that Professor Bensusan criticizes, again, seems to be related to Abrahamic religions and their supposed “secularised” versions. In these faiths, their god first creates the world, and then creates one kind of entity that is made on his “image”: Man (the male, specifically). This is evidenced by the presence of the god-given soul that resides inside Men, which grants them the ability to speak and to command the world around them. Knowledge, in this framework, is domination by mirror-placing around what there is. If Men are a piece of the image of their god, they see themselves in each other; and, if this is founded also upon the divine ability to speak and to dominate, then things are known by domination of the Same. After they killed their god, the Same becomes their intersubjectivity – therefore, to know something is to project this one self’s Same upon what there is, to make the Other into the Self/Same – by force, if necessary.

Again, this is not what is obligatory for any of the Complex Realists, who are outside these traditions – or at least at the margin of indifference. At the Proto-Indo-European word *spékýeti³⁹ we find the notions of *expectation*, of *expectancy*, or even of an *artistic spectacle* associated with the term *speculation*. From this etymology it seems very unusual to obligatorily make it mean something like “to shine the Same onto the Other”. In a pragmatic-oriented, object-oriented interpretation, expectations are already about the other, particularly a other out of control of the observer; about something that might have some regularity and might aid collectives to organize or defend themselves. Speculative reasoning, in terms of

³⁹ Ringe, 2006.

expectancy, anticipation and organization, is much more *pragma*/OOO-oriented towards cycles of nature, agriculture and weather patterns, as well as other actants, than Ego-launching onto others.

Luhmann has a similar theory of expectations as the origin of social systems⁴⁰. For example, “it is expected that a crime should be tried” – this general expectation animates the building up of pragmatic-speculative systems that we know as the Criminal Law, procedural rules, evidence evaluation techniques, and so on. Most importantly, this pragmatic-speculative expectancy is not only present at every single broader collective involving humans: it also is not about what me, Otávio Maciel, existentially expect about Legal Theory. When that expectancy is enounced, it is a vectorialization of a kenotype, not what me, flesh-and-bones, expect about what there is. Also, different from this kind of normative expectation, cognitive expectations such as “vaccination reduces the risk of severe infections” are even more evidently so not related to Ego projection. There is much to be gained by this *pragma*-oriented speculative realism⁴¹ that is not in opposition to Bensusan’s own aims.

In this sense, speculation is a study of expectancy that attempts to manage particular pragmatcal data towards something other than it is at this very moment or to what might come to be anticipated. As such, there is absolutely no need whatsoever to recourse to egos, mirrors or totalities. Even if we stick to the mirror hypothesis, they are not just egological tools for narcissists, such as the Hegelian projection of myself onto the Other that turns out to be a kind of Same (and vice-versa). Let it be remembered, taking the Greek religion again as an example, that it was through reflection and a polished mirror-like object that Perseus managed to defeat Medusa.

Still in relation to mirrors and reflections, the accusation of “**transparency**” is somewhat exaggerated when dealing with Whitehead’s process cosmology. The criteria for “transparency”, in Professor Bensusan’s take, seems to be that everything is experienceable in some way – therefore, everything allegedly is transparent in Whitehead’s metaphysics. He writes: “in some sense speculation

⁴⁰ For more information, cf. Luhmann, 2013, “Fifth Lecture”.

⁴¹ Something very close to this is the “pragmatic speculative realism” that has been defended by OOO philosopher Ian Bogost (2012, p. 29-30). I vehemently stress that any of the constructible Complex Realist approaches will have to work on this direction as well, one way or another.

has something to do with transparency– it assumes that what is beyond is somehow reflected in what is already known or thought. It is connected to the reflection of mirrors that make what is still unseen transparent”.⁴² Now, from a Surematic metaphysics, this does not make much sense. It would be a scathing criticism if one would work under the tale of that god, his human creations, and their murderous acts. Were this obligatorily the case, perhaps the mirror metaphor would be the case. Despite that, again, we do not need to condemn nor accept those philosophemes from these kinds of ontotheologies.

Furthermore, to say that everything experiences do not mean at all that everything experiences everything, every time, in every way possible, any which way it might happen. For Complex Realism there is no single model of subjectivity given by this or that omnipotent god. There is no single form of experience. Asymmetry is the basal ontological fabric. Every experience is localized, since even places are placed. There is no surematic reason to say neither that everything experiences everything in the same way (false by default following of difference and asymmetry in the Category Third); neither that everything is accessible to anything. Remembering the Latourian lesson, the more associated, the less “social”. This helps us better to understand OOO’s objects withdrawing to its own celomatic interior that is not accessible from outside. Even more, the asymmetry of forms and of transcendent acts (such as desire, knowledge, or hope) that goes from one indoors to something outdoors eliminate the supposedly “free-of-charge” universal knowledge that would be automatic, gratuitous and from-nowhere. There is no “same-kind-of-access” to be supposedly avoided by criticizing transparency if no access is the “Same”.

There is a further distinction that must be made, that is that access or experience does not automatically entail knowledge, much less the “universal intelligibility” that some religions and moderns think there is. This difference between what there is (which is asymmetrical by the Category Third), and what might be known or accessed (which is both asymmetrical by the Category Fourth and heavily mediated by Category Sixth) is also in the paper-thin distinction between the pure form (C-3) and a kenotype (C-7). This means, **ontology is not epistemology**. What-there-is, again, is under no obligation to be known, to be

⁴² Bensusan, 2021, p. 7.

pointed at, to be viewed, to be controlled, to have its “intelligibility extracted”, to use Professor Bensusan’s term. For example, in Nicolai Hartmann’s metaphysics of knowledge, as we saw, the being-in-itself (and the categories themselves, for that matter) will not be fully objectified by nobody, not even an indexical, since being is **not** being perceived or pointed or indexed under these other theories. To claim otherwise is to conflate ontology with teleologically-oriented epistemology. The trans-objective and the trans-intelligible lies beyond any attempt to control or to violate the object, lest we may come to annihilate what there is.

§4 OBSERVATIONS III – EXTERIORITY AND THE OTHER

Now we turn to the heavy issue of the Great Outdoors and its relation to what there is “inside”. From what we have seen from the Categorical Matrix, I must vocally and strongly disagree that the “interiors are shaped by the external” philosopheme that Professor Bensusan repeats across the book. In Heinz von Foerster, Spencer-Brown and Luhmann’s theories, for instance, the only way the exterior “shapes” the internal is by slaughtering the system, raping its borders and rupturing its systematicity. For us, what shapes, varies, selects and re-establishes is what is there, centered on the Category Sixth, the object-body-system. This is my appropriation of the “ontological principle” (Maciel, 2019), but it also lays specific emphasis on the fact that all kinds of RC are metaphysics of work, of transportation, of translation, of energy-spending, of time-spending. Indexicals are crucial for this, but they are not, in any way, enough.

There is another problem with this Great Outdoors that supposedly is not transparent, in terms of being experienceable or perceivable. We came to find the opposite feeling on the book. Professor Bensusan says that “finitude is an incapacity to realise that the Great Outdoors is already fully available on the very borders of our interiority”⁴³ – *this* is what strikes us as transparency. This is indeed what is experienceable in any way at every time, by any thing or anything, forever and ever. His Great Outdoors is always-present, always-there, always-shaping, always-haunting, always-holding us hostage. During the *Online Book Symposium*, I remarked that this led me into a feeling of metaphysical claustrophobia while I

⁴³ Bensusan, 2021, p. 95

was reading about this kind of Other. While writing this paper, I briefly considered was being a little exaggerated – however, I checked that astoundingly over forty times expressions like “holding us hostage” appears across the book. If something that might be experience in any which way by anything at any time is not transparency, I am not sure I know what it is.

Although I am not a connoisseur of psychoanalytical theories, I must admit that the contrast between Lacan’s Great Other and Levinas supposedly “Not-Great” Other served to highlight the metaphysical claustrophobia I felt again and again reading the book. Professor Bensusan says that the Lacanian Great Other “is outdoors judging what is inside”⁴⁴. By comparing to what I felt as the Levinasian *Great Other*, we should be so lucky! If the Levinasian one judged us, that would be the least of our problems, for it supposedly builds the internal, holds it hostage, determine internal operations and keeps us constantly under visage, being pointed at, being chased and whatnot. As a Pagan scholar, I might *speculate* if this Levinasian *Great Other* (LGO) is not an Ersatz for the dead Abrahamic god at the hands of the moderns. What other ontotheological creature could inaugurate such a level of omnipresence?

Curiously, about this overpower of the LGO, there is a peculiar reversion. Bensusan also holds the paradoxical claim (which is okay under the rules of Indexicalism) that despite always-being-there, “the outer is always situated in an interiority– there is no external world independent of a viewpoint” (Bensusan, 2021, p. 29). He alerts us against conflating Totality and Exteriority – however, he does so by fusing the LGO with the observer’s interiority. If the exterior is always “interiorized”, we seem to have arrived once again at one of the theories that claim “it was inside us all along”. Or, at a modification of Schopenhauer’s “the world is my representation”, which became “the world is my indexicalization”.

We reject this solution by rejecting totality (which both I and Bensusan do) – while I also emphasize the differentiation between exteriority and the necessity of a correlation. The exterior is under no obligation to be neither totalized, as we both agree, but it also is not under any obligation to be correlated to any particular thing, especially to *my* correlation, to *my* interiority, to *my* indexicality.

⁴⁴ Bensusan, 2021, p. 70.

Professor Bensusan seems to accept the “simple correlationist” orientation, while transforming the ego-indexicality-which-actually-is-the-LGO into a new version of strong correlationism. Furthermore, nothing seems to suggest that a non-correlationist (non-indexicalist-centred) exteriority would obligatorily be fully accessible, or transparent, or an easy pray to have its intelligibility extracted. Whatever is trans-objectifiable indeed might be considered a residual *relatum* to the indexicalized observer – does not mean it is totalized or that it will come to be fully accessed someday. That isn’t even the case for whatever is trans-intelligible, which lies beyond what might be contactable, less even knowable. This, it seems for Surematics, is a more radical form to do justice to the Outdoors, to the Other.

Before we go into the conclusion, I must close this session with some metaphilosophical considerations. All those that are fond of paradoxes and contradictions are invariantly asked again and again about this particular form of doing philosophy. Is a paradoxical theory ethical? Can it be wrong? If that which was predicted comes true, the theory profits. If that which was predicted does not come true, the theory profits. How is that not a built-in immunity from criticism and having its limits evaluated? Better yet: can Indexicalism genuinely be interrupted? I fail to see how, at least at this moment, for if it succeeds, we have indexicals here and there. If not, the book says its own position was somehow designed to fail in a self-destructive way, while it also endeavours to promote something like a metaphysical scarcity, against the named “metaphysical abundance”⁴⁵. Is this enough to do justice to what there is; to guide ontological and political theories and actions? I am anxious to see the developments into these areas and I await fidgetily the scenes from Professor Bensusan’s next chapters.

CONCLUSION

At the end of the book, Professor Bensusan summarizes his position in a long quote that I shall include some numbers for didactical purposes.

“Indeed, Indexicalism entails 1) that there is nothing to be perceived but deixis. 2) No interiority can perceive without the deployment of deictic operators. 3) What is

⁴⁵ Bensusan, 2021, p. 191 and ss.

perceived is already indexically placed. 4) Mediation is done by deixis, and concepts are useful in as much as they provide implicit indexicality. We could perhaps rephrase Kant's motto: intuitions without indexicals are blind (or mute). 5) Receptivity, like hospitality, is made of reorientations. 6) But the others, infinite in their traces, always remain exterior. 7) Supplementation is not integration, and never reaches completion" (Bensusan, 2021, p. 148-9, numbers are mine).

Of these seven points, we reject only the first. We have worked many of the categories of existence across your paper, and indexicals are not only present, but unsurmountable for the metaphysics of the Spirit, of the sociological and sociocultural world inasmuch as they are the first development out of *sens*-attainment from kenotypes. We partially accept points 4, 5 and 6 as follows. Regarding 4), we believe concepts are indeed useful and there is some indexicality involved, but their function does not solely rest on indexicals, but also on the other categories of existence. About 5), it is okay, but not enough, since receptivity and hospitality do not need only reorientations – organizational programmes and expectancies are also the norm for most hospitable encounters, such as friends, hotels, inns and even on virtual ambiances. Finally, regarding 6), I would just suggest to replace the “infinite” of the other for the “transfinite”, which I believe would be more interesting. We accept points 2, 3 and 7 without further remarks.

After these presentations regarding my kind of Complex Realism (Surematics) and Professor Bensusan's Indexicalism, I believe that there are important dissonances that might be worked out in an ecological way. Bensusan's preoccupations and commitments are close to my own's, even if our paths go through very different ways. In this sense, I am convinced that sharing a commitment towards decolonization, ontological plurality and a metaphysical-grounding for an ethics of caring and hospitality is what brings us closer and enables us to work together. Let us try to find a way into the metametaphysical forum that complex realism tries to be.

The quest against substance, for example, might be reworked in many ways. Substance needs not to be that of eternally unchanging and created self-contained and immune unities. There are many theories of substances that might appeal to Professor Bensusan – even if he insists on taking indexicals as the starting point or the most important part of philosophy. I gladly concede to that, for there is plenty of space to develop indexical-research on the territory, particularly to his more recent approaches to kenotypes and theories of direct reference with my

colleague and former student, Guilherme da Silva (UnB).

In terms of method, Professor Bensusan himself worked very meticulously to show how speculation is possible in Indexicalism, but I would add that speculation does not need to be ego-launching on things. Contrasting to Hegel's ego self-othering and whatnot, Whitehead's method is a good example, for it combines a rational side of basic argumentative logic and rational coherence with empirical adequation and adaptability beyond the initial context of the data we study⁴⁶. Even if this is a more pragma-oriented, object-oriented, system-oriented approach, it makes fruitful and abundant usage of indexicals, and we might learn a lot from Bensusan's take on proximity and the possibility of knowledge.

By employing another of Professor Bensusan's work, we might say that if we focus on the "this indexical" of this object, it is feasible – if we focus on this indexical of "this object", it is also feasible. Previously defending a "cubist" form of Überrealism⁴⁷, if we shift the intentionality of our transcendent act from the observer to what is being observed, we can perfectly distinguish between a Sixth that is *here*, and the *Sixth* that is here. In a Bensusanian-cubist way, this is absolutely fine. We do not need to say "only indexicals matter", neither "only objects matter". By abandoning totality, substantivism (or the nowhere-standpoint), and the prejudice that every access/knowledge is of the same way, we both might keep flourishing greatly.

In the broader sense of Complex Realism, the Categoreal Matrix forms something like a massive multiplayer online role-playing game (MMMORPG). One can place prehensions (Category Fourth) at the centre of its adventure-dynamics of their metaphysics and produce interesting results. I placed the Sixth of objects, bodies and systems and I am enjoying the adventure of these ideas. Bensusan placed the Seventh, particularly, the middle-stage of indexicals. All these approaches are lawful and fruitful in our MMORPG.

We finish with a broader synoptic view of what is available to us now. After working on how pure forms of difference bring about many other categoreal dynamics, such as prehensions, communications, associations, we might adumbrate our Categoreal Matrix one final time and put into evidence that the

⁴⁶ Whitehead, 1978, particularly Chapter 1 of Part I.

⁴⁷ Bensusan, 2011.

Category Third might become the centre for a new kind of formal ontology. This form of difference enables the emergence objects, systems and kenotypes – therefore, these are categorically dependent upon difference. Be it a difference that there-is and might evolve into a closed nexus (the minimum requirement for a simple object), or be it a difference that might be abstracted for enunciation (the starting point for kenotype-making), this new kind of formal ontology might be one of the next big things Complex Realism has to offer. Professor Bensusan’s recent developments towards Meillassoux’s kenotypes, Professor Harman’s new dalliances with formalism, and my own Category Third point out to this new commonly-shared horizon of Indexicalism, object-oriented ontology, and the surematics of our Complex Realism.

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