Summary

Mystical recesses of discourses
On the *impossible* glossaries

In the initial paronomasia which plays the role of the preface, the title of the monograph is explained, since it is derived from the inconspicuous poetical phrase coined by Józef Czechowicz in his *Elegia uśpienia* (*The Elegy of Lulling*) namely, "zwija się zaułek zawiły" ("the recondite recess is rolling itself up"). As inspiration for the main initial utterance, this phrase, used in the introduction, is of a formal character (hence the figure of paronomasia or alliteration, to be more precise). However, considering the whole body of the text, it also reveals the text's conceptual features. The recess refers, therefore, to its secondary metaphorical semantics which indicates, in accordance with the architectural optics of the labyrinth structure, a situation of erring, uncertainty, seeking traces, or futile weaving in space from which there is no way out. The figurative value of the metaphorical recess allows me to adopt it for a group of distinctive works which themselves seem to meander in the mass of problems and themes, sneaking out a definition or representation in order to remain not definitive and undefined ones; to them undoubtedly belong such concepts (or rather *quasi*-concepts), as *vnienachodmiost'*, *outsideness* (Mikhail Bakhtin), heresy (Jan Patočka), selfness and otherness (Emmanuel Levinas) *différance* (Jacques Derrida), or the butterfly style of writing (Roland Barthes), to name just a few examples. Their full explication is impossible, which justifies, at least to some degree, the decision to associate the discursive recesses with the epithet *mystical*, inaccuracy or inadequacy of which is expressed by the italics. What links the aforementioned concepts with the mystical experience is the idea of the inexpressible: common to all of them is, the very idea that presents a considerable challenge to the idioms, examined in this book, idioms which in various ways attempt to construct their peculiar *impossible* glossaries. The italics, which this time accompany the word *impossible* – are the precise result of the energy carried by this contradiction: under threat of the self-effacing (the philosophical strategy of *Aufhebung* transforms itself into a process of *sus rupture*/*under erasure*), these glossaries are still being written, which is proved by all the texts analysed in this monograph. Their *mystical* subsoil, so to speak, indicates the so-called aporetic effort made by a mystic who faces the necessity of recording his or her inexpressible vision: in any event, he or she keeps describing this vision regardless of the risk concerning the expected loss of this experience's inexpressible nature. The issue that is commented o here is, therefore, induced by confronting the textual promises with their realization, and determines one of the tasks taken up in this book. It is

worth adding that the meaning of the *mystical* context, but also the theological one, might be comprehended in a more literal sense, since the explored works (often against their own intentions) enable me to assume such an interpretation which is based on the religious threads that is in other words, different from the literary or philosophical ones. Their dominant position is determined by the Talmudic (Levinas) and Cabbalistic themes (Derrida), which do not annihilate references to the Christian (Patočka) and Orthodox Christian contexts (Bakhtin).

In the first chapter, entitled "Horizons of contemporary discourses – a brief reconnaissance," various discursive practices are discussed in order to emphasize that many theories of discourse describe its essence differently, which generates a significant number of definitions that often turn out to be antithetical, and openly destabilize the frames of the phenomenon in question. This ambiguity results from the 'old-fashioned' understanding its semantic content: in the well-known *Discours de la method* (1637), Descartes identifies the discourse with the philosophical conversation or dispute, yet its earlier (the ancient *discursus*) definition refers to the event of divergence, multidirectional movement, dispersion of thoughts. In this monograph, the two fundamental traditions of the contemporary discourse are recalled namely, the structuralist one derived from the linguistic concepts of Ferdinand de Saussure, and elaborated by Michel Foucault, and phenomenological ones (Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger) which frame discourse from the perspective of the intentional consciousness involved in the effort of thematization.

The second chapter is dedicated to Mikhail Bakhtin and his anti-systematic work on the language. Bakhtin's glossary is without doubt a reservoir of curiosities since it brings together terms and notions that prove the thinker's involvement in the language of everyday, common or colloquial communication. His activity boils down to capturing words from this everyday language in order to transform them into a set of intriguing devices which subsequently serve the construction of his original anthropological projects. Those devices allow Bakhtin to run away from the so-called scientific nature of speech, for they maintain a desirable, as one can believe, semantic non-transparency that meets the conditions for the *impossible* glossary, namely, the one which does anything to fail to accomplish the conventional interpretation saturating the signicative layers of the complex utterances as well as singular lexemes. The strategy of the author of *The Aesthetics of Verbal Art* rises from the attitude hallmarked by an exceptional aversion to the systematic and totalitarian thought due to which, instead of a transparent academic style, he postulates "a necessity of the new, philosophical surprise over everything. Everything could be after all something else," as he writes in *Problems of Literature and Aesthetics*. Many of Bakhtin's extra-ordinary concepts are born with his work on language. which prompts the decision to examine carefully its peculiar recesses equipped with the power of creation shaping *inter alia* the ethical relationship between his genuine "answerability" and responsibility. The situation of dialogue, originating from the dialogic nature of the word by dint of which it gravitates towards polyphony, the idea developed by Bakhtin while reading the novels of

Dostoevsky, is characterized by a specifically performative force which goes beyond the problems of the style or language in order to participate in constituting the ethical horizon. It is founded on the theological idea of the Orthodox Christian community (of a conciliar nature), but also draws from the conception of the gift (*Gegebenheit*) elaborated by the neo-Kantian Hermann Cohen and transformed by Bakhtin into a *dannost'*. The elementary unit of the conciliar community is the relationship between "I" and "You," which is based on "answerability," which might also beassociated with the practical philosophy of Siemion L. Frank. Streaked with the religious metaphysics, this philosophy has been never considered in the context of Bakhtin's thought, however, in an astonishing way it resembles his dialogic situation. Frank assumes, therefore, that "I" is limited by the relation to "You" and at the same time, on the level of this very limitation, is constituted as "I". The relationship with "You" is not accidentally given to "I," the latter is included (presupposed) by the Other without which "I" simply cannot exist. What is more, "I" and "You" establish the unity of "We" which is regarded as a manifestation of the heteronomous order namely, as a primal unity oriented towards the exploration of the interpersonal sphere (all the interactions and mutual influences). In Bakhtin's thought, the elements of the Marburg neo-Kantianism can also be observed, especially their theological aspects elaborated by Hermann Cohen who is considered the founder of the philosophy of dialogue which subsequently determines the concept of outsideness and alien-my word. With respect to the Absolute, Cohen refers to the apophatic theology of the medieval philosopher Moses Maimonides who in his *Guide for the Perplexed* keeps belief about the impersonal God, that is one, dwelling outside of any representation. People can only guess his existence due to the selected attributes through which he is to manifest himself, which, in consequence, ultimately conditions the relationship between God and Man. As a basically unrecognizable subject of knowledge, God must remain nothing but a sign of the ethical order in human life: with regard to this, Cohen proposes, therefore, a non-ontological transcendence (in his *Love and Justice in the Notions of God and Man*, 1900), which eventually leads to the ethical transcendence. Regardless of the many further complications, the neo-Kantian's view formulates a model relationship between "I" and "You," of which clear influence is present in Bakhtin.

In the next (third) chapter, a radical portrait of heresy becomes a central issue, since its main character is the Czech philosopher Jan Patočka. As a defiant student of Edmund Husserl, Patočka, in a seemingly discreet way intervenes in the phenomenological discourse, and transforms intentional consciousness into a critical one. This modification gains in importance when one considers it in the perspective of the practical overview concerning the manners in which the world appears: according to Patočka, this process occurs not in the light of intentions, as is desired by Husserl, but through the primal act of negation (*epoché*) which is to begin the process in question. The Czech thinker thus maintains that the constitutive element of each phenomenon is the sphere of "hidden," about which there is nothing to say, as if this phenomenon, just because of the impossibility of its very assump-

tion, turned back to the Kantian noumenon, a thing in itself. In his *Heretical Essays in the Philosophy of History* (1975), Patočka reminds us that from the etymological point of view heresy stands for a choice, and this promptly allows him to bind it with a responsible decision, which enables the individual to break out of what are termed 'casual truths,' namely, by which he means myths or superstitions. On the very occasion, the thinker also writes about two momenta occurring in the event of heresy: the negative one which tends to expose its creative character; the positive momentum, on the contrary, affirms continuity with a certain view or tradition. The historical context, into which heresy is inscribed by Patočka, reveals its three manifestations resulting from the transgression of three basic levels: orgiastic, de-monic, and sacral, wherein only the latter emphasizes the idea of responsibility and along with its secrecy uplifts the chiasmic structure of heresy. The dissenting considerations taken by Patočka direct him towards the idea of Good related with the concern about one's soul, which must be conceived as a revitalization of the Platonic thought originating from the early dialogues by this founder of classic on-tology (*Apology*, *Phaedo*, and *First Alcibiades*). In the light of this thought, the *psyche* is regarded as the prime mover and user of the body, and due to this it determines the real being of "I". In turn, the body resembles an instrument that serves good life, governed by the soul; the good life itself is tied to to the prescription of know-ing oneself. Concern fore one's soul is, according to Patočka, connected with the Christian vision of responsibility, and through the very connection it reveals the heretical split in responsibility itself, which stems from its association with Platonic rationalism. At the expense of freedom, the Greek philosopher perceives responsi-bility as subordinated to knowledge, but this knowledge, under the form of thema-tization or articulated truth which itself is, from the view-point of the Czech think-er, a real damnation, seems only to close in the circle of dogmas, and moves away from the Good expressed by the concern. In this presupposition, there is, according to Rodolphe Gashé, the unquestionable power of Patočka, who, on the contrary to Husserl or Heidegger and his well-known conception of *Sorge*, welcomes the concern on the threshold of its relation to the Christian paradigm, from which he drafts the right conclusions, since he takes into account human commitment to "You" (God, man) for whom in the individual dimension of love and guilt one is responsible. Moreover, this responsibility to a great extent also relates to the need for teaching, which itself significantly shapes the intellectual biography of Patočka, and is well illustrated in his book devoted to the bounds of the Platonism with the concept of Europe (*Plato and Europe*) – the dissertation's content only seemingly reveals itself as a record of various philosophical issues discussed in the private surrounding of his Prague apartment. Indeed, in those familiar lectures, Patočka communicates to his faithful listeners an essential message (in *The Gift of Death* noticed by Jacques Derrida), which is related with the heritage of the project called Europe. All the contemporary successors of this project (no matter whether they are born in Europe or not) must break up with the funeral reflection resulting from mourning the Old Continent (whose work was announced by Hegel, and contin-

ued by Husserl and Heidegger), because such a break enables them (or us) to refer to its heritage openly that is, with responsibility. In the very condition of being European, there is, as Patočka continually stresses, the very heritage which is not only the gift, but a task. To face it is to acknowledge the contemporary conditions of Europe in order to attempt to change them for better ones.

Emmanuel Levinas (in the fourth chapter) takes over Patočka's ethical commitment, this time realized on the basis of the idea of Infinity, which must be interpreted as an another challenge to the fusion of conventional philosophical discourse with the tradition of wisdom presented by the Jewish "just" (Hassidic leaders), and included in the Talmud (in the Mishnah as well as in Gemara). Like the Czech philosopher (and Derrida, the thinker whose opus is to be analysed in the next chapter), Levinas is a representative of the phenomenological circle, focused around the Husserlian movement, which must have had a significant impact on the methodological devices used by the author of *Autrement qu'être ou au-delà de l'essence*, earlier practised by the German philosopher in his *Logische Untersuchungen* (*Logical Investigations*, 1900-1901) – with the eidetic reduction that is at the head of Husserl's conception. The other important philosophical contexts in Levinas are Bergson's concepts of intuition and alternation, Heidegger's being-to-death (with which Levinas vigorously polemizes), and Descartes' notion of God which leads the French thinker to his idea of Infinity. His original ethics, inscribed into the so-called a-theology (in John Llewelyn's terms), Levinas also owes to the multi-annual conversations with Maurice Blanchot and Jean Wahl (who is, according to Samuel Moyn, a proper discoverer of the theological Other; the first significant work by Levinas, *Totality and Infinity* [1961], is dedicated to Wahl). Without the presence of the Talmudic wisdom, studied by the philosopher under the guidance of Mordechai Chouchani in the second half of the 40s, there wouldn't be the idea of responsibility (often expressed by the Face) which is essential for the relationship between the Self and the Other, streaked with the mentor-protégé approach, and also flowing from the order of love described by Franz Rozenzweig in his *Star of Redemption*. The aforementioned lis is completed by Jacob Gordin, the founder of the Paris Cabbalistic school – even though the author of *Difficile liberté* officially distances himself from the Jewish mysticism, Gordin's influence on Levinas' works should be, however, considered, especially in the context of the *soi* (*selfness*) standing for the destitution of the Self, withdrawing from the category of the Self into selfness in order to open up to the Other. In this strategy of destitution, one might, therefore, encounter the reverberation of the Cabbalistic doctrine of *tsimtsum* which is closely examined in the chapter devoted to Derrida. The real relationship between all beings occurs, as claimed by Levinas, beyond all thematization, which forces the thinker to abandon the realm of the traditional phenomenology, which is focused on intentional consciousness. Unfortunaktely, this consciousness unfortunately proves to be captivated by the metaphysics of presence, in Derrida's terms, or by the ontology of representation (proposed by Lévinas himself). The ontology that annuls the representation is in effect its powerful reduction which

results in the ethics or phenomenology-outside/beyond-lights. In this part of the chapter, the respective stages of this project's development are discussed, of which the conceptual culmination is *Totality and Infinity* complemented in 1974 by another important dissertation entitled *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*. It's worth recalling the above-mentioned stages, since they perfectly illustrate Levinas' genuine contribution to the philosophical discourse: the first one is an unprecedented in its originality *il y a* (*there is* in English translation), a conception (elaborated by the philosopher already in his early works from the 40s namely, *Existence and Existents* and *Time and the Other*) of the anonymous existing which stays out of time; in the event of the so-called primary dia-chrony, the *il y a* transforms itself through the process of contraction (*hypostasis*) namely, the existent contracts its existing. This results in gaining by the existent such attributes, as consciousness, identity, subjectivity exposed from now on to time and transcendence, which manifests itself as the presence of other beings and worldwide elements. The accurate ethical moment appears during the secondary dia-chrony, in which the "egological" space of the individual is disturbed by the Other: his proximity determines the ethical sense of this relationship, and wake the Self from "dogmatic slumber": the Other's presence (neither wanted nor unwanted) forces the Self to insomnia, wakefulness, sobriety. Thus for the Self, the real opening up to the Other deprives the Self of its subjectivity in order to take responsibility for this distressing You. Through the aforementioned process, Levinas turns to the idea of heteronomy, in which the Self subordinates to the Other (the ethical relation unavoidably changes the status of the individual who becomes a hostage or debtor of the Other): the act of subordination is necessary for Levinas' thought on responsibility, which consists in the absence of substitution: in being responsible for the Other, no one can replace the Self. In his new ethics, the philosopher proposes, therefore, an original, asymmetric substitution through which the idea of Infinity, instilled in humans (according to Descartes), is to be revealed. In order to discover the trace of God placed (or instilled) in the Self, Levinas indicates bu int the only way, which in an extra-ordinary, indirect manner that includes the You, who turns out to be the source of the metaphor of curvature of intersubjective space, outlined already in *Totality and Infinity*, and thought to the end in *Of God Who Comes to Mind* (1984). It's noteworthy that Levinas' heteronomy is founded on the phenomenon of passivity related in his *impossible* idiom with the grammatical case of accusative by dint of which the thinker is able to construct a new, ethical declination. The relationship with the Other assumes, therefore, the reduction of the Self from the nominative level to the accusative one (*me voici* – "here you've got me," "here you see me," which refers to the biblical declaration "Here I am") in consequence resulting in the situation, in which the Self is haunted by transcendence. In the discussion on Levinas' philosophy, his distinctive attitude towards language is also taken into account, since it is based on the inexhaustible concatenation of substitutions. The character of the last segment of the chapter is conjoined with the spatial metaphor of bridge, on which Levinas and Derrida are to meet on the occasion of the death of the first thinker:

for this very reason, Derrida writes his moving and emotional *Adieu*, which is to transfer the readers to the realm of reflections regarding the deconstruction.

In the fifth chapter, initiated by Derrida's phrase from his *Truth in Painting*, the thinker presents himself in the self-ironical light, for he tends to suggest that all his writing activity is a collection of parerga, or casual commentaries inscribed in the margins of the great philosophical canon. But, as is well known, from this marginal position Derrida destabilizes and disturbs all those monumental concepts, in which the metaphysics of presence (or logocentrism streaked with phonocentrism, in his own terms) is established. Since the philosopher's critical analysis occurs inside the philosophical (in Plato, Aristotle, or Hegel) and linguistic systems, he makes use of many devices generated by these systems with the acknowledged *différance* in the lead derived from the linguistic tradition under the banner of Ferdinand de Saussure. The essential device of Derrida's deconstruction is of an apophatic character: it is never present and cannot be defined, however, it continues to control the text or language from its "inside". At most one may describe its temporal-spatial activity, that is, differing, unfolding, postponing, delaying, dissemination of meanings, etc. These attributes allow Stanford L. Drop to compare the difference with the cabbalistic doctrine called *tzimtzum*, which was elaborated in the sixteenth century by the Sephardi mystic Isaac Luria. In the centre of this doctrine, there is God fathomed in the convention of *creation ex nihilo*, *Ayin*, whose literal meaning is "nothing," which suggests that the negative moment in God is at the same time his beginning. The invisible Absolut of *En-Sof*, which stemmed from the *Ayin*, is conceived as a primordial being that permeated the entire universe, being alone in its fullness and for that reason feeling melancholy. The only remedy for loneliness was the creation of other beings, however, in order to make this possible, God had to go into exile into himself, shrink in the gesture of contraction, empty space from himself: only in this way could created beings find their place. In our imperfect world, the *En-Sof* is of a trace structure (*reshimu*, the cabbalistic trace), and manifests itself exclusively in the form of the attributes, which govern the temporal-spatial dynamics of the reality, and as such it does resemble Derrida's difference. The essential consequence of this comparative analysis of the relationship between cabbalistic thought and deconstruction is the possibility of revealing these problems' presence in Derrida's early and most significant works, *Of Grammatology*, *Writing and Difference*, and *Dissemination*. In *Faith and Knowledge*, Derrida discusses three aporetic sites: The Promised Land, island, and desert; he also takes into account the centuries-old, and openly imperialistic *mondialisation* (globalization) of Europocentric culture, which managed to colonize most of our world. The Arab Spring, as Derrida often emphasises, is the response to this globalization, yet the perspective of the desert messianism, analysed in my book, cannot be perceived only as a preventive measure, since the philosopher reveals the presence of knowledge in faith in order to overcome its domination, which shaped the spiritual sphere of the so-called Western civilization. Therefore, of the three sites, listed in the introduction to his essay, Derrida favours the desert, which meets with strong opposition from Barbara Skarga, who

in *Trace and Presence* accuses the deconstructionist of nihilism. As a metaphor, the desert might be indeed interpreted in an ambivalent way, but Skarga reduces its meaning to "the absolute amorphousness, recurrence, and lack of differentiation, […] imperishable presence, barrenness and emptiness," and defines it as a denial of the difference. This totally negative reduction, in my opinion, fails to meet Derrida's intention, since in the desert horizon his concept of *praesens propheticum* is developed in order to become the dessert messianism fully introduced in *Spectres of Marx*: this messianic structure also unveils it's a-theological character, as it does not require any messiah, and opens itself up towards the future, which is to come. The emptiness of the desert expresses uncertainty about this future, which cannot be conditioned, but thought of only in this way, the future might be related with the idea of responsibility (hidden in the secret of tomorrow) for Otherness. Derrida's responsibility includes the formal structure of the promise, which is called an emancipatory, since it concerns the future idea of democracy associated with such responsibility that locates itself out of the contemporary, institutional law. Alongside the concept of dessert messianism, *Spectres of Marx* concentrate s one a specific spectral logic, which – in the form of an impossible conversation with ghosts – appears in *Archive Fever* and which enables Derrida to cast some light on the religious aspects of Freudian psychoanalysis. The aforementioned book allows me to examine his twin-track approach, due to which both temporal streams are considered: the future, which is to come, and the past deposited in the archive, and inhabited by the ghosts. The spectral logic is related to the hypothesis of haunting, as well as to the spectre's ambivalence, since it remains to adhere at the same time to the eviodence of the livinf past and living future. For Shakespeare's Hamlet, communing with the ghost of the murdered father (a 'scene of instruction" for spectral logic), this event entails a catastrophe of his world hitherto (expressed in the well-known phrase that 'time's out of joint'), time ripped of its hinges, thus forcing one to act. The spectral logic (taking into account the whole non-obviousness of the spectre, which might be an inspiring ghost, or a spook devastating the individual from its centre) inscribes itself into the expatcations without horizon of expectations. It seems hard, therefore, to agree with the conclusion reached by Agata Bielik-Robson, who perceives Derrida's thought only in the thanatological context, which is situated on the antipodes of the vitalism, proclaimed by the authoress in her *Crypt-theologies of Late Modernity*. Her vision I s denied by the messianic orientation to the future, for Derrida identified with hospitality, which is articulated in the name of Otherness. The aforementioned motifs allow me to analyse the deconstructionist's ties with negative theology (uncovered, *inter alia*, in his commentaries on the poems of Angelus Silesius, and expressed in his strong interest in the typographic issues), and with the post-secular thought, in which Derrida engages himself in the discussion with J.-P. Nancy (concerning touch), amd with J.-P. Marion (on the idea of gift). In the last part of this chapter, inspired, on the one hand, by Derrida's biographical portrait by Cixous, and, on the other, by his own autobiographical enunciations included in *Circonfession*, I analyse an

intriguing correspondence between the poetics of confession under the banner of St. Augustine and the prayer, which might be articulated in the absence of God, but it cannot push away the force of tradition – for Derrida, this means a necessary return to his (repressed) Hebraic sources.

The last (sixth and final) chapter of my dissertation concentrates on the late and specifically *mystical* works by Roland Barthes, who, from his acknowledged announcement concerning the author's death, gradually attempts to free himself from the violent power of the *signifié*. With regard to this, Barthes invents such conceptions like "starlitting" text (*S/Z*), or tearing it into elliptical fragments (*Pleasure of the Text*, *Fragments of Love Discourse*, *Roland Barthes*), and finally – fascination with the emptiness associated with his experience of the Japanese Orient. I compare this fascination with the phenomenon of photographical *punctum* heartbreakingly described in his last book *Camera lucida*, which stands for the evidence of the impossible work of mourning related to the death of Barthes' mother, Henriette. In this part of the book, I also take into consideration the process of creating texts, the pure act of writing, which essentially determines Barthes' activity. On the one hand, this act enables the writer to adhere almost somatically to language (which allows me to introduce a mystical concept of *devekut* by Abraham Abulafia, which obviously remains foreign to Barthes' world view), on the other, is a kind of grace, a-theological version of redemption, which for the author of *Mythologies* might only be found in writing.