Crisis and restoration of the form of life
in De Martino and Wittgestein

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Résumé :

Dans cet article, je me focaliserai sur la dialectique de la présence et de la crise de la présence qui émerge dans les recherches d'Ernesto de Martino, pour analyser ensuite le concept de forme de vie comme il apparait dans les recherches de L. Wittgenstein. Selon cette théorie, comprendre une présence implique le risque de "la perte de la présence". Un tel risque, était évité, dans le monde primitif, en faisant usage de la magie. De là, comprendre une "présence" entraîne " faire et se débarasser des conditions de possiblité de l'animal humain". Nous pouvons appeler cela une "anthropogénèse". L'un des enjeux qui émergent de la "crise de présence" est le suivant : où, par conséquent, la "crise" est-elle au premier plan ? Se focalisant sur le cas spécifique de la "crise de la forme de vie", je tenterai de faire quelques pertinentes observations en faveur de la théorie de Wittgenstein. Par conséquent, pour comprendre la dialectique de la « crise de la forme de vie» et le "rachat d'une forme de vie", je ferai référence à la formule "suivre une règle" utilisée par Wittgenstein dans *Philosophische Untersuchungen*. Selon l'approche de ce philosophe, quand nous ne savons pas comment "suivre une règle", il devient nécessaire de revenir au "mode commun du comportement des hommes". Le but est de trouver dans la dialectique "crise de la présence" et "rachat de la présence", en effet, dans la "crise d'une forme de vie" et "rachat d'une forme de vie", le trait définitoire de la nature humaine et, par conséquent, le "jeu linguistique" qui caractérise une "forme de vie".

ملخّص

سنركّز في هذا المقال على جدلية الحضور و أزمة الحضور مثلما تنبجس في مباحث آرنستو دي مارتينو، لنحلّل بعد ذلك مفهوم شكل الحياة لدى فيتجنشتاين. حسب هذه النظرية، أن نفهم حضورا ما يستلزم عنه خطر ˝ضياع الحضور˝. كانت تجتنب مثل هذه المجازفة في العالم البدائي و ذلك باستعمال السحر. و على هذا الاساس ينجرّ عن فهم حضور معيّن العمل لنبذ شروط إمكان الحيوان الانساني. يمكننا أن نسمّي ذلك بالتكوين البشري. و احدى القضايا التي تنتج عن ˝أزمة الحضور˝ هي القضية التالية : أين توجد بالتالي الأزمة على المستوى الأوّل؟ مرکّزين على خصوصية ˝أزمة شكل الحياة˝، سنحاول ابداءِ ملاحظات وجيهة لصالح نظرية فيتجنشتاين. و لكي نفهم بالتالي جدلية ˝أزمة شكل الحياة˝ و ˝فداءِ شكل الحياة˝ ، سنقوم بالاحالة على صيغة ˝اتباع القاعد˝ التي يستعملها فيتجنشتاين في *التحقيقات*. من منظور هذا الفيلسوف عندما لا نعلم كيف نتبّع القاعد يصبح ضروريا أن نعود الى الضرب المشترك لسلوک البشر. و الهدف من ذلك يتمثّل في ايجاد جدلية ˝أزمة الحضور˝ و ˝فداءِ الحضور˝ و بصورة فعلية في ˝ أزمة شكل الحياة˝ و في ˝ فداءِ شكل الحياة˝ أي ايجاد السمة التي تعرّف الطبيعة البشرية و بالتالي ˝اللعبة اللغوية˝ التي تعيّن ˝شكل الحياة˝. ˝˝

Abstract :

In this paper, I will focus on the dialectics of "presence" and "crisis of presence", which emerges in the research of Ernesto de Martino, then move on to an analysis of the concept of "form of life" as it appears in the research of Ludwig Wittgenstein. According to this theory, understanding of a "presence" implies the risk of "loss of the presence". Risk that, in the primitive world, was avoided by using the "magic". Therefore, understanding of a "presence" entails the "doing and get rid of the conditions possibility of the human animal". We can call this "anthropogenesis". One of the issues that emerges from the "crisis of presence" is the following: where, then, that the "crisis" is in the foreground? Focusing on the specific case of the "crisis of a form of life", I will try to make some relevant observations in favor of the Wittgenstein's theory. Therefore, to understand the dialectics of "crisis of form of life" and "redemption of a form of life", I will refer to the formula "following a rule" used by Wittgenstein in *Philosophische Untersuchungen*. In the study of this philosopher, when we do not know how "following a rule", it is necessary to go back to the "common mode of behavior of men". The aim is to find in the dialectic "crisis of presence" and "redemption of the presence," indeed, in the "crisis of a form of life" and "redemption of a form of life", the definitory trait of the human nature and, therefore, the "linguistic game" that characterizes a "form of life".

« This return to the "common behavior of mankind" is nothing but what de Martino describes as a return to a mythical, magic, heavenly level. A return which the Italian philosopher explains through the "myth and ritual symbolism" and its ambivalent nature, and which in Wittgenstein's words is expressed through the use of a "reference system", a set of behaviors that can be defined *anti-historical* and are indirectly found also in Frazer's *Note sul "Ramo d'oro".*»

« The soul might be easily "lost" if it would not be possible to go back on top from the slope in which the presence annihilates through a cultural creation and an accredited tradition. »

Ernesto De Martino[1], *The world of magic.*

1. From the end of the Being to the end of the world

Meditating on the state of uncertainty and hesitancy typical of the human animal can be useful to think about the way of being of th e personal pronoun "I", which is sometimes praised other times vituperated but it is always present in the history of Western philosophy.

Without claiming to offer a genealogic reconstruction of this pronoun, we will restrict to a brief examination of the meaning the "I" had in Kant and Heidegger, and to analyze the De Martino concept of "presence" and the Wittgestein concept of "form of life". In this way we will be able to understand for example the reason why the great Italian philosopher and anthropologist Ernesto De Martino1 opposes Kant "I Think" and Heiddeger "Being" to the concept of "presence" to arrive to the definition of "world". De Martino concept of "presence" is fundamental as, unlike Kant "I Think" and Heiddeger "Being", it opens to another concept, which is the "crisis of the presence" and, as a consequence, the risk of "not being in the world". Only after having analyzed these concepts, it will be possible to clarify the relation between the "loss of presence" or "crisis of a form of life" and its reaffirmation.

This instability is the core of our reinterpretation. This idea is the anticipation and the preparation to a more radical observation: De Martino "crisis of the presence" is nothing but a revival of the "crisis of a form of life" which can be identified in the so called "paragraphs of the crisis" in *Philosophical Investigations*. If on one hand this work is full of references to the idea of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus,* on the other it stands out from it. In his work Wittgenstein claims to examine "the ways of being of the *I think*" or, as declared by the Austrian philosopher himself, of "a form of life". His attempt is suspended in the *Tractatus*, as one can gather from proposition 6.54, where the author implies that this idea has to be left unspoken.

To this purpose, it is crucial to highlight the difference, the rift, the hiatus which separate De Martino concept of "presence" from Kant "analytic unity of apperception" or Heidegger "Da-sein". The passage accused by the Italian philosopher is taken from Kant *Critique of pure reason* : "Also the supreme principle of the transcendental unity of self-consciousness implies a supreme risk for the person, that is the risk to lose the

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[1] According to us, Ernesto De Martino (1908-1965) represents one of the rare Italian philosophers who dealt with philosophical concepts as anthropologic evidence.

supreme principle of which he consists. This risk arises when the person, instead of saving freedom abdicates to his tasks, letting the contents be worth beyond synthesis, as they were elements which are out of control, as if they were absolute.

But when this threat outlines, the real risk is the dissolution of the person, who disappears as presence (…). Kant assumed the analytic unity of apperception as a ahistorical and uniform point. According to him, the thought of the person and its contents do not change, and he based on this the transcendental condition in the synthetic unit of apperception.

However, as elements and facts related to the awareness do not exist, if not for abstraction, so the presence, an empirical presence, does not exists, who is an original given, an immediate element who is beyond any risks and is unable of any passions and developments in his/her personal sphere, that is, of a personal history". [1]

De Martino target is the discovery and the awareness of human autonomy, of an "self" who is a granted reality, having an ideal apex in the "transcendental unity of self-consciousness" from where the human experience develops. This is the inevitable limit of Kant interpretation: though interested in the "self" and affirming the unity of the "I think", Kant has dealt with the "self" as a still element, who is beyond any doubt, instead of conceiving this unity as subject to regressions and eclipses.

Kant denies this possibility to the "self", who according to De Martino has as final purpose the inevitable change of the "self". More exactly, the particular condition of the "self" is evident and it is clearly reflected in the philosophical stream developed between the end of 20's and the 50's, which is named Existentialism, whose outstanding representative was Martin Heidegger.

The German philosopher stands out for what the modern rationalism could not solve: man as as a given, with his limits and bounds, *Da-Sein*, which originates from "Being-Towards-Death". This identification of *Da-Sein* with "Being-Towards-Death", or better, with the anticipation of death is for us Heidegger philosophical core which the Neopolitan philosopher questions. In *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger summarizes the ontological existential concept of death as follows: "Death, as the end of Being, is the most appropriate possibility of the Being, as it is unconditioned, sure and, as such, undetermined and insurmountable. Death, as the end of Being, is proper to man, as he is made for the end".[2]

That is, for Heidegger death is the "authentic historicity", as it makes the Being face his "destiny" (*Geschick*): "When, by anticipation, one becomes free for one's own death, one Is liberated from one's lostness in those possibilities which may accidentally thrust themselves upon one; and one is liberated in such a way that for the first time one can authentically understand and choose among the factical possibilities lying ahead of

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[1] E. De Martino*, Il mondo magico. Prolegomeni a una storia del magismo*, Torino, Boringhieri, 1967*3,* p. 188.

[2] M. Heidegger, *Essere e tempo,* trad. it. di P. Chiodi, a cura di F. Volpi, Milano, Longanesi, 2009*4*, p. 315.

that possibility which is not to be outstripped. Anticipation discloses to existence that its uttermost possibility lies in giving itself up, and thus it shatters all one's tenaciousness to whatever existence one has reached".[1]

On its turn this constant relation between the "Being" and the possibility of death can take a non-authentic or an authentic shape. The authentic form opens man to the sense of "Being" that is of "Being for Death", which is nothing but living an existence towards death, accepting the condition of solitude and anguish: "In it the Being stands and faces nothingness and of the impossible possibility of his existence."[2]

In this matter the "limitedness" or "finitude", that is having a finite existence, is presented as determining for the Being, as it is historical, realizable, possible. This limitedness of the Being as a dark and anguishing aspect will lead De Martino to take distance from Heidegger existentialism. According to De Martino one cannot restrict oneself to the "I Think" or "The Being" conditions. In opposition to Kant ad Heidegger, the idea of "presence" stands out as a human option *in fieri*, as a destination and a task, a drama and a problem. In other words, man's life, his "presence", is neither the revealing of nothingness to us nor being for death, as Heidegger asserts.

On the contrary, the Being, the unity of the person, the "presence" is a weak and fragile premise that can undergo a crisis. That is what De Martino assumes in his *The World of Magic*, a work where the word "presence" is used for the first time to indicate man subjectivity, the unity of the person, and the autonomy of the "self", a "self" or "presence" that can undergo crises. This concept will be developed also in his last works. The Italian philosopher assumes that we are not dealing with a strong and independent premise, rather with the original place of a *crisis*. For this reason De Martino identifies the characteristics of this "presence" in "fragility" and "frailty".

The Being in the world is not to be taken for granted rather it is a "developing reality",[3] who is always exposed to the risk of frailty and annihilation, which can put the "self" to a hard test.[4]

According to de Martino both Kant and Heidegger leave aside the historical and natural development of the "I Think" and of the "Being", in other terms the "antropogenesis"[5], those requisites, requirements, and conditions of the human animal, which are acquired once for all but that risk to undergo crisis, to shatter, or to get lost. The main constitution of the Being, the core of human existence for De Martino is not "Being in the World" but "to have to be in the world". In his pieces entitled *The end of the world,* this concept will defined "ethos of primordial transcendence", meant as "the real principle by which a world where one can be present is possible"[6] and where the tension

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[1] Ivi, p. 460.
[2] Ivi, p. 323.
[3] E. de Martino, *Il mondo magico*, cit., p. 97.
[4] Ivi, p. 105.
[55] For a definition of the concept of *antropogenesis* see the II chapter by P. Virno, *Quando il verbo si fa carne. Linguaggio e natura umana*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 2003.
[6] E. de Martino, *La fine del mondo. Contributo alle analisi delle apocalissi culturali*, Torino, Einaudi, 1977, p. 669.

between the risk-not-to-be-in-the-world and reintegration-to-the world, between an immediate identification and separation from it takes place.[1]

This is a principle which on its turn also implies the radical risk of not being able to be in any possible world. This criticism is a sort of preparation to a more radical observation: the "end of the world" is nothing else than a return of the "crisis of the presence". [2] *Mythical and ritual symbolism: the role of magic and religion.* In order to prove the validity of this idea, that is the possibility of the collapse of the "ethos of transcendence" governing the world, De Martino analyzes the role played by magic practices in primitive or prehistoric societies, which includes the world of psychotics, of mystics, of religious, of magicians, and of poets. Once the De Martino's idea of "presence" is clear, our attention is directed to understand how the recovery and redemption of what has been defined as presence occurs.

In the second chapter of *The world of Magic*, titled *The Historical drama of the world of magic* – which according to us is the most original as it proposes in an innovative way the problem of the magic practices in the well-defined contest of the primitive or prehistoric societies -   De Martino mainly refers to the role of magic as a defense to the risk of *"losing the presence".*

First of all, it is necessary to clarify what the term magic stands for, in order to avoid misunderstandings due to the common use of this word. The following question arises: in what sense does magic exist and to what extent is it real according to De Martino? We know for sure that it is not intended as an Abracadabra spell! On the contrary, magic is seen as a defense from the ever incumbent risk of "losing the presence".

It constitutes a system of compromises, guarantees, and rewards which are strategies granting the human presence in the world. Only in this sense, "magic" can "restore the horizons which in crisis" and a possibility to decide and act after the existential crisis: "When a certain critical horizon falls into a crisis, the risk is the collapse of the existing limits: everything can turn into anything and the nothingness gets closer.

But magic, which is also a signal of the risk, arrests the arising chaos and redeems it in an order. In this sense, magic becomes restorer of horizons in crisis. Through demiurge it recovers the world which is getting lost".[2]

The most meaningful example of the theme of "presence" which risks to be lost and which redeems this risk is the experience of magic in officiating funerals by the Arunta tribe: " by the Arunta, as the dying person is "loose" and is in an evil condition of attraction and contamination, the redemption from the risk occurs as follows: the hut of the dead is destroyed so that he cannot came back; it is forbidden to pronounce his name, as the word might turn into its meaning and make it real again; the ground with

[1] For further clarification see De Martino: *Storia e metastoria. I fondamenti di una teoria del sacro*, Lecce, Argo Editore, 1995.

[2] E. de Martino, *Il mondo Magico*, cit., p. 149.

which the corpse is covered must be stepped on to reinforce it (…). During the mourning/grief, which is an anguishing expression of the risk, water is poured on the grave to make the ground more compact and solid.

During the same day the men of the camp join in the area, and the "separation" from the dead goes on. (…). The youngest brother makes the following ritual by using a rope made of the hair of the dead: he puts one ending of the rope in the mouth of a man and pushes the other end on his own bell, where he feels his grief. (…). The other men go around the grave, swinging their hands up and down, shivering their legs and shouting "trr, trr, trr!" without intermission. Then they bend towards the ground and finish their ritual by shouting a prolonged "baa!". In this way the dead has been removed or distanced". [1]The main theme which is repeated during that day is always the same, and it is used to scare, distance, drive the dead away by means of techniques activated by magic itself, of remedies which are anything but spiritual.

We are dealing with concrete practices and this shows us that magic has not to do with spells but with what De Martino describes as "mythical and ritual symbolism". The aforementioned example reporting the experience of magic of the dead by the Arunta[2], in which the "presence" risks to be lost and that is recovered, has the "ritual action" as its core.

The mechanism of the ritual, that is of the obsessive rituals, such as repeating gestures and cries, which are defined by De Martino as the "lament ritual" in his work edited in 1958, might be defined as the "iconic sign" – by using a concept taken from the Pierce semiotics – of a crisis, that is a situation in which the balance established is lost, of the risk of not to be in the world, of being unable to go through a particular situation, such as the grieving, of being paralyzed and blocked in a dangerous and risky condition.

In the conditions of particular grieving and privation the "being" opens to the "existential drama". It is in these conditions in which he seems to be destined to the "end", exposed to critical moments when there is nothing one can do, that he opens to the "historical drama" through the "ritual". In this sense the "ritual" is seen as action, a mechanism of defense which allows man to rule and control the "being".

The sensation that man is completely out of history, abstracted, far from the cultural world and from history where he is continuously called to be is not only a physical risk but a psychic one, as it has been described in the state of *olon* by Malays and Tungus natives: "We find that it is characterized by a complete abandonment of control, as if there is some element present that sur-renders itself completely to an outside force. It

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[1] Ivi, p. 102.

[2] Examples of this relation between loss of presence, lament crisis and mourning lamentation are described by De Martino also in *Morte e pianto rituale nel mondo antico: dal lamento pagano al pianto di Maria,* Torino, Paolo Boringhieri, 1958. In the rural Italian society of Lucania he detects mourning forms very similar to the mourning crisis in the ancient world.

is as if this insecure, unstable presence is unable to withstand the shock of some emotive force; it cannot accept and master this force within the framework of relationship with which it is familiar. In this way the content as a present awareness is lost. The subject does not seem to be aware of what he is faced with; his fragile control reaches an "impasse" that it is incapable of surmounting, and so it abandons all effort. When this barrier is down, there is no longer any distinction between presence and the world around."[1] This passage outlines the strong relation between the risk of losing the self and the risk of losing the world.

This incumbent risk of the "end of the world" will lead De Martino to focus on another phenomenon, "religion". The Italian philosopher intends it as a way to face the danger of the "end" by means of rituals and myths. It is not coincidence that the "myth and ritual symbolism" used by religions is a system of "de-historification" of the becoming. De Martino focuses on the metahistorical aspect of religions, that is on their function of "de-historifying" [2]a critical situation through the "ritual", which allows the return to the origin reshaped by the "myth".

The background to both magic and religion is the ritual action. Together with the Romanian philosopher Mircea Eliade, De Martino intends the use of the ritual in religion as «a "behavior which leads the historical "this time" to a metahistorical "once", which is also "once for all"».[3] The "this time" is a contingent event, the *hic et nunc*, which is turned into "once for all", that is it is taken back to the origins, to the real beginning. In the ancient pagan religions the original beginning coincides with the "initial orgy", the "primordial chaos", and in the historical religions with the will to come back to "God". In other words, the same role played by magic in the pre-historical societies is played by religion in the historical societies.[4]

The function of the "myth and ritual symbolism" in historical religions such as Christian religion has its premise in pagan religions' symbolism. In both cases its mechanism makes the redemption and restoration of "being" possible through the ritual reiteration.[5]This mechanism governs both the archaic "ways of life" and the Christian ones. According to De Martino the myth and ritual mechanism, also defined as the "as if", by the ancient pagan religions is a "symbolic representation", a "symbol", and it is be understood and studied as such.

But when is "symbol or "archetype" born? It arises in life when a "historical fact" is attributed to a metaphysical level, to the original chaos, which is defined by De Martino as "closed symbol" or "symptom", as it is unique and inimitable. For this reason it has to be converted into a model, an archetype, an "open symbol", an image of the "myth"

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[1] Ivi, p. 93.

[2] It is a technical term used by the Italian scholar to indicate suspension, abolition of history.

[3] E. de Martino, *La fine del mondo*, cit., p. 378.

[4] In particular, De Martino intends *Christianity* as the religion showing most of all how history works, highlighting the metahistorical aspect on which it is based, the eternal return of Christ to the Eucharistic banquet.

[5] Even if in the studies on Christianity history is released from links to the myth, for De Martino it is defined with the so called *model of the centre* (cfr. E. De Martino, *La fine del mondo*, cit., p. 295).

applicable to a historical, concrete fact by means of the mysteriously revitalizing "rite": «In the myth-ritual the closed symbols (symptoms) take the shape of open symbols (images of the myth), and the return of the past becomes a ritual "bringing back" on a dehistorifying level"».[1]

However, the novelty brought by de Martino is not his interpretation or focus on myths rather having interpreted myths and rituals from a philosophical point of view, beyond their religious meaning: «It is necessary to get used to dissociate the notion of "myth" from the notion of "word" and "tale" (as in the Homer meaning of mythos, "word" and "speech") to match it to the notion of "sacred action", "meaningful gesture", "primordial event". (In this sense) (…) the myth, whatever its origin is, is always a premise and an example related to the whole human condition, and not only to single "sacred" or "profane" actions. It is a premise to the whole reality in general".[2] De Martino does not longer examine myth in its meaning of communication but above all in its complex structure, which is not only an anti-historical structure but it also includes the novelty as an irreversible element. This aspect distinguishes his concept of religion from Eliade's.

2. Up the river: from De Martino to Wittgenstein.

At this point, it might be useful to mention Wittgenstein. Also the Austrian philosopher deals with the concept of *crisis*. In his work *Investigations,* he shows how tormenting and troubling "rule-following" can be. What is the relation with Wittgenstein's thought? Once we have clarified the extent of De Martino's philosophical thought and the reasons why he analyzed magic and religions, our main aim is to try to understand the "natural history"[3] of the human animal.

In our opinion, the core has to be identified in his concept of "crisis" and the dialectics between rules and real facts of life, which is a concept extended to the theory of linguistic games and their nature by Wittgenstein. Where is "crisis" emphasized? It must be underlined what, according to us, is one of the most important passages in Wittgenstein *Investigations* on "crisis" of a "form of life", or better on the unmanageable uncertainty we fall into, and which is expressed as uncertainty of "rule following": «Following a rule is analogous to obeying an order. We are trained to obey to orders and react to them in a particular way.

What if one person reacts to an order and to the training *in one way* and another in *another way*? Which one is right? Suppose you came as an explorer into an unknown country with a language quite strange to you. In what circumstances would you say that the people gave orders, understood them, obeyed them, rebelled against them, and so on? The common behavior of mankind is the system of reference by means of which we interpret an unknown language».[4] Both Wittgenstein and De Martino are attracted by

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[1] E. de Martino, *La fine del mondo*, cit., p. 253.
[2] Ivi, pp. 251-252.
[3] Wittgenstein uses this espression in paragraph 25 of *Ricerche.*
[4] L. Wittgenstein, *Ricerche Filosofiche*, trad. it. di R. Piovesan, a cura di M. Trinchero, introduzione di M. Trinchero, Torino, Einaudi, 1974, § 206.

the return to "the common behavior of mankind", and this clearly emerges in the just mentioned critical situation.

This clarification is particularly important as it leads us to review this issue consisting in a mix of collapse and resurrection, crisis and redemption, or, in Wittgenstein's words, of rules and real life facts. In both Wittgenstein and De Martino philosophy the intersection of these two levels and the resulting hybrid space play an important role. It is in this intersection of the two levels which our real nature can be detected. However, it is necessary to clarify that this oscillation does not only refer to the "presence", as De Martino assumes, but also to the "possible conditions" of our "form of life" and the linguistic game characterizing them.

These consist of public and social practice, as well as of a personal mental activity: «Is what we call obeying a rule something that would be possible for *only one man* to do, and to do *only once* in his life? This is of course a note on the *grammar* of the expression "to obey a rule". It is not possible that there should have been only one occasion on which someone a report was made, an order given or understood, and so on. To obey a rule, to make a report, to give an order, to play chess are customs (uses, institutions)».[1]

Using Wittgenstein's description in his *On certainty*, one might say that a real fact in life, occurring empirically, what he defines "water flowing", becomes a rule or a norm in a "riverbed": «The mythology may change back into a state of flux, the riverbed of thoughts may shift. But I distinguish between the movement of the waters on the river-bed and the shift of the bed itself; though there is not a sharp division them».[2]

Wondering on what a "rule" is and what "following a rule" means, means to come back restlessly to "the common behavior of mankind" emerging in a "crisis" and arising just when the relation between the empirical and grammatical levels, the river and the riverbed, the history and metaphysics, is uncertain. In De Martino's definition that has been described as the possibility to repeat the myth through the ritual whenever a "critical moment" occurs. This allows the primitive man to "get back on top", that is to make history , overcoming the crisis.

Wittgenstein himself seems to be aware of this step. This return to "the common behavior of mankind" is nothing but what De Martino describes as the return to a mythical, magic or heavenly level, which the philosopher explains with the "myth and ritual symbolism", and that Wittgenstein explains with the "reference system", that is those anti-historical behaviors that can be detected also in *Note sul "Ramo d oro" by Frazer*.

Our intuition on the practices of magic seen as "defense measures", such as the representation of a kind of "climax" of a "form of life" is reinforced by Wittgenstein

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[1] Ivi, § 199.
[2] L. Wittgenstein, *Della certezza*, trad. it. di M. Trinchero, introduzione di A. Gargani, Torino, Einaudi, 1999, § 97.

annotations on Frazer in 1931. The Austrian philosopher takes cognizance of the religious world of primitive people and identifies in magic as "symbolism" and "ritual" the aspects of a common way of behaving, "a natural way to try to protect". Using Wittgenstein's words: «Frazer-s explanations would not be such if they were not addressed to an inclination we naturally have. Eating and drinking can be dangerous both for primitives and for us. There is nothing more natural than trying to defend ourselves – and we ourselves could now devise protective measures".[1]

This declaration marks the gap between Wittgenstein and Frazer. From this point of view, the aspect of "potentiality ", of *not being yet*, characterizing human life, or better "the form of life", expresses its peculiarity only if we take into account what in the *Note* he defines "addressing to an inclination we have ", an inclination which according to us is like a return to "the common behavior of mankind". In our opinion, Wittgenstein shows that a return to the "already decided " can have a "dehistorifying" effect, that is a "reactivation" of the historical experience of a "form of life ", comparable to what the Italian philosopher described referring to "crisis".

This structure has its strength point in the "regression" towards an origin, which makes possible the historical experience of a "form of life", its "uniqueness", without giving it a univocal definition, as it seems to have the same characteristics of De Martino "presence".

 Once again we are dealing with "forms of life" whose main characteristic is "frailty", "contingency", "uncertainty", and which are not certain and stable once for all. This condition underlines the metahistorical and unvaried aspect, the "always" which seem to scare those philosophers who reaffirm the uniqueness of a "form of life", who brag its diversity without realizing that it comes from the return to what we have in common, the return to "common behavior".

To catch this ambivalence characterizing both De Martino and Wittgenstein's thought is far from being a neutral or Social Democratic attitude. Rather it shows the historicity typical of a "form of life". In our opinion, this is the way one should read the depth of De Martino and Wittgenstein thoughts. Terms such as "going back the riverbed", return to "common behavior of humankind", "get back on top" and so on indicate the "connection" where this intuition comes into play. "Restoring" a previous state, that is the key word which, according to us, characterizes a "form of life" or "presence".

In both cases "regression" has the apotropaic value to protect the "Being" from the risk of not being, of being unable to overcome a critical moment (such as in the case of the return of the dead by the primitive tribes such as the Arunta, or the return to the possible conditions of the "rule" by a "form of life"). This is what joins De Martino and Wittgenstein, as one can also see in the previous considerations on *symbolism*. The matter does not refer exclusively to the myth or to the ritual, the *presence* on one hand

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[1] L. Wittgenstein, *Note sul "Ramo d'oro" di Frazer*, trad. it. di S. de Waal, introduzione di R. Rhees, Milano, Adelphi, 20068, pp. 24-26.

and the "lack of presence" on the other, the grammatical level and the empirical one, rather their "relation", the intermediate space, the "between".

In this space, which can be defined transitional, to borrow a concept near to Winnicott's philosophy, the "presence", the "self" stands, on the edge of a *limen*, in the afore mentioned "between", who allows the overcoming of the critical points by means of "regression". At De Martino and Wittgenstein's stage, it is not a matter of facing just one of the two aspects characterizing the "form of life" or the "presence", but both these aspects, their continuous impulse, their mutual implication and connection. This is recognized by both De Martino and Wittgenstein.