# Mimesis and Attention
## On Christian *Sophrosyne*

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ABSTRACT   One might well wonder about the source of Girard's knowledge. Where is it thought to have come from in the first place? From what vantage point are we supposed to be surveying the events he claims are *originary*? And what, then, is the condition for the very possibility of his Christian wisdom? In this paper, I argue that we can put forward a tentative solution by looking at one particular aspect of all the texts that Girard has interpreted: they are all *written* texts. Analyzing this in detail with the assistance of the proposals of Bernard Stiegler, I will claim that it is writing itself that has afforded us the possibility of *paying attention*. Moreover, in the second section, I shall also put forward an analysis of the gnoseological condition of the possibility of Christian wisdom. To do so, I expand on Stiegler's reading of Kant's notion of *schema* focusing on its relation with the hermeneutical notion of *figura*, as presented by Erich Auerbach. Commenting on the common rhetorical setting of both the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the Bible, I then show that these two written texts address a very similar problem—a critique of the way people judge—and also put forward, surprisingly, much the same solution: to properly judge, it would be better to take into account past examples of judgments and consider that, no matter whether we *critique* them or not, they will schematize our own experiences and influence our intentionality.

KEYWORDS   attention; figuralism; judgement; schematism; sophrosyne

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> Everyone knows that the insane interpret the world via
> their own peculiarly consistent logic; how can you tell if
> your own logic is 'peculiar' or not, given that you have
> only your own logic to judge itself?
> I don't see any answer.[1]

Introduction

*Wisdom* is a notoriously problematic word to grasp and clarify, especially if one is inclined to seek out its philosophical roots in ancient Greek. Ought we to opt for *sophia*, which sounds like the easiest possibility, or perhaps adopt *phronesis*? Maybe, instead, we should retain the old Socratic and Platonic idea of invoking *sophrosyne*. For, surely enough, a wise man is both *sophros* and *sophos*. Indeed, we pronounce these two words in such a similar way that one might even be tempted to discard the most relevant difference conveyed by the written signs they employ. But let us exercise caution: these three terms have divergent but also somehow convergent meanings—and these, together, are ones that might well lead us to some interesting findings.

In Homeric Greek, the notion of *phren* has to do with both emotions and intellectual abilities. We might say that, at its origin, *sophrosyne* is the virtue of those who can exercise prudence and who are conscious of their own limits. A *sophros* will be someone who has temperance and moderation—for instance, in acknowledging their own inferiority relative to the gods. It will also be someone who can receive and acknowledge the gods' rules or laws (cf. Aeschylus, *Prometheus Bound*), acting on them with due reason while also maintaining their own equilibrium. In trying to distinguish *sophia* from *sophrosyne*, we should not forget that Homeric heroes are persecuted by the gods not because of their lack of knowledge (*sophia*), but because of their lack of moderation (*sophrosyne*).

When the old aristocratic *furor* for competition gives way to the *polis* and its fondness for cooperation, *sophrosyne*, as self-control and self-limitation, really gains its centrality in the system of civic virtues. Plato often—but nowhere as much as in the *Charmides*—focuses on the notion of *sophrosyne*. Is it just minding your own business, and thus an instance of moral self-restraint? Or is it, etymologically, a sound and sane mind—an intellectual precondition, one might say, for proficiency?

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1.  Douglas R. Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 690.

According to Umberto Bultrighini, such a sound mind (corresponding to the first translation of *sophrosyne* in the *Greek-English Lexicon*, edited by Liddell and Scott) does not exactly concern the proper use of *nous*, the intellect; *phronein*, differing from *noein*, specifically hints at ways of thinking and feeling as these show up in their concrete manifestations—directed towards others and arising between us and them.[2] In other words, *sophrosyne* is not about any kind of pure and disembodied knowledge in the sense of *sophia*, so that the latter, as a consequence, cannot really count as a sound translation for "wisdom."

According to Aristotle, *sophrosyne* is what saves or preserves (Gr. *soizein*) *phronesis*[3] by *containing desires*; and so it looks like a condition of possibility for both *phronesis* and *sophia*, the former being the ability to choose where concrete and particular actions are concerned, the latter the ability to attain knowledge of the universal. Meanwhile, my own interpretative translation of this term, and of "wisdom," would be this: *paying attention in order to conveniently dwell in Being.* So what, the reader may be wondering, does any of this have to do with Girard's Mimetic Theory, or Christian cultural legacies and influence broadly conceived? I myself believe that there is a significant connection, and in spelling this out here I shall also try to demonstrate how deeply it holds in respect of our philosophical tradition, too.

For centuries, *phronesis* has been translated into Latin as *prudentia*, and this became the root of the more common word *jurisprudentia*, meaning a skill or ability oriented towards judging, or applying a law to, a particular case. We might be tempted to think that when such a daunting task is to be performed with regard to actions, then *phronesis* is the right word. When we are to judge some*thing*, in the sense of subsuming a particular being into a universal noun (bearing in mind that nouns and laws have, as a common ancestor, the Greek *nomos*), we might want to refer to the notion of *sophia*.

As a matter of fact, we can make use in both cases of the particular universe of semantic associations linked to the term "judgment." Whenever we say that a subject S was guilty of some failing G, we are producing a judgment that works, logically, in the same way as a judgement stating that a certain being B belongs to some universal category C. A wise person is someone who can judge the condition in which he needs to be, so the *habitus* or virtue he needs to possess in order to judge properly must be *sophrosyne.* Judging both others and things with which we have some sort

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2. Umberto Bultrighini, "Carmide," in *Tutte le opere*, ed. Enrico V. Maltese (Rome: Newton Compton, 2009), 1055.

3. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1140b.

of *intentional* interaction is tantamount to *dwelling in Being*. In order to efficaciously dwell in such Being, where this involves things that figure in our projects as well as others that call out to be understood and judged philosophically, we need to properly attend to them—to *pay attention.*

This point provides me with an opportunity to initially introduce and comment upon a passage from Girard taken from a very recent collection of papers edited and translated into Italian by Pierpaolo Antonello and Alessandra Diazzi. Girard is commenting enthusiastically on the notion of attention as put forward by Simone Weil, notably in *La pesanteur et la grâce*: the "ability to pay attention to beings and to things."[4] Attending or paying attention is an extremely arduous struggle, similar to prayer and thoroughly subordinated to an authentic relation to God—always at risk of being distracted or diverted by a false relation between the I and others. It is, according to Weil, our only source of authentic knowledge, and its main enemy or obstacle is the *Great Beast.*[5]

I think that Girard puts his finger here on a fundamental issue—one that clearly aroused his interest not only because of the reference to the Platonic *Great Beast* (which, as Thibon notes in his introduction,[6] legibly resonates with the Beast of Apocalypse), but also because of the epistemic relevance Weil attributed to prayer. Moreover, we find in that very same collection of writings a paper reflecting on the epistemic relevance of Christian Revelation more generally.[7]

In the present article, I hope to show how a Girardian approach to this matter might lead to a fuller grasp of the epistemic relevance of Christian Revelation as a method for making accessible the very possibility of judgment, and as a way to build our capacity to pay attention (or a condition of the possibility of the latter). I shall begin from the second of these.

4.  René Girard, "Rileggendo Simone Weil," in *Mimesi e pensiero* (Massa: Transeuropa, 2019), 92–3.

5.  G. Thibon, the editor of the original version of *La pesanteur et la grâce*, noted that "to adore the 'Great Beast' is to think and act in conformity with the prejudices and reactions of the multitude to the detriment of all personal search for truth and goodness." On the origin of this myth, cf. Plato, *Republic*, Book VI, and Simone Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, trans. Emma Crawford and Mario Von der Ruhr, ed. Emma Crawford, Mario Von der Ruhr, and Gustave Thibon (New York: Routledge, 2001). More on this later.

6.  Ibid., XXIV. Lamentably absent, both in Weil and in Girard, is any reference to the *Wild Beast* that appears in Hegel's *Jenenser Realphilosophie: Die Vorlesungen von 1803.*

7.  René Girard, "Letteratura e cristianesimo: una prospettiva personale," in *Mimesi e pensiero* (Massa: Transeuropa, 2019), 227–38.

Written memories: Christian Revelation as technical support
  for the capacity to pay attention

From her own words, we learn that Weil had developed not only a theory of attending, but also a rough theory of the *genesis* of attention:

> Studies and faith. Prayer being only attention in its pure form and studies being a form of gymnastics of the attention, each school exercise should be a refraction of spiritual life. There must be method in it. A certain way of doing Latin prose, a certain way of tackling a problem in geometry (and not just any way) make up a system of gymnastics of the attention calculated to give it a greater aptitude for prayer.[8]

Girard reminds us that, according to Weil, "one can apply [the capacity to pay attention] both to the other and to a text."[9] And it seems to me that the reference to texts here is of paramount importance when it comes to answering the underlying question posed, which is one to which Weil herself only gives the bare outlines of an answer: how do we build the capacity for attention?

 Scholarly research and faith have, at a certain level of analysis, one thing in common, as does the conversion of Romanesque writers, which Girard often comments on: namely, *a close relation to texts*. One thing that Girard does not really take into his account, either when dealing with the Bible or when analyzing works from his *canon* of writers, is that all of these authors are first and foremost writers in the most technical and literal sense of the word. All of them, in different ways, are in the first place competent operators of that very special technique of memory which is *writing*—as in the *writing of texts*. This might seem self-evident and ir-relevant, but in truth it is not. Simone Weil certainly had a sense of the relevance of the text in building the ability to pay attention; on the other hand, even though Girard had been working on texts ever since his own *diplôme* as a chartist, he did not really take up this issue.[10] Dealing with texts, both as writers and as students, has a very powerful effect on our consciousness: an effect that no one has been so engaged in clarifying as Bernard Stiegler, the former student of Jacques Derrida. Indeed, Stiegler

8. Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, 120.

9. Girard, "Rileggendo Simone Weil," 92.

10. Yet he did in some sense anticipate it—for instance, in *Deceit, Desire and the Novel*, where he notes: "The printed word has a magical power of suggestion, and the author never tires of giving us examples of it." René Girard, *Deceit, Desire, and the Novel: Self and Other in Literary Structure*, trans. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965), 31.

has, in some fashion, unconsciously taken up the challenge posed by Weil's aphorism and worked out a whole theory of the genesis of attention, also exploring many of its consequences.

It is beyond the scope of this article to fully examine Stiegler's work, but it is necessary, for the sake of my argument, to briefly introduce its tenets. Stiegler has worked on the Husserlian notion of *longitudinal intentionality*,[11] trying to put forward a sort of heterodox interpretation of the role of so-called *tertiary retentions* in the interweaving of our inner consciousness of time. According to Edmund Husserl, the intentionality of conscious-ness is not instantaneous, which means that we are never really dealing with a single instant, a single and punctual present. Our present intentional attitude towards the world is always already interwoven with the just-gone, the retention, and the not-yet, the protention. When we listen to a melody, or to a sentence, we do not actually compose in our mind the sequence of sounds as if they were *arriving* one by one, isolated, and then synthesized by some transcendental *Ich-denke*—or, better, we do exactly so, but not from scratch. Our first synthesis, our first temporal compilation, is always already given to us as such.

Stiegler put forward his reading of Husserl specifically in the context of a close confrontation with Immanuel Kant.[12] Husserl himself had likewise dealt with the matter through confronting Kant, albeit via Franz Brentano. He was concerned about the excessive role that his own mentor was conceding to the imagination (a notion as closely related to *mimesis* as one could envisage) in the process of synthesis pertaining to temporal objects. As maintained by Husserl, the problem in Brentano's account pertained precisely to his theory of the *original association*, according to which the imagination was supposed to link primary retentions (the just-gone), by association, to present percep-tions. Such a solution was unacceptable, because it ended up making the temporal dimension of experience something *imagined*. It was at this point that Husserl introduced his theory of longitudinal intentionality. By keep-ing the imagination out of the game, he hoped to save the epistemic value of temporal perception. Relative to this debate, Stiegler makes a somewhat revolutionary step forward.[13] He is not willing to reject or question the clear

11. Cf., for the best-known introduction to the notion of *longitudinal intentionality*, Paul Ricoeur, *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer, vol. III (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 23ff.

12. Cf. Bernard Stiegler, *Technics and Time*, trans. Stephen Barker, vol. III (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 15–6.

13. The three-volume *Technics and Time*, published in France between 1994 and 2001, amounts to an extended argumentative exposition concerning this issue.

distinction between memory and retention, yet he is concerned with the role that the imagination is called to play in the process: his intention is to reaffirm, instead, the thought that "a perception is never entirely without of all imagination."[14] To argue his claim, Stiegler puts forward the notion of *tertiary* retention (R3), meaning an externalized memory, carved out of the Husserlian notion of *image consciousness*. First and foremost, the tertiary retention plays a methodological role: as externalized memory, it offers the certainty of the equal repetition of itself. In 1905, as Stiegler points out, Husserl was able to make his own phenomenological analysis of a melody partly because he could count on the phonograph to offer him the absolute certainty that whatever modification he was perceiving in the experience of a melody was not to be attributed to the source of the experience, but to the process of consciousness. If the experience of a sound in the wake of what preceded it is different from what it was in a first listening to the same sequence, this must be because of something happening to or within consciousness. Without tertiary retentions such as the record, Husserl would not have been in a position to discard the hypothesis (and, actually, what might appear as the certainty) that the difference was to be attributed to the execution. Instead, the experimental experience of listening several times to the very same temporal object clarified to Husserl that the consciousness engaged in experiencing—and therefore also in selecting perceptions and primary retentions—was at each and every cycle modified by the memories of past experiences. As a methodological tool, the notion of R3 shed light on the fact that imagination—through memory (as something different from the primary retention, and which we may call, with Stiegler, secondary retention)—intervenes at the very heart of perception, conditioning the interweaving of longitudinal intentionality. Primary retention appears to be influenced in respect of what it itself does by openings in the matrix of antecedent selections operated by consciousness, in such a way that "secondary retentions [memories] inhabit the process of primary retention in advance."[15]

Likewise, tertiary retentions become, in Stiegler, the foundational theoretical element for a new model of consciousness. R3 is an externalized memory of an event that consciousness can, even without having directly lived it, still reactivate and make its own. This is what happens, for instance,

14. Surprisingly enough, this statement, which the reader can find in the original French version of *La technique et le temps*, at vol. III, pp. 38-39, note 1, as such: "Je pose évidemment en conséquence qu'une perception n'est jamais pure de toute imagination" has vanished from the corresponding endnote no. 9 on p. 227 of the English translation.

15. Stiegler, *Technics and Time*, III, 19.

when we read a book or see a movie and understand what it means so well that we can actually think those thoughts or remember those feelings as if they were our own—and, indeed, they actually do tend to end up also being our own. Most of the objects that populate our world can be placed in this category because most of them are images (static or dynamic), books, music, monuments, or just *things* that happen to be loaded with impressions of events we have not lived through, but that have become a part of our memory. Stiegler is therefore brought to deal with the Heideggerian problematic lurking beneath our own argument: namely, that of human finitude, which the French philosopher labels *retention finitude.* To do so, he will go back to Kant once again.

The third volume of *Technics and Time* is, indeed, an extended and robust confrontation with Kantian philosophy, and in particular with the problem of the transcendental schematism and its relation to imagination. Taking into consideration Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer's view of the *culture industry* and its relation to the schematism, as well,[16] Stiegler claims that in order to properly deal with the problem of the relation between imagination and perception we must revisit the argument put forward by Kant when analyzing the unity of consciousness, as in the first version of the *Transcendental Deduction*, only focusing this time on the role attributed to the imagination. He argues that the phenomenological description of the temporal synthesis of consciousness, according to which the perception of the present is always already interwoven with retentions and protentions that are both primary secondary and tertiary, actually fits best with this initial analysis on the part of Kant. He even claims that in this way we will finally be brought to the point of being able to see right to the heart of the *mysterious doctrine of schematism.*

In order to accomplish this stage of my argument, it will be useful to consider, in parallel, Kant's presentation of the triple synthesis (of apprehension, of reproduction and of recognition) put forward in the first version of the *Transcendental Deduction*, and the phenomenological account of the experience of temporal objects. Stiegler shows us that the *impasse* in which Kant had probably found himself trapped was the same one that, according to Husserl, Brentano had fallen into. Neither of them had managed to move beyond the analytical distinction between apprehension and reproduction. When describing the synthesis of reproduction, Kant might well be referring to what Husserl labeled "primary retention." In version A, he

16.  Cf. Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 135ff.

is eventually led to assert that "the synthesis of apprehension is therefore inseparably combined with the synthesis of reproduction" (A102). Keeping the two syntheses clearly separated, the former as primary retention, the latter as secondary retention, Stiegler can state—in line with the spirit of Kant if not the letter—that the synthesis of reproduction *accompanies* the synthesis of apprehension: i.e. a memory always escorts, as a criterion of selection, every primary retention. The third synthesis, of recognition, assures, as protention, the coherence of consciousness with itself and the unity of consciousness as a stream. This process gives us the unity of apperception, which thus can accompany every representation.

Yet, just as with Husserl's phonographs, Stiegler reproaches Kant for disregarding the fact that the unity of apperception, the unity of that stream that Kant's consciousness itself was, could become *visible* to his analysis only because it was externalized using a material support: namely, the text that Kant was himself writing. This very same text that we can read is the very same memory we can reactivate, even if we have never actually lived it in the present tense, so to say. Without a written trace of his own long argument, without tertiary retention in the sense of a technically externalized and unified version of his own stream of consciousness, such retentional finitude would have hindered Kant's own research. The unity of consciousness, which in Kantian terms is the fundamental condition for the possibility of judgment, is therefore given to us by the tertiary retention, which is a sort of fourth synthesis—one that Stiegler labeled *technological.*

Nevertheless, a generic interaction of consciousness with the world of objects surrounding us (which, essentially, are mnestic traces) is not enough to properly *contain* this retentional finitude.[17] Studying, which, as Weil mentions, is not just reading, is the main point of entry into this condition of the mind. Again, the example we have chosen in order to briefly report and comment on Stiegler's work is telling: in order to contain the retentional finitude which constitutes us, we do not just read *but also write.* Writing means having an active interaction with tertiary retentions surrounding us: it is this technological condition that made it possible for Kant himself to do what he did, and it is this special activity that builds our capacity for attending.

17.  As in Girardian and Dupuyan jargon, the verb '*contain*' is here of the utmost significance: in order to contain the retentional finitude, in the sense of keeping it in check, we need to postulate a general, and also retentional, finitude that Stiegler calls *le défaut qu'il faut.* We contain our retentional finitude by interacting with those very retentions that constitute us as retentionally finite. Were we to be retentionally infinite, none of this would make any sense, and our consciousness would not experience time.

Indeed, Girard, commenting on Weil's aphorism, notes that "the capacity to pay attention gives us access to another reality:"[18] building his capacity to pay attention by writing down and externalizing his own stream of consciousness, Kant gained access to the transcendental realm. The authors of Girard's canon, in *writing* down their own experiencing, which was sublimated and transfigured into their novels where the novelists were concerned, and into the Bible in the case of the rest of Girard's case studies, opened up an opportunity for conversion: *metanoia.*

According to Mimetic Theory, this might be the realm that granted them the external perspective logically required if one is to perceive the victims of the scapegoating mechanism as innocent. In the case of Proust, the process is most evident: the author regains his lost time in the first instance thanks to some contingent and serendipitous experience, and then writes it down—this is no mere accessory to his endeavor, it is constitutive, *supplementary* in the Derridean meaning of the word.

In this first section we have thus obtained our first finding: dealing actively with tertiary retentions, as was done unconsciously by all of Girard's authors and by Kant (amongst many others), and as anticipated by Simone Weil and put forward by Stiegler, is constitutive of our capacity to pay attention.

Schematism and figuralism: Christian Revelation as a condition
of the possibility of wise and attentive judgment

After the *Transcendental Deduction*, Kant takes up the most mysterious of his doctrines, the *Transcendental Schematism.* According to the *Kritik*, the *schema* is a product of the imagination that mediates between sensibility and intellect, *projecting* pure *a priori* categories onto the manifold of intuition and thus making *representations* possible.[19] The schema is a procedure through which reason can put the data received by sensibility into forms; it is the rule which it must follow if it is to be capable of subsuming the particularities of intuitions into the universals of categories; it is the means by which it can *fill* the concept with the sensible. Now, such a schema, produced by the imagination according to Kant, once again invokes the notion of tertiary retention. Kant uses a very special example, and it is this that captures Stiegler's attention. When describing the schema (in A 135) of the number *one thousand* he considers it different from the images in five dots ". . . . ." of the number five. Yet, he seems to forget that the former

18.  Girard, "Rileggendo Simone Weil," 92, my translation.
19.  Bernard Stiegler, *De la misère symbolique* (Paris: Flammarion, 2004), §58.

number is the result of a long history of techniques of calculation that are all, in the end, *tertiary retentions.* Even if they do have different functions, both *schema* and *image* have a common origin: tertiary retentions.

Examining this Kantian topic through Stiegler's eyes makes it possible to state the following: the written text, as the most relevant and influential case of tertiary retention, contains our retentional finitude and supports the coherence of the stream of consciousness as this relates to the unity of apperception; furthermore, it conditions and mediates, as a criterion of selection and association, the production of representations—which, technically, is the exercising of our very faculty of judgment.[20]

In both the Western biblical and the *secular* hermeneutical traditions, we can encounter a highly relevant notion that, in the wake of this analysis of the notion of *schema*, may well spring to mind: this is the notion of *figura.* In the following, I will try and show that the notions of *schema* and of *figura* share more than we might commonly think.

My argument will run as follows: the *schema* mediates between the manifold of intuition and the category, between sensibility and ideality. In biblical, notably Pauline, Augustinian and Patristic hermeneutics, the notion of *figura* performs the function of mediating between mundane, mortal, bodily vicissitudes and the providential, divine, transcendent order, between the terrestrial adventure and eternal life, and between each particular individual story and the universal history of redemption.

Even if the functional analysis counts for more in terms of its evidential value, it may still be worth reminding ourselves of the essential traits of the history of the term '*figura*.'

In its ancient history, the Latin term *figura* fluctuates, covering more or less all the meanings that Greek conveyed with μορφή, εἶδος, τυπος, σχῆμα. Its associated semantic universe includes the germane notions *forma*, *umbra*, *imago*. With Cicero, the term acquires its technical character, defining the three canonic levels of style *figura gravis*, *mediocris* and *attenuata*,[21] and entering once and for all into the field of grammar and rhetoric. According to Auerbach, "figural interpretation establishes a connection between two events or persons, the first of which signifies not only itself but also the second, while the second encompasses or fulfills the first."[22] The fulfillment

20. Bernard Stiegler, *La société automatique*, vol. 1, L'avenir du Travail (Paris: Fayard, 2015), §100.

21. Erich Auerbach, "Figura," in *Scenes from the Drama of European Literature* (New York: Meridian, 1957), 20.

22. Ibid., 53.

is, in general, defined as *veritas*, while the *figura* is the *umbra* or *imago*. Since Auerbach is focusing on the contraposition of figural and allegorical interpretation, he stresses the thoroughgoing historicity of both *veritas* and *figura*, as when he writes: "the *figura* has as much historical reality as what it prophesied. The prophetic figure is a concrete historical fact, and it is fulfilled by concrete historical facts."[23] Auerbach is engaged in a reflective dialogue with Augustine, who admonishes: "when you hear an exposition of the mystery of the Scriptures telling of things that took place, you believe what is read to have actually taken place as the reading narrates; lest, undermining the foundation of actuality, you seek as it were to build in the air."[24] Even so, the relevance and meaning of the hermeneutic *nexus* can only be thoroughly understood when we focus not so much on its historicity as on the intermediary role played by the figural principle itself. Saint Paul, and later the Patristic tradition, link events from the history of Jesus, the Church, and redemption back to a single concrete historical *umbra* or *imago*—e.g., the prophets of the Old Testament.

Historically, the *figura* is always also ideal. As something mundane, it partakes already in divine history: this is the feature that makes of it a *nexus* between two vicissitudes that might look incompatible or even incommensurable, but that opens up instead the achieving of an experience of truth—precisely in virtue of the connection that unites them.

In order to further clarify the formal analogy that is emerging, we need to focus on a detail that Auerbach neglects:[25] namely, the fact that the Bible, as is also in large part the case with the *Critique of Pure Reason*, is a text that claims to offer a means to efficaciously comprehend the world.

In order to confirm this analogy, we shall seek out the triangulatory relation on which the doctrine of transcendental schematism is predicated not in the intra-textual interpretation of the Bible but in the relation between the reader, the Bible, and his or her world—this being a matter on which, maybe implicitly, Auerbach expands in *Mimesis*.[26] The manifold of intuition that the reader of the Bible can, in that text, find the means to have

23. Ibid., 30.

24. Ibid., 39: "Ante omnia, frater, hoc in nomine Domini admonemus et praecipimus, ut quando auditis exponi sacramentum Scripturae quae gesta sunt, prius illud quod lectum est credatis sic gestum quomodo lectum est; ne substrato fundamento rei gestae quasi in aere quaeratis aedificare" (*Serm.*, 2, 6 sgg.)

25. I find support for this in Barry Maine, "Erich Auerbach's 'Mimesis' and Nelson Goodman's 'Ways of Worldmaking': A Nominal(ist) Revision," *Poetics Today* 20, no. 1 (1999).

26. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953).

a meaningful and true experience of, is not the Old Testament, but his or her own mundane, historical, concrete and real life.

The *figura* is an externalized memory of the *authors* of the Bible which no reader has lived in the first person: one that acts as a *schema* through which the acolyte can overwrite his or her own intentional attitude of *aboutness* as it relates to the world, thus imposing some efficacious category upon his or her own manifold and chaotic existence. The text mediates, as a tertiary retention conditioning the syntheses of apprehension and reproduction, the exercising of the power of judgment that every single subject is called upon to engage in with respect to his or her own reality in order to efficaciously dwell in it.

In other words, in order to perform a *valid* judgment both according to the methodology of figural interpretation and by analogy with Kant's *Kritik*, we need to somehow associate the manifold of historically determinate, concrete intuition with the efficacious category of the divine vicissitude: just as the *schema* mediates between sensibility and ideality, the *figura* mediates between the mundane and the history of redemption. The essential trait, just as Kant argued, is a double homogeneity—in respect of both the human vicissitudes of the reader and the divine one, the source of revelation and the transcendental condition of the possibility of every meaningful and *true* experience for the acolyte. In its essential role as intermediary, it fulfils exactly the same analytical role in the case of the *figura* as it does in the case of the *schema*.


Conclusion

The matter presented in the doctrine of the transcendental schematism is (at) the heart of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, and is introduced right after a paragraph that reminds us of the aim of the whole work. The title of the *Introduction* to the *Analytic of Fundamental Propositions*, of which the schematism of pure concepts of the intellect constitutes the first chapter, is, not by chance, *Transcendental Judgment in General*. Once qualified, it emerges that the formal analogy between the condition of the possibility of judgment in general as presented by Kant, and the condition of the possibility of a true Christian interpretation of reality, involves a further element.

Translated without euphemism or prudery, as Girard does, the biblical terminology looks surprisingly similar to that employed by Kant: they seem to share a common *stage*. The main characters in the New Testament, as Girard shows, have much to do with a court, which is known to be the virtual place in which Kant stages his long argument. The German

philosopher brings reason down to the "court of Reason," and in so doing employs a number of notions that are at home within that particular semantic environment. Notably, the *transcendental deduction* is modeled on jurisprudential procedure. The very kernel of his argument—albeit perhaps less famously—itself pertains to legal semantics: 'category,' as the *etymon* clearly indicates, might be translated as "[bringing] down to the public square [to accuse]." On its part, the Bible stages a debate between a *victim*, a *prosecutor* (this is the meaning of the term *Satan*), a defense attorney (the original meaning of the *Paracletes*) and a judge (God the Father).

Thus, the stage is common to both. These two *books* also identify a similar if not common *enemy* in tangled loops of self-reference:[27] the undifferentiated crowd and the self-referential chaos of the *ideas of Pure Reason*. Moreover, we can then draw from this a hermeneutic implication that is of relevance to our present concerns.

Kant argues that the power of judgment is a very special non-procedural talent: it is the result of training and exercise, helped by convenient examples (A 131:26–8). Figuralism seems to share such an understanding and puts forward the same device: the Old Testament is a sort of anthology of examples of judgements issued by a people who had always already begun to reckon with and reflect on the problem of accusation, of the *category*, that the New Testament submits to a new trial, a new *critical* exam, in the hope of making from it an instrument of *veritas* for all of its readers.

In seeking to attain this goal, the proposed solution appears logically analogous to that proposed, albeit not without second thoughts, by Kant himself. In order to connect the manifold of intuition—the singular, particular experiences of historical subjects—to the idea of justice *in veritate*, a mediating device seems to be needed: a *figura*, an *image*, a *schema*, a *syn-tactic style*—a way to compose the accusation. We cannot judge without intuition, without direct and first-hand experience, nor without ideal categories, nor without *schemas* provided as tertiary retentions, *i.e.* indirect, second-hand experience.

This seems to be the Biblical *punctum*: "Look, this has already happened, and in order to wisely judge, to understand, to put the singular case in the convenient category (noun, law), *thou shalt refer to this mediating example*!" The Bible, at least according to those who have argued for the figural interpretation, appears to have accepted that a *deferred* example, drawn from a

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27.  Most recently, Mark Anspach has thoroughly re-explored this issue in his *Vengeance in Reverse. The Tangled Loops of Violence, Myth and Madness* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University Press, 2019).

compilation shared by all members of the community of those experiencing judging, might be the best available *schema*: because, maybe, and in terms corresponding to Girard's interpretation, those who *wrote* it also knew that *mimesis*—which as regards the greater part of its significance is nothing but the faculty of *imagination*—always plays a role, and frequently a predominant one, in the exercising of the power of judgement. They were able to access the realm where this could be realized because in writing down their own experience they somehow entered into that very special condition that Weil conveniently calls *attention*, attention itself being, in the end, the capacity to overcome, momentarily, our own retentional finitude and fight against its most immediate implications: "to think and act in conformity with the prejudices and reactions of the multitude to the detriment of all personal search for truth and goodness."[28]

There, then, they thought it best to be led by the *figura-schema*, an externalized example already put to the test and *criticized* by the tradition, rather than by the Great Beast, such as is always already *satanic.*

I believe that such is *Christian sophrosyne* at its best.

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28. Weil, *Gravity and Grace*, 164.

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