

The Mountain and the Sea as Mirrors of the Soul

An approach from Georg Simmel's AEsthetics and Gaston Bachelard's Poetics *

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Abstract

Two different thinkers, Georg Simmel and Gaston Bachelard, made brothers in spirit on account of both their intuitions genius, a singular approach to the world of life and the senses, to the mysteries of certain elements of Nature as well. Simmel raises the problem of the landscape and the understanding thereof in its quality of a deeply spiritual fact that can only be solved within such a context. It could be said that this is a self-enclosed vision that is experienced as a self-sufficient unit however intertwined with an infinitely remote extension thereafter aimed at overflowing even though enclosed within borders that do not exist with regard to a feeling toward a divine One –the total of Nature living, however, at a lesser level, on a different stratum.

Separated from Nature, the “civilized” man gets back to It, changing It, however into a landscape –a fact that, as far as Simmel is concerned, is a spiritual tragedy –in other words a tragedy wherein a part from the whole becomes an autonomous whole arising from the “other whole”, while pretending to be

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endowed of its own right –a tragedy that, in modern days, caused the strongest repercussion by tearing away the conduction of the cultural process. When facing elements –the sea, the mountain- humans are joyfully *alone*. This is so because –as Bachelard warns us, we are facing a loneliness ideal so necessary for the cosmic challenge psychology. Should you wish to project your will pursuant to the best possible way, you should be left on your own.

Soil, rocky masses, heights, a chaos becoming order and mystery. Says Simmel that the Earth realm as such can be seen there, fully endowed with its unparalleled momentum even though far away from any type of life as well as any signifié of form proper. It is Simmel's contention that the ultimate secret of the impression the Alpine ranges causes us lies in their being "far away from life".

Bachelard tell us about the birthright of the children of Nature: *the primeval rocks*. So, in a kind of dialog between rocks and clouds, the sky seems to imitate earth: in a kind of dialectic between master and slave, both the rock and the cloud need one another, they both suppose and imagine one another. This is so because, out of its own immobility, mountains always give us an always active impression of uprising.

Simmel confronts the mountain geography and the maritime geography –the latter is more representative of a moving, multiform life, oscillating between dead calm and storm, thus setting free the "immediate presence" and the "pure, relative magnitude of life" thanks to a crushing dynamics exceeding the very life through its own, ever changing forms. A mountain range grants a fresh power to shouts due to the swarming of echoes that remind us the par excellence echo, the inner echo, the echo that imprints itself and feeds on silence, the vibrating echo you can hear in the deepest depth. The (relative) *verticality* of a mountain range throws us back to transcendence, to the plenitude of existence, to the unlimited limits of climbing we can reach at without even attempting.

Heroism, fights, dream, feats. In that sense no wonder that Simmel devoted one of his delicate analysis to *adventure*. Thus,

both the mountain and the sea appear as mirrors of the soul, a soul that has become mountain ranges, deep gorges and ravines –and, at the same time, the soul is likely to shelter both violent waves as well as sleeping waves in search for a silent and calm ocean. Hence, these are the roots for the primeval fight, the gallantry and heroism that protect us when we feel overwhelmed by the *extrinsic immensity*.

Key words: Mountain, Sea, Simmel, Bachelard, Landscape

Introduction

Two different thinkers, Georg Simmel and Gaston Bachelard, made brothers in spirit on account of both their intuitive genius, have offered a singular approach to the world of life. As if they were great serpents leading us on the way, we will allow them to take us along and the senses, to the mysteries of certain elements of Nature as well.

Why Simmel? why mainly by the **device** his essay on "The Alps" represents? Is this an aesthetic essay anticipating the advent of the expressionist style in painting, as Habermas (1988) implies in the epilogue to Simmel's *Philosophische Kultur*? Is this an anthropological-philosophical reflection? A critique on culture? All this, all that leads us, calls us to read the works of an accomplished interpreter of his time –thanks to the loftiness of his writings and his thinking, places us at a privileged watchtower from which we will be able to examine our times closely. And also, why not Bachelard, a faithful devotee of Nature's poetics and living space – besides his classical works in the realm of the Philosophy of natural sciences, and his contributions... we should say his foundations on the epistemological cut (1935, 1938), a faithful devotee of so sophisticated an hermeneutics that, if at all possible, it takes us to a kind of meta-poetry?

We have to take into account that, as far Simmel is concerned, the core of Philosophy is not –well, at least, is not only a content that is constructed and shared, but also a determined intellectual attitude focused toward life and the world, a way and a 'functional' mode to approach things and treat things intimately. This is how impulse is recovered. –as a metaphysical process –and this is closely related to the Philosophy of landscape –a most adequate frame at that if we are eager to grasp fully his meditations over the Alpine mounts and their (apparent) counterpart: the sea.

This is so because, at times, a landscape is much more than a landscape. Simmel (1998:1975) foresees the question, and expresses it in a way as simple than complex: "Our consciousness has to possess a new "whole", unitary, higher than elements, unbound to their isolated meaning and not mechanically arranged on the basis of those elements: this is what a landscape is". He means that we are not seeing "a given element", a piece of the planet we are able to gaze upon in an immediate way: this –as represented as a landscape, in Simmel's opinion (1998:176) demands "maybe an optical, maybe an aesthetic being-for-itself pursuant to a feeling, a singular exemption, apt at characterizing the world from this indivisible unit of nature wherein each fragment can only serve as a channel for the total forces of existence.

In actual fact, Simmel formulates here the problem of landscape and the understanding thereof, as a strongly spiritual fact likely to be solved there, only. It would be "a vision closed upon itself, that is felt as a self-sufficient unit, intertwined, however, within a infinitely more faraway extension that, afterwards, flows out between borders that do not exist as far as the feeling of a divine One, of the total of nature living at a lower level, at another stratum are concerned (1998: 176). Could it be possible for us, just here, to resort to the paleographic palette a poet uses to paint and reproducing, more and more increased, the actuality of the rocky

landscape and its irreplaceable diamond, sharp edge –to be sure, Bachelard would approve.

Yes but, all the same, a human being (even though devoid of any poetic insight –even ignoring if he has one, at least at the level of either a preoccupation or an aspiration...) -a human being stops in front of a landscape and, in his own way, he paints it, in spite of not being a true artist.

This is why Simmel (1998:176) reminds us that "Nature –that in its being, its profound meaning is deeply ignorant of individuality, is reconstructed by the human eye which divides and recomposes things divided into isolate units within "the landscape"-an individuality in its own right. Separated from nature the "civilized" human gets back to It, converting It into a landscape. This, says Simmel, is a tragedy of the spirit –that is, the tragedy lies in the fact that some part of a whole becomes an autonomous whole "[...] arising from the "other whole, "while pretending to be endowed of its own right [a tragedy] that, in modern days, caused the strongest repercussion by tearing away the conduction of the cultural process" (1998:177).

Simmel, however, under a pantheistic appearance, resorts to the primitive, constitutive religiosity present in human life. Are we allowed to think that the perfect contemplation of a landscape –or, more directly, a contemplation of Nature, a way to get tied again with the Other, thus founding unity, the Whole –the fact of seeing? Perhaps –not willingly, who knows, we resort to the image of the world, to the image any landscape evokes for us and claims for us –however it could be (or it certainly is) that we resort to our ultimate senses -actually the first senses, such an image has awoken for us.

This is why, as far as Simmel is concerned (1998:185-86) the *feeling* of the landscape and the *landscape visual unit* are just two different moments of a unique phenomenon: "This is precisely there when the unity of the natural existence is successful in wrapping us inside it, as this occurs when facing a landscape: a

scission between an Ego who is watching and an Ego who feels –a scission appearing wrong twice. In front of the landscape we stand as whole humans –and same goes for the natural landscape or a landscape that has been converted in a work of art. So the action that creates it for us becomes immediately an action that looks and an action that feels and, for the first time, smashes into pieces those separations for the first time and, this, thanks to the following reflection".

This work is not going to referred explicitly to important questions such as identity construction and deconstruction, patterns of regional identity, or essential and imagined identity, among other related issues, very well developed by different authors (Allen *et al.*, 1998; Paasi, 1991, 2003; Van't Klooster *et al.*, 2002; etc.), and also the suggestive works of the Japanese philosopher Tetsuro Watsuji (2006) on cultural phenomenology of the landscape. Nevertheless, many times all these phenomena are implicit while analyzing Simmel's and Bachelard's approaches.

Mountain, Sea, and Soul

When facing elements –the sea, the mountain- humans are joyfully *alone*. This is so because –as Bachelard warns us, we are facing a loneliness ideal so necessary for the cosmic challenge psychology. Should you wish to project your will pursuant to the best possible way, you should be left on your own. A loneliness, however, that is at the same time a company endowed with a growing innerness. An only apparent reclusion anticipating all the facets of heroism. Such a loneliness of the existing being is, at the same time, unique and different, and we can find it either in mountain ranges, the altitude –all types of altitudes, or facing the sea, the movements thereof –all types of movements. Resonance of the soul feeding itself by both facing and embodying those elements –the only way to secure some victory even though such victory implies the defeat of our longing for a growing authenticity.

For Georg Simmel, the Alps offer an aesthetic impression unlikely to be reproduced through a work of art: it is true that, opposite to such a colossus, the existential experience becomes something unique, something impossible to repeat. Now, this is also true as far as the aesthetic experiment is concerned, the aesthetic experiment felt by any person recreating a landscape through a work of art.

Simmel (1988: 126) tells us that "the peculiar meaning of what is of a massive nature is based on the singularity of the alpine shapes. If seen as a general expression, the configuration of the Alps owns, as a general characteristic, something anxious, something accidental that escapes from any possible unity of shapes. This is why, for many painters only interested in the formal quality of Nature, the Alps are barely tolerable for them".

Beyond genial intuitions that permeate the Simmelian thought, we must, nevertheless, point out that, actually, a painter gives ex post a shape to an aesthetic experience –not to say an existential experience, as cases might be, a shape operating ex ante as an efficient cause for the future work. In turn, the work triggers an infinite number of echoes among the viewers who are the re-creators of that landscape. Indeed, if there is a landscape the enormous magnificence of the mountain range overwhelms, it is the landscape of the soul, so full of heights and abrupt slopes, valleys and rivers at peace, rocks, enclosed paths, eternal snows and suns. Reflects and projects that beautify the soul with all the possible hues, preparing the soul to grasp in a better way Mother Nature's magnificent display.

The overwhelming silence of the Alps at times either calls us or placates us according to the depths of the observing soul. It is since the soul that we see Nature's elements and call out to them – in the same way that we call out to the work of art.

A part of this question, however, does not slip Simmel's mind (1988: 127s) –most especially indeed when he states that "The question of the shape forwards the impression the Alps cause on

us down to the very ultimate categories of the soul [...] The high mountain –that is, the inaccessible and muffled fury of its purely material mass, united to the simultaneous, more than terrestrial thrust, as well as the transfigured calm of the snow are for us a source of inspiration while melting both aspects in a one and unique, intimate resonance. The absence of an own and authentic meaning of its shape achieves that both the feeling and the symbol of the great powers of existence melt in the high mountain –which is less than any possible shape but more than all shapes possible".

We are facing a dialectic of what is ethereal and what is rocky and shapeless, between immensity and finiteness, between unreachable heights and abysses we imagine on account of both need and support. All these aspects, conjugated, as a polyphony, in search of a recondite sense ruled by intuition, only accessible from the heights of a contemplative, silent soul.

However, at the point where "shapes are juxtaposed in such accidental way, without any leading instruction uniting them or giving them a meaning –as it occurs in the Alps, any shape whatsoever would find itself painfully isolated, deprived of any supporting point within the whole should the accumulated material mass –the homogeneity of which is to be found even under the highest peaks, fail to offer a body unitary apt at encompassing its individuality that, in itself, is devoid of meaning. For the chaos of the solitary, indifferent silhouettes to find, so to speak, a counterbalance and a commencement [...] of cohesion, the shapeless matter has to acquire an unusual predominance" (Simmel, 1988:126s). Oh yes, rock is fundamental, even church-like.

Soil, rocky masses, altitude, peaks, a chaos becoming order and mystery. "The undulating disturbance of shapes and the massive materiality rising out of the mountain own dimension get propitious, in their tension and counterweight, an impression wherein excitement and peacefulness appear to melt down jointly, in a most singular way (*ibid.*, 126s.). Says Simmel that the Earth real

as such can be seen here, fully endowed with its unparalleled momentum even though far away from any type of life, as well as any signifié of form proper. So, ice abysses, frozen summits –that are already deprived of any relationship with soil depressions arise as "[...] symbols of the transcendence raising the mirror of the soul to the site wherein lodge what we could attain even being in great danger, a site we cannot reach at on the sole strength of our will (*ibid.*, 127).

Simmel considers that clouds contribute for a more human, more terrestrial vision –our vision, of the heights. Now that clouds make the mystical roof of heights much more at our reach, much less supernatural –and same goes with the voice of the heights calling out to us from transcendence "[...] the aesthetic impression disappears at the same time than mysticism with which it is intimately mixed when clouds cover the snowy summits because, at that moment, mountains are reduced to an earthly dimension thanks to the clouds that crush them and unite them to the rest of the earthly domain. Only when the sky is limpid mountains aim to the supernatural in an infinite, uninterrupted way while appearing to pertain to an order different to the earthly order" (*ibid.*, 127). Precisely, for Simmel, the ultimate secret of the impression the higher alpine region causes to us lies in this "distancing from life".

As far as he is concerned, Bachelard (1996:208) –via Novalis, advises us about the birthright of the children of Nature: *the primeval rocks*. So, in a kind of dialogue between rocks and clouds, the sky seems to imitate the soil. "The rock and the cloud fall into one another. The rocky abyss is a kind of motionless avalanche. The threatening cloud is a disorderly movement" (*ibid.* 208). In a kind of dialectic between master and slave, rock and cloud need one another, they both suppose one another, they imagine themselves mutually. "Among its peaks, among its rounded soil, among its rocks, the mountain is a belly and teeth. It devours the cloudy sky, it wolfs down the bones of the storm and even the bronze of thunder (*ibid.*, 210). The fact is that, starting from its

own stillness, a mountain, nevertheless, "gives us an always active impression of uprising" (*ibid.*, 213-214).

Hence, it could be useful to have the *provoking* imagination Bachelard is so fond of revisited as it is certain that "[...] an active contemplation of rocks rises and rises upward, from that very moment, until it becomes a challenge. A participation to monstrous forces, and dominion upon overwhelming images" (*ibid.*, 215).

Rocks *force* us to see, to imagine, to live within the real realm within all its dimensions, cavities, and escarpments. With its lights and its shadows. Just as the soul.

Now, of course, the rock surges as an instigator of terrors and the indispensable correlate thereof: heroism. The fact that Bachelard (1996: 216) tells us that the function of the rock lies in inspiring terrors into the landscape is not unwarranted a statement: "This is the required condition for contemplation becoming courage, and the world we are looking at becomes the circle for an hero's life".

The rock as a *grave* but, also, as a re-birth. This is so because, without such a correlate, the Sepulcher would not find its ultimate meaning. Ultimate, and first meaning. Inasmuch as –says Bachelard, the idea is living the stone. He is surprised at the number of people who take a walk nearby a stone quarry. Almost anybody, however, is brave enough to enter down. This is why he says that a poet is *the most primitive of paleographers*. At the end of the day, as the saying goes, the only person apt at settling the controversy with the primeval rock, is the person who, at the same time is *the higher and the deeper one*, in accordance with which the poet asserts himself / herself intimately while he / she breaks the barrier with his / her gaze.

In turn, Simmel opposes the mountain geography to the sea geography. Sea geography is much more representative of life "moving, multishaped, oscillating between calm and tempest, letting free the 'immediate presence' as well as the 'pure, relative

magnitude of life' thanks to an overwhelming dynamism apt at overcoming life through its own, continuously changing shapes.

To the contrary, in the high mountain process is just conversely set up. "This release from life, considered to be both fortuitous and exhausting, both isolated and minuscule is allowed to us in the high mountain in an opposite sense: in spite of coming from the stylized plenitude of vital passion, this release comes from the time faraway. Here, life is like a prisoner -a prisoner, however, intertwined with something more silent and rigid, purer and higher than life could ever be" (1988: 128-129).

All this, Simmel (1988: 129) accentuates it when approaching glaciers –the site where landscape gets isolated, and the shapes thereof get also isolated from temporality. "Glacier [...] is the absolutely a-historic landscape. In glaciers –the image of which is unaltered by neither summer nor winter, any association with the ups and downs of human destinies –that, more or less, accompany all other landscape, any association is just destroyed. The mind image of our surroundings is rather likely to give a meaning to our spiritual existence. It is only thanks to the timelessness of glacier that this extension of our life is deprived of all and every possible foothold".

Simmel has presented us with important contributions for a Sociology, and a Psychosociology of space, and properties thereof (a matter we have analyzed elsewhere –in some of our works: del Acebo Ibáñez, 1985, 1996). Consequently, he has also contributed to the concept of limit –either implicit or explicit according to the case at stake, in his essays on aesthetic. Hence, his contrast between mountains as limit, border, or division, and the sea as union, link, an entity aiming at making human contacts easier. A paradox between the (apparent) neighborhood of *the other side of the mountain* –which, however marks distance and difference, and the (in)appearing distance of the sea horizons the horizontal immensity of which accelerates our craving for encounters, for establishing bridges.

It is the enthronement of verticality –into its dialectic of up and down, of height and depth, of mountain and valley, insofar, precisely, as verticality flies off, getting rid of the opposites: lower and deeper“[...] Which is unusual and wonderful it the fact that all the height and majesty of the Alps can only be observed near the glaciers, when all the vallees, vegetation, and human dwellings have disappeared from our eyes. That is, when nothing hollow is likely to be seen –even though hollowness could condition the impression of altitude. All those elements, implicitly, carry depth within them –mainly vegetation which always causes us to think of roots penetrating down the deepness upon which everything is based upon. Conversely, here, the landscape appears as completely 'finished', free from everything else [...] not any more perfecting is needed, not any more release for us to contemplate that world, not any more artistic configuration is needed –the insurmountable fury of the landscape own existence is against such a possibility" (Simmel, 1988: 130).

And all this occurs in a typical, ideal way with the glacier: “[...] no doubt –and only within the extreme region of glaciers, it would seem that depth has lost any possible influence on things. Due to the fact that the valley has disappeared, it the pure presence of the heights that imposes itself. In other words, a position is not relative, now, it is simply 'in a lofty position' and we do not think any more if at so and so meters over any determined level. This is why the mystical majesty of the impression summits cause on us becomes absolutely incomparable thanks to what simple people call "the beautiful alpine landscape" wherein mountains are nothing more than the crowning of a landscape placed at a lower level, nice and charming with woods and prairies, vallees and Swiss-style cottages. It is only when you have left all that behind that you are in a position to have access to a radical, metaphysic novelty, access to an absolute height with any relationship whatsoever to the corresponding depth. One element only among the elements included within a correlation –that, actually, could not

exist if the other element is absent, states, nonetheless, a clear self-sufficiency" (*ibid.*, 131).

So is Simmel's contention (1988: 131): this is the actual paradox of high summits and glaciers, wherein "high" gets emancipated from "low", thus crashing against humans' mood: "The liberation feeling that the landscape of summits and glaciers offers us at the most solemn moments, this feeling maintains an utmost close relationship with the feeling we have about the contradictions of life, inasmuch as life is the unending relativity of the opposites, the permanent conditioning of contraries, the fluid mobility within which things are likely to exist provided, however, they exist under conditions. From the impression that summits cause is also derived the symbolic intuition that life gets released when it aspires, in a supreme momentum, toward whatever is no more accessible to any life form, because this very fact is not only overwhelming but also opposite to life".

The *verticality* of the high summits –as a preexisting growth, stirring immobility, height that, paradoxically enough, emancipates itself from its own deepness, a climbing that becomes a permanent arrival, a thing infinite which confirm our limits –hence, however, a metaphysic resonance, such a verticality finds an echo into the ultimate character of the soul of anyone who opens himself / herself, and accepts an aesthetic and existential over joy.

Mountain gives a new power to the scream, due to the swarming of echoes, reminiscent of the par excellence echo, the deepest one, the inner one, the echo that imprints itself and feeds on silence, the vibrating echo you can hear in the deepest depth. The (relative) *verticality* of a mountain throws us back to transcendence, to the plenitude of existence, to the unlimited limits of climbing we can reach at without even attempting. Because the summit is far over the maximum height: it is a craving, a vocation, a call which becomes an echo so that search is likely to go on. And the idea is keeping growing on. A summit is a confirmation of the climbing process –and this is why it is a haven: there, you forget

any tiredness caused by the efforts you have already made, a haven too because you are hopeful with regard to the distance you are still to cover.

Bachelard reminds us that Nietzsche instructed patiently his will of power during the long hikes in the mountains, wherein his existence was nurtured fully by the wind of the highest summits. "He loved summits" says Bachelard (1993: 242), in search of the "abrupt divinity of the wild rock".

Walking in the mountains is at the same time a climbing process and an effort, it also mean fight. This is why Bachelard says that Nietzsche "with his thought against the wind has converted walking into fighting. And even more: walking becomes his fight. [...]. Against the wind, a fight is almost always triumphant because... a hero of the wind just falling down under a of wind would become the most ridiculous of the defeated generals [...]. A brave walker splits himself in front of the wind, against the wind. His walking stick crosses the hurricane, pierces the soil, stabs the gust of wind. [...]. The tears of the fighting water have nothing to do with sorrow, they have to do with rage. Their anger is a response to the anger of the tempest. [...]. So, a walker, devoured by the storm [...] becomes [...] a flag, a banner. The sign of courage, the proof of strength, the power of a capacity. The coat badly treated by the storm becomes also a kind of flag, the unvanquished flag of the hero of the wind" (*ibid.*, 242-243).

In his psychoanalysis of the man walking up a mountain, against the wind, Bachelard considers this is the more efficacious exercise to vanquish the inferiority complex. Indeed: "hike without any aim whatsoever, thus *pure walking*, similar to *pure poetry*, offers constant, immediate impressions of power. [Thus] profoundly shy people are great walkers: each step ahead is a symbolic victory for them, each time they hit their walking stick against the soil, they compensate their shyness. Far away from the cities, far away from

women, they hunt for the *pure struggle*, the struggle against the elements" (*ibid.*, 242-243).

Instead, the sea smothers all the screams, anything the sea seizes becomes the sea whichever lives within its depth, whichever floats over its waves: this is indeed the confirmation of its reign, starting from such a (non superfluous) superficiality covering belonging and rhumb line.

The (relative) *horizontal*ity of the sea throws us back to the almighty rhumb line at all costs, it forces us to display ourselves while starting from a partial sinking. Beyond every possible limits limited, however, by the winds (the winds of our soul as well as the winds of Nature) and it throws us back to current alien to our will.

Bachelard's poetics also offers wealthy contributions to those aspects: water as a contemplation, deepening as an element of the materializing imagination. As far as he is concerned, the sea – probably more than any other element, is a complete poetic reality: a living water, a water born again from itself, immutable water, a food for customary phenomena, a vegetative element, *the body of tears* (1993: 23). Thus, it is from the sea –i.e. "starting" from the sea that we try and aim to attain the element, the "substantial water", the "water we have dreamed of within its own substance" (1993: 24). Couldn't we say that a reflection on the water, as poets say, is the first vision the universe grasps of itself?

A continuous and irresistible birth: "In its own violence, water acquires a specific anger [by receiving] all the psychological characteristics of a *type of anger* (*ibid.*, 29). Actually, for Bachelard there exists a duel of indignity between the human being and the sea: "The water that treats us violently becomes quickly enough the water we treat badly [...] Ebb and flow of an anger that wails and resounds" (*ibid.*, 29). This is so because, as a source of energy, the being, for Bachelard, is an *a priori* anger. This is why he states that the four elements are different types of anger, of provocations inasmuch as we do not know immediately the world by means of a peaceful, tranquil knowledge. (1993: 239s.).

When facing the provocation lead by, and generated by Nature's elements, any victory over the water is not only scarce – real scarce, but also much more dangerous –hence more praiseworthy than any victory we might carry off against the wind and the mountain. Indeed, a swimmer and a sailor conquer one of the elements that are the strangest to their own nature. This is why, for Bachelard, while the initiation of humans at sea gives way to a fright they are able to overcome [...] the mountain hike is unaware of what we could call the threshold of heroism" (1993:244).

Should we were talking about heroism, we would be facing a call to the integral human being, while the call of the sea, one way or the other, claims for a total, intimate surrendering. It could be called a waves active invitation: "the sea calls us as a motherland"; "looking at the sea, it's for us, the willingness to delve within" (1993:247). Now, such invitation from the sea is neither painless nor unwarranted". Conversely, it could be seen as a "dangerous, hostile initiation" –a good representation of the *jump into the unknown*.

Says Bachelard that, at sea “*above all we are watching the fight of the fighters*” this is why his quotation from Lafourcade is so appropriate when pointing out that “[...] the ocean is an enemy who tries to vanquish, and that we have to vanquish; its waves are bodies we have to confront, any swimmer feels that he / she is crashing his / her whole body against the limbs of his adversary. (1993: 251). It would seem that the ocean is no longer a body we are able to hug: "it is a dynamic realm that respond to the dynamics of our insults" (*ibid.*, 251).

So, we would be facing a struggle *per se*. In his psychoanalysis of the pride of the swimmer, only preoccupied for his / her next feat, says Bachelard “[...] this feat our will is dreaming of is the experience –*vécu*- poets sing with regard to violent water. An experience which is much less made of remembrances and much more made of anticipations. The violent water is a guideline of

courage" (*ibid.*, 252). Moreover, we can say the same thing about farewells on the seaside: : "[...] these are, at the same time, the most heartbreaking as well as the most literary of farewells. A poetry exploiting an ancient heritage made of dreams and heroism" (*ibid.*, 117). This is so because, for some dreamers "water is the new movements inviting us to a travel we have never done [because] this departure, if materialized, uproots ourselves from the soil" (*ibid.*, 118).

Heroism, struggle, dream, feat. In that sense, no wonder that Simmel (1999) had devoted one of his delicate analyses to *adventure*. In his opinion, the "form of adventure" lies in escaping from life control but we are due to fall into such control –a fruit, so to speak, of movement proper. In adventure, a synthesis between activity and passivity takes place, between we have conquered and things that have been given to us. The fact is that, any adventurer "always believes that he is safe" (1999: 24).

Thus, we would be facing "an integration of the casual and the external, within the internal-necessary [...] even though adventure seems to be supported by a difference as regards live, life to be felt, totally, as an adventure" (*ibid.*, 20).

(In) Conclusion

So, the mountain and the sea surge as *mirrors of the soul*, a soul which is now a high summits range, narrow passes, valleys, and deep gorges –however, the soul is likely to shelter both violent waves as well as sleeping waves in search for a silent and calm ocean. These are places wherein the ontological echoes sound best, the places wherein you are able to listen to yourself at best. "It seems, says Bachelard (1993: 287) that, to fully understand what silence is, our soul needs seeing things that are kept secret. To be sure about rest, the soul needs to have next to her a large natural being asleep". This is why the greatness of the human being is fed by the greatness of the world, as well as measured against the

measurements of the world inasmuch as *noble thoughts* are born out of *noble sights*. Finally, this *intimate immensity* Bachelard calls us to, as a philosophical category of the dream, directs us toward depth and truth.

The sea and the mountain –elements that awake us at dawn to delve into daydreaming, offer us the late evening twilight so that more dreams are born.

So, says Bachelard, we should be made aware that "in the kingdom of the imagination and daydreaming, day has been given to us so that we are able to check the experiences of our nights" (1993: 276).

When all's said and done, this a victory of the soul upon elements (sea, mountain) that defeat us, as we have just said, so that we believe we are authentic. Rock and water should be seen as challenges and foundations.

Indeed, this vastness you can pronounce is, says Bachelard (1975: 235), the one who "teaches us how to breathe the air resting on the horizon, far away from the walls of the chimerical jails, the source of anguish".

Hence, these are the roots for the primeval fight, the gallantry and heroism that protect us when we feel overwhelmed by the extrinsic immensity. In other words, a dialectic between the vast extension of the world and the vast extension of the human mind, solved within a growing existential synthesis.

You are entitled to think that this is an excess of optimism. However, we would be sure that Bachelard would intervene to remind us that "[...] we must accept that the poetic image lives under the sign of a new being. This new being, is the happy human" (1975: 21). This is so because poetry implies a happiness of its own, independently of the drama likely to be discovered. This is so because immensity is within, inside us, and the only thing a poet does is showing us the way.

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