ТЕОРИЯ ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ

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WHAT HAPPENED TO ALLEGORY?
Two Histories and Five Meanings of Allegory

Abstract. This essay addresses the causes of the decline of interest in the problem of allegory, as a relatively general theoretical problem, despite the allegorical character of a considerable part of the twentieth century prose and poetry, and in spite of the presence of allegorical qualities in a significant part of the post-war popular culture. It both describes and analyzes several meanings habitually ascribed to allegory, as well as the complex interaction between these meanings. The essay aims to clarify these causes in the hopes that their better understanding will make it possible to reassess of the entire question of allegorical representation and will enable the emergence of a new, more comprehensive and empirically adequate, theory of allegory. As a first step towards such theory, the essay proposes the definition of allegory as complex correlation between a specific phenomenological modality and its literary textualizations.

Keywords: allegory; literary theory; representation; conceptualization; phenomenology; Walter Benjamin; Paul de Man; Angus Fletcher.

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ЧТО ПРОИЗОШЛО С АЛЛЕГОРИЕЙ?
Две истории и пять значений «аллегории»

Аннотация. В статье рассматриваются причины падения интереса к проблеме аллегории, несмотря на аллегорический характер значительной части прозы и поэзии XX в. и несмотря на использование аллегории в массовой культуре послевоенного периода. Описывается и анализируется несколько принципиально различных значений, обычно приписываемых понятию аллегории, а также сложное взаимодействие между этими значениями, в надежде на то, что прояснение этих причин и их лучшее понимание позволят переосмыслить всю проблематику, связанную с пониманием аллегорической репрезентации, и сделают возможным создание новой, более общей и эмпирически обоснованной теории аллегории. В качестве первого шага к такой теории предлагается первичное определение аллегории как сложной корреляции между определенной феноменологической модальностью и ее литературными текстуализациями.

Ключевые слова: аллегория; литературная теория; репрезентация; концептуализация; Вальтер Беньямин; Поль де Манн; Ангус Флетчер.

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Forty years ago, allegory was in vogue. Allegories were everywhere, and everything seemed to be allegorical. Nowadays, allegory is a term that is infrequently used, when it is used, in most cases its meaning remains vague, and even more rarely it is discussed in significant detail. What happened to it? The one possible answer is that the subject of allegory merely exhausted itself, as a result of overemphasis in literary research, as well as the stretching of the concept in the works of

Paul de Man and his school[1]. However, even a perfunctory examination of the empirical studies in the field shows that the study of allegory is far from being exhausted. Most of the major theoretical questions remain unanswered; most of the debates still require reassessment and analysis. Moreover, even though there is impressive body of work on allegories from Late Antiquity to the end of the sixteenth century, the work on later periods remains fragmented, sporadic and often eclectic. Furthermore, when writing about various late nineteenth and twentieth century works, either of an explicitly allegorical nature or those possessing a significant allegorical dimension[2], I was surprised to discover how little general theoretical knowledge we have about allegorical writing in the century that produced so many allegorical representations of all possible subjects: from the ontology of human existence to gender and politics. Moreover, when a larger temporal and critical distance from the contemporary scholarly situation becomes available, the theoretical study of allegory may well look like a forsaken town in the jungle – with so much to testify to the extraordinary achievements of those who lived there, and so little to explain their sudden abandonment of the place.

Correspondingly, in addition to its major goal mentioned above, this paper has two interrelated subsidiary goals. First, it aims at demonstrating that the project of the study of allegory, as a major subject of literary theory and literary research, was abandoned because of historical rather than theoretical reasons – the internal problems of development of the research field and the growing mixture of different types of terminology, alongside more general vicissitudes of the theoretical fashion. In contrast, from both the theoretical point of view, the question of allegory remains as important and complex as it was thirty or forty years ago; and the problem of allegory in twentieth and twenty-first century culture seems to be even more important, not only for historical and theoretical reasons, but also for our own self-understanding in the current cultural situation. Drawing upon the historical analysis of the problem in the first part of this paper, its second part attempts the conceptual clarification of the problem of allegory, from which, as it seems, its reassessment, also mentioned above, can be successfully started.

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[1] See [12; 13; 14; 15]. For a characteristic application of de Man's ideas by his students and followers, see, for example, [17].

[2] See "Significatio Allegorica" in [45, 89–112], [41] on Gerard Manley Hopkins, [43] and [38] on Kafka, [46] on the allegorization of trauma, [43] on the Strugatsky Brothers, [42] on Brazilian Jewish literature, [44] and [40] on the contemporary science fiction series *Firefly*, and others.

Alongside the "exhaustion of the field" hypothesis and among various plausible reasons for the loss of interest in allegory, another explanation points to the general historical dynamics of literary studies: over the course of the 1980 s and 1990 s, different post-formalist approaches were replaced by historical ones. As this explanation goes, the allegorical fashion was closely associated with de Man's version of deconstruction, in other words, with the most formal version of an approach that was in itself both formal and textually-oriented. According to this explanation, the rise and decline of the interest in allegory was an integral form of the rise and fall of de Man's rhetorical formalism. Regarding allegorical studies as an episode of theoretical fashion, there is an element of truth in this statement; yet, from the theoretical point of view this opposition of allegory to history is definitely fallacious. In a famous line, frequently quoted and misquoted in different contexts, Walter Benjamin wrote: "Whereas in the symbol destruction is idealized and the transfigured face of nature is fleetingly revealed in the light of redemption, in allegory the observer is confronted with the *facies hippocratica* of history as petrified, primordial landscape [5, p. 166]. Since Benjamin, numerous works have been written on the subject of allegory and history[3]; as it happens, some of them were more convincing, others less. In the wake of this massive wave of studies and speculations, there is little doubt that not only among different tropes, but also among different objects of formally-oriented study, allegory is the one that is most closely related to history. Therefore, scholars might have anticipated that the historical research engulfing literary studies since the 1980 s would only serve to boost interest in allegory. Nevertheless, this is almost the exact opposite of what actually happened.

At the same time, as will be shown below, the word "history" seems to be a key to this question, although not in the above sense of the advent of history as the central subject of literary studies, but rather as the history of the understanding of allegory itself. Correspondingly, it is to this history in a much more restrictive sense, the history of allegorical studies, that one should turn. As is frequently repeated, in different periods allegory was both an underdog and a cult object of literary criticism. The history of the depreciation of allegory by the Romantics, the Symbolists or most Modernists, as well as the grounds for this depreciation, are widely known; they have been repeatedly reviewed and analyzed, and they are only tangentially related to the goal of this essay[4]. In contrast, the heyday of allegorical studies seems to require more critical attention. Among a few early theoretical texts on allegory, C.S. Lewis's *The Allegory of Love* not only contributed to the revival of interest in the subject of allegory, but also devoted a considerable space to its theoretical analysis [24, p. 44–111]. At the same time, the discontinuity between these early studies of allegory and the major assumptions of earlier anti-allegorical rhetoric must not be overestimated; thus, as his grounding assumption, C.S. Lewis still affirmed that "symbolism is a mode of thought, but allegory is a mode of expression" [24, p. 48].

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[3] See, for example, Timothy Bahti [1] for the combination of an explicit and self-conscious influence of de Man's formalism with an in-depth analysis of the relations between allegories and history.

A much more general reorientation of literary studies towards allegory, and a deeper reappraisal of the main assumptions related to it, followed the publication of *Dark Conceit: The Making of Allegory* by Edwin Honig (1959) and Angus Fletcher's *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (1964). Since their works, ancient, and medieval and Renaissance allegories have been meticulously studied from different analytical perspectives. Among important critical understandings, Honig, as well as the various and impressive studies of allegory that followed his pioneering work, have shown that most of the empirically found allegories do not belong to the notorious category of "personification allegory"[5], which usually covers all the cases when an isolated character or decontextualized material object stands for a clearly and carefully defined abstract notion. This, in turn, meant that when the poets, critics or philosophers attacked allegory for its supposed semantic rigidity or dogmatism, for its lack of feeling or imagination, for being schematic or didactic, for its alleged cognitive emptiness or indifference to "the real human life" and the physical world, in all these cases, as more textually-based and attentive research has shown, these writers were usually demonizing a creature of their own invention. A little later, the debate upon the question of whether allegory is a cultural mode or a literary genre, which will be described in more detail below, significantly added to the research, and helped to bring to the fore some of the most important questions related to the problem. In addition, over the course of the two decades following the mid-1960 s, the critical understanding and appreciation of the allegorical dimension of several seminal literary works probably developed more than it did over the course of the two hundred years preceding this period[6].

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[4] Murray Krieger's classical essay "'A Walking Dream': The Symbolic Alternative to Allegory" probably presents the argument in the most concise form [23]. Among recent works, Azade Seyhan's "Allegory as the Trope of Memory: Registers of Cultural Time in Schlegel and Novalis" [35] or "Romanticism's Errant Allegory" by Theresa M. Kelley [22] may offer more nuanced views of the subject.

[5] See Clifford [11], Fletcher [16], Miller [29], Murrin [30], Nutall [32].

At the same time, as regards the empirical choice of the relevant textual corpus of allegorical works to be studied and analyzed, a certain duality became gradually apparent; it is this duality that would play a crucial role in the later decline of interest in allegory. Significantly, both Honig and Fletcher indicated that what made them return to the problem of allegory during the period of its depreciation and disrepute were modern allegories, including those of Hawthorne, Melville and Kafka, no less than the classical allegories of Apuleus, Jean de Man, Dante, Spencer or Bunyan. Kafka, for example, is mentioned dozens of times by both Honig and Fletcher. Fletcher goes even further and allows for a very broad variety of possible allegories. He writes: "An allegorical mode of expression characterizes a quite extraordinary variety of literary kinds: chivalric or picaresque romances and their modern equivalent, the "western," utopian political satires, quasi-political anatomies, personal attacks in epigrammatic forms, pastorals of all sorts, apocalyptic visions… imaginary voyages… debate poems…" [16, p. 3–4].

To this list of the sources of his scholarly motivation, Fletcher added that one may find an allegorical quality even in those works that one usually reads or watches for entertainment, like detective stories, westerns or science fiction, "all of which are direct descendants of a more sober ancient tradition. The reader is often perhaps not aware that these works, mainly romances, are at least partially allegorical" [16, p. 5].

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[6] See, for example, the large volume *Interpretation and Allegory: Antiquity to the Modern Period*, edited by Jon Whitman (2000), for a relatively broad picture of these debates and achievements.

He also noted this allegorical mode in various European films usually identified with Modernism: those of Eisenstein, Bergman, De Sica, Antonioni, Fellini, Bunuel, Alain Resnais, and the French "New Wave" [16, p. 365–366]. Finally, he suggested that in visual art Soviet socialist realism is a direct heir of the medieval allegorical tradition; "in the choice of subject as well as in form socialist realism provides the closest modern analogue to medieval religious monumentality" [16, p. 366].

At the same time, already in Fletcher's ground-breaking study, a paradox was at work. In terms of empirical analysis, and in spite of his theoretical declarations, Fletcher narrows down this openness to the description of relatively specific themes and literary effects as characteristic of or intrinsic to the functioning of allegory. Thus, the core chapters of his book, where the bulk of actual analysis is carried out, are called: III. "Symbolic Action: Progress and Battle" [16, p. 147–180], IV. "Allegorical Causation: Magic and Ritual Forms" [16, p. 181–219), V. "Thematic Effects: Ambivalence, the Sublime, and the Picturesque" [16, p. 220–278]. In other words, in contrast to his broad theoretical openness, in terms of the choice of the objects of empirical literary analysis, there is only one step between his work and Quilligan's later redefinition of allegory as a "genre" in restrictive and technical terms – the redefinition that proved pivotal to the entire field and that will be addressed below. A concordant paradox shows in Fletcher's attitude towards those Modernist works in literature and cinema, as well as popular culture, which he mentions as allegorical. While in Honig and Fletcher the writings of Kafka are repeatedly identified as allegorical, their studies usually mention him in passing, and their theories of allegory are built on much earlier examples. Other mentioned sources of inspiration and interest in allegory, including science fiction and westerns, are not analyzed at all. The same is true on a broader scale. Even during the years of the allegorical fashion, in-depth practical studies of post-Renaissance allegories were usually lacking; as a result, there was no scholarly ground that could contribute to the awareness of the empirical diversity of allegorical texts on both structural and thematic levels. All these modern allegories – whether Melville or Kafka, Thomas Pynchon or Stanislaw Lem – were tacitly presupposed to be analyzable in theoretical terms developed with reference to *Metamorphoses* or *Faerie Queen*, just because they are "also" allegories. A closer look at this assumption, however, makes it clear that this assumption is far from being self-evident and that it is precisely the degree of simi-larity behind this *also*, the degree of similarity between different allegorical works, that must be at stake in theoretical analysis.

If the tradition that followed Honig's and Fletcher's works tended to ignore this problem of possible structural heterogeneity of empirical allegories, later research usually used to avoid it through narrowing down the range of the analyzed materials. Maureen Quilligan's book was one of those major studies that provided a theoretical basis for this change in focus. She drew upon a much earlier tradition epitomized by C.S. Lewis's *The Allegory of Love* and Rosemond Tuve's *Allegorical Imagery*, which tended to view and analyze allegory in relatively narrow and restrictive formal terms. Developing a similar line of thought, Quilligan argued for allegory "as a genre" that is related to specific historical circumstances and cultural contexts, and, most importantly, that is characterized by specific literary techniques: personification, the emphasis on the double meaning of the diction used and the semantic ambivalence of language in general, the text's reliance upon a Biblical pre-text, and several others. It was quickly noted, however, that this argument leads to serious theoretical difficulties, as there exist various texts that share with Quilligan's allegories their basic structural characteristics, but not their more specific literary techniques. The practical impact of this understanding, however, was relatively limited. In the books that were intended for a broader academic audience, a similar approach to allegory as a genre, whose very existence is intimately related to "its time," usually meant that allegories written after the seventeenth century, as well as earlier ones which did not fit the assumed formal pattern of allegory, tended to be ignored[7]. As a result, as time went on, literary research focused more and more on allegories with a stable, demonstrable and unambiguous relation between the allegorical signs and their meanings.

Thus, in Jon Whitman's monumental 2000 collection *Interpretation and Allegory*, one will find fifteen essays discussing allegories from Antiquity to the sixteenth century, as well as three detailed introductions by the editor [52, p. 3–29; 33–70; 259–315], which focus almost exclusively on the same "classical" allegories. In contrast, there is only one essay addressing the early nineteenth century [35, p. 437–450], and two – the twentieth. Furthermore, these two twentieth century essays focus on Benjamin and de Man's theories of allegory [31; 36] rather than literary works; this, in turn, means that in this more than 500-page collection, post-Romantic allegorical literary writings, even though they were so abundant and so complex, are almost completely left aside. To take an even later example, in the 2010 *The Cambridge Companion to Allegory* out of nineteen chapters, only four deal with post-Romantic literature. Among them, once again, two chapters are devoted to allegory in philosophy and literary theory: Benjamin, hermeneutics and deconstruction [10, p. 241–253; 28, p. 254–265]. The remaining two chapters primarily address various possibilities of allegorizing some modern works, allegorical practices and their performative aspects, while focusing on "American allegory to 1900" [27, p. 229–240] and a few "post-1960" texts [19, p. 266–280][8]. Significantly, the only recurrent elements in the discussions of modern allegories seem to be their theoretical conceptualizations by Benjamin and de Man, whereas, as it seems, modern or post-modern literary texts may be added randomly and in small quantities. The great twentieth century allegories, which once served as the major motivation for the return to the study of allegory, now seem to be almost forsaken. Another 2010 collection of essays, *Thinking Allegory Otherwise* [25], broadens the range of the analyzed allegorical objects, from science to female agency, without, however, proposing a different theory or understanding of allegory, which can be applicable to these objects.

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[7] See, for example, [26] or [9].

Were this the whole story of the modern study of allegory, one would probably have little choice but to put up with this narrowing of analytical focus, to blame it on the partly irrational character of the history of science, and turn to another subject in the hopes that it has fared better historically. Around the same time, however, literary studies witnessed another and, what is most important, counter-directed theoretical development, which would also come to an end by the mid-1990 s. As is well known, since the end of the 1960 s literary scholars rediscovered and developed important philosophical instruments much needed to confront allegations against allegory, at least in the form that was popular since the second half of the eighteenth century. In the 1960 s, the ideas of Walter Benjamin became increasingly accessible beyond the German language: at first, as distant critical echoes, then in full-length translations, and finally as analyses of his works and their integration into literary research[9]. At the end of the 1960 s and throughout the 1970 s, Paul de Man not only translated Benjamin's ideas into a more contemporary critical idiolect and reshaped Benjamin's elaborate and sometimes opaque work for a hurried contemporary scholar; de Man also developed several important notions, including that of the mode of temporality as it is implied by allegory. Significantly for the history of allegorical studies, both Benjamin and de Man focused precisely on those periods and texts which were gradually excluded from the more empirically-oriented studies of allegories described above. Moreover, as will be shown below, the tendency to narrow down the empirical discussion of allegory to its pre-modern examples ran counter to almost all the assumptions and emphases that were central to the philosophical apologias of allegory in the style of Benjamin or de Man.

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[8] The 2010 *Allegory* by Jeremy Tambling seems to indicate a certain change in emphasis. Already at the beginning, Tambling disagrees with the position, according to which "allegorical implications in later texts, such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726) or George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945) were regarded as special cases" [47, p. 1]. Significantly, his book also contains a full-length chapter on allegory "in the age of realism" [47, p. 85–108]. Nevertheless, the chapters that follow it revert to the familiar subjects, a chapter on Benjamin [47, p. 109–127] and the one on de Man [47, p. 128–151]. They are followed by the chapter entitled "modern allegory," yet allegories in modern literature are actually discussed only on seven pages [47, p. 152–165], while the rest of the chapter is a general theoretical conclusion to the book.

Surprisingly enough, whereas these two "sides" of the allegorical fashion have been frequently discussed, the relation between the two was rarely addressed and, to the best of my knowledge, was not perceived as deeply problematic. Yet, it is this oppositional relation that must be at stake in any retrospective scrutiny of the problem. There are two different ways of looking at this opposition, and I hope to be able to show that both can be theoretically instructive. One may say that it is this contradiction between the praxis of the study of allegory, as it has been described above, and the theory of allegory, as it will be discussed below, that brought the entire field to its present crisis. Indeed, a blatant contradiction is not something that scholarly work can easily contain. Nonetheless, one may look at the same problem the other way round. It is the very awareness of the existence of this contradiction and its role in the decline of the study of allegory that may bring further insights as regards this study and the questions it needs to ask at the present moment; it is precisely this tension that may prove to be dialectical in pointing out further paths for investigation. However, before this dialectics can be addressed, one should take a closer, and sometimes critical, look at these theoretical developments in the study of allegory.

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[9] These are, first and foremost, Benjamin's *Ursprung des deutchen Trauerspiels*, his book on Baudelaire, "The Storyteller," and his famous theses "On the Concept of History." Timothy Bahti's *Allegories of History* [1], already mentioned above, may serve as an example of numerous attempts at their systematic analysis, as well as characteristic difficulties involved in these attempts.

According to the Romantics and the reversal of their ideas in Benjamin, the notion of symbol implies, first, the immanent presence of meaning in being, including the very materiality of being and its human experiences. Second, it implies a possibility of the articulation and contemplation of this meaning in a moment of trans-temporal "immediacy," which thus can merge meaning and physicality [23, p. 4–5; 47, p. 62–84]. In contrast to symbol, according to Benjamin, allegory implies nothing of the kind: it relates the physical and the transcendent, the concrete and the abstract, matter and meaning, without attempting to mask an ontological and epistemological gap between them [5]. If symbol is a figure of continuity, allegory is one of disruption. However, it is precisely as such an ultimate figure of disruption that, according to Benjamin, in ontological terms allegory seems to be a much more accurate reflection of human existence with its lack of self-evident continuity between materiality and meaning. In even more explicit terms, de Man stated this as the ontological ground of allegory. In this sense, the allegorical disruption both lays bare and foregrounds the ontological disruption that is the very heart of human existence. The materials of allegory (or, in semiotic terms, the syntagmatic chains of its signifiers) do not pretend to miraculously "contain" meaning as their immanent property; these materials are explicitly used for expression and visualization. In allegory, the immanence of meaning is sacrificed for the sake of its transmissibility. To put it another way, for both Benjamin and de Man allegory is the very figure of philosophical truth, at least when the latter is contemplated in existential terms. If symbol envelopes human existence in consoling illusions and self-delusions, allegory exposes existence in the world in its very nakedness, in the nakedness of the absence of a secure immanent meaning.

This figure of ontological disruption at the heart of any allegorical representation, in turn, forms the foundation of the relation between allegory and melancholy, which Benjamin believed to be intrinsic to allegory, and repeatedly underscored throughout his writings. Significantly, for Benjamin melancholy is closely associated with the human ontological situation; as such, it is not an emotional attitude but rather an ontological acknowledgement [5, p. 133–142]. At the same time, according to him, disruption and melancholy are only a part of the ontology of allegory, as eventually they restate the ultimate need of redemption. Addressing this dialectics, Teskey summarizes Benjamin's position as follows: "By reversing the aesthetic valuation of symbol over allegory, which had dominated German aesthetics since Goethe, Benjamin argued that the almost surrealistic character of allegorical imagery in German baroque drama forced the mind, in its quest for meaning, to abandon the realm of sense and perception for that of theological truth" [48, p. 12].

Developing the same paradoxical line of thought, Benjamin suggests that "allegories fill out and deny the void in which they are represented," whereas their intention "faithlessly leaps forward to the idea of resurrection" [5, p. 233]. In addition, it was also Benjamin who related allegory to the problem of temporality. Relying on the ontological considerations summarized above, he interpreted the allegorical disruption between materiality and meaning as a more authentic representation of the historicity of the human condition, as opposed to the consoling fantasy of the immediacy of meaning in physical existence, which underlies the symbol as it was defined and used by the Romantics and the Symbolists. "Allegories are, in the realm of thoughts," writes Benjamin, "What ruins are in the realm of things" [5, p. 178].

As has already been mentioned, developing this line of thought and addressing the ontological foundations of allegory, de Man stresses its relation to the problem of temporality and loss [13]. Moreover, although he was drawing upon Benjamin's suggestions, he stated this problem in a concise and relatively accessible manner, and went on to explore the full significance of its implications. For de Man too, allegory denies a possibility of the revelation of a meaning as immanent to the experience itself; in allegory, meaning is left for the reader's post-meditation or remains hidden. Moreover, according to him, an irreversible gap between the sign and its meaning, which is found in allegory, is much truer to the irreversible temporality of human existence, and may serve as its better image. It is this disruption between linguistic articulation and its evasive meaning that, for de Man, closely links allegory to irony. At the same time, his interpretation of the significance of these conclusions was the opposite from that in Benjamin. De Man adds a visible element of "postmodern" joy in the liberation from the implied necessity to ground meaning in the truth of being. He explains that as "allegory designates primarily a distance in relation to its own origin," "renouncing the nostalgia and the desire to coincide, it establishes its language in the void of this temporal difference" [13, p. 207]. In contrast to Benjamin, the same wording ("void") gets an essentially different ontological meaning. For de Man, an allegorical articulation of the irreversible temporality of human existence is essentially liberatory, whereas for Benjamin it only discloses the finitude of existence and the vital need of its redemption[10]. As Ralph Flores explains: "While Benjamin thus discovers mourning in allegory, de Man discovers the overcoming of nostalgia or morning" [17, p. 239]. Correspondingly, when addressing these philosophical apologias of allegory, one should not underestimate the significance of this difference in the relative place allocated to the problem of temporality, as well as the contrast between the allegory's relation to melancholy and nostalgia in Benjamin, as opposed to its association with irony and liberation in de Man.

At the same time, it is precisely because the continuity between these two philosophical apologias exists against the background of such an essential difference, that this continuity becomes especially significant when these apologias are contrasted to the field of the empirically-oriented studies of literary allegories, as this field has been mapped above. Indeed, despite the differences between these ontological apologias of allegory, both are very much twentieth century in their assumptions and their general hermeneutic direction. Although Benjamin developed his theory of allegory with reference to seventeenth-century Baroque drama and Baudelaire's poetry, his major concerns are the loss of apparent existential meaning, mortality, human existence in the world and the problem of a possibility of its truer literary description than that in most nineteenth-century texts, the mystery of language in its relation to meaning, the problems of history, destruction and loss. It is the unstable, the vague, the distorted, the irrecoverable, and the painful that Benjamin underscores. Most of this holds true for de Man's analysis as well, at least partially. Moreover, if de Man celebrated the freedom of the sign and the liberation from nostalgia, it is not because he was able to point out an alternative ground of being, but because the very notion of the ground of meaning, of grounding meaning in being, appeared to him as an illusion. In both cases, however, philosophic attention focused on the disruption between the sign and its extratextual meaning, and correspondingly on different semantic elements that are closely associated with this disruption: ambiguity, vagueness, distortion, undecidability and, above all, the loss.

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[10] In "Spring and Fall," one of his most frequently quoted and anthologized poems, Gerard Manley Hopkins concludes the allegorization of a child's grief over an autumn landscape: "It is the blight man was born for, / It is Margaret you mourn for." Benjamin would probably agree with Hopkins, but not with de Man.

It becomes highly significant, therefore, that within the field of empirical study these are the features that are most clearly present in modern allegories, such as those of Kafka, precisely in those works which, as has already been said, mostly remained beyond detailed empirical scrutiny in the research of allegory. Indeed, as has also been mentioned, empirical research has tended to focus on stable medieval and Renaissance allegories, with clear connections between the allegorical sign and its meaning, which, in turn, were based on a stable semiotic code, on the one hand, and no less stable assumptions about the ontologically true parallelism between the spiritual and the physical [50; 51], on the other. To summarize, the philosophical apologias of allegory were orientated towards the analysis of those examples of allegorical writings that had been marginalized by empirical research, whereas empirical research focused on allegories which were almost completely irrelevant to its philosophical apologias. Retrospectively, this paradox seems to be one of the main reasons why "the allegorical fashion" gradually came to an end, even though more general changes in literary factions have also contributed to this effect. However, the end of a fashion can be a good time for having another look at it.

In spite of what is quite a common feeling today, the analysis of the problem carried out above shows that, at least in theoretical terms, the study of allegory neither came to a dead end, nor should it have come to such an end. Certainly, not all the complications can be easily corrected. Thus, the split between the philosophical apology of allegory as a revelation of the universal ontological ground of human thought, on the one hand, and the focus on relatively invariable formal properties of allegory as a genre in late medieval and Renaissance literature in Western Europe, on the other, cannot be easily bridged. Furthermore, it is possible that this gap cannot be bridged at all, as in these two contexts the term "allegory" is used in essentially different senses. Addressing this problem, a more traditionally-oriented literary scholar would probably say that the use of allegory for the designation of the ontological ground of any process of semiosis is only a far-fetched metaphorization of what is literally and initially a clear and quite technical category of rhetoric and genre poetics. In contrast, a post-structuralist would probably question the very attempt to chain the term "allegory" to an essentialist version of genre poetics, which has for a long time been considered as outdated and which, as it seems, is not supported by empirical findings. For a post-structuralist, such an attempt would be an example of a reduction of the most important questions regarding our human existence to the positivistic reification of the dialectical, the naturalization of the historical, as well as the ontologization and universalization of the local. The more attentively this split within the field is examined, the broader and more serious this rupture seems to be.

At the same time, under closer analytical scrutiny the opposition discussed above, qua theoretical opposition rather than historical rupture, does not seem to be beyond the possibility of a meaningful resolution. It is indeed true that serious terminological confusion exists in the field at different levels; however, it also seems that this confusion can be clarified, and different uses of the term can be separated from one another. This is not to deny that an absolute and clear-cut analytical separation between terms is rarely feasible and probably rarely desirable in humanities and social sciences. Indeed, as a result of the fact that the study of human existence is carried out by humans, it cannot but involve certain terminological and conceptual recursion. This does not mean, however, that one should not try to avoid a situation when the same term is simultaneously used in several essentially different and incompatible senses or a situation when different scholars, referring to the same concept or object, actually speak of different things. As will be shown below, in the theoretically-oriented and empirically-oriented discussions of the problem of allegory analyzed above, the term "allegory" has been used in four different senses; for the sake of convenience, one may designate them as ontological, phenomenological, hermeneutic, and generic. There is also an additional sense of the term, which is usually used to designate an "externally imposed" allegorical interpretation; this sense will be discussed below with reference to Quilligan's concept of "allegoresis" [33, p. 163–186]. To complicate the situation still further, in quite a few cases two or more senses are combined. Correspondingly, in order to clarify the object of study, these five senses of allegory should be discussed in more detail and preferably separated, at least at the analytical level.

Quilligan's approach to allegory "as a genre" has already been discussed in substantial detail; below it will be called the "generic" approach. Comparing to it the other four approaches to the understanding of allegory will be convenient for their analytical specification. In his book on allegory in Shakespeare, A.D. Nutall writes that "the fundamental subject of this book is a particular habit of thought – the practice of thinking about universals as though they were concrete things" [32, p.XI]. Although "habit of thought" does not seem to be a particularly clear expression, the general meaning of this line is clear. Among the numerous modalities of consciousness, there is one that involves the representation and manipulation of general notions in a form of concrete objects; this modality can be called allegorical. It is also significant that in contrast to C.S. Lewis's description of allegory as a means of expression, which has been quoted earlier, Nutall uses the word "thinking" rather than representation. In cognitive terms, one may speak of Nutall's allegorical "habit of thought" as a cognitive capacity. At the same time, as numerous studies of allegory have shown, general concepts are essentially affected by their realization and semiotic manipulation as material objects. Furthermore, generic notions are not the only possible contents of allegorical works. Stephen A. Barney writes that "in allegory, mental experience is made concrete, and physical experience is made abstract" [2, p. 49]. This "mental experience" can be emotional, as it can be conceptual; love and mercy, faithfulness and kindness, rage and fear, envy and cruelty have been the subjects of allegorical writing for generations, almost as long as it has existed. Usually, however, there is an element of generality to all these contents as well, whereas private emotional experiences are rarely allegorized. It is no less significant, however, that even in this *universalia*-oriented representational form the signified of allegorical representations is the assumed generality of common feelings rather than the deduced generality of a conceptual order.

An even better and more precise definition of these understanding can be formulated in phenomenological terms. As I attempted to show elsewhere, a considerable part of the central problems of literary criticism can be analytically reformulated and clarified in terms of "semiotic phenomenology," in other words, in terms of the phenomenology of consciousness as it is realized in its textual correlates [45]. Allegory seems to be one of such problems. When consciousness is directed towards its generalized conceptual or emotional contents, and these contents appear to consciousness as concrete material entities, one may speak of the allegorical modality of the intentionality of consciousness. Its textual correlates, ones that intrinsically imply the application of this intentional modality, like Kafka's *The Trial* or Saint-Exupery's *The Little Prince*, are allegories. This is the second, "phenomenological," understanding of the concept. In terms of empirical literary analysis, the difference between the phenomenological and the cognitive descriptions of allegory seems to be less related to analytical meaning, and more to a point of view and the degree of philosophical precision that one may aspire to achieve when discussing a given textual case.

It is with this understanding that one may want to return to de Man's discussions of allegory in order to compare this interpretation of allegory as a modality of the intentionality of consciousness to the use of the term in de Man and his version of deconstruction. This comparison may be especially instructive, as most critics of de Man of different theoretical persuasions felt that he makes the term "allegory" mean something very different from what is usually meant by it in more traditional contexts. Moreover, probably, it is this feeling that what is at stake is not an interpretation of the object of study, but rather the very nature of this object – it is this feeling that may account for the rather paradoxical desire of many scholars of allegory to defend their object from philosophical apologias in the style of Benjamin or de Man[11]. At the same time, as the passing time has shown, the exact nature of their disagreement with reference to allegory turned out to be elusive or, at least, to be of the kind that scholars found difficult to reformulate in more precise terms. Let us, however, attempt such a clarification.

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[11] Thus, for example, Joel D. Black writes, "The only way to avoid this sort of confusion is to wrest allegory once and for all from deconstructing Allegorists" [7, p. 120]. Significantly, the imperative form and the violent imagery of this pronouncement seem to go beyond even the usual tensions between more traditionally-oriented literary critics and their deconstructive opponents.

First, for de Man and his school, "allegory" refers to *the* general principle of interpretation, rather than a group of texts or literary techniques. One may begin with a more restricted version of this claim in Northrop Frye. In the *Anatomy of Criticism*, Frye mentions in passing that "it is not often realized that all commentary is allegorical interpretation, an attaching of ideas to the structure of poetic imagery" [18, p. 89]. It was noted only much later that the contextualization of this remark makes its meaning significantly less radical[12]. What is important for the current analysis, however, is not its initial meaning, but rather its influence. This influence was indeed significant. Frye's remark produced an effect far beyond the one he probably intended; and it was quoted almost obsessively. Thus, to take some of the most important examples, in "Lyric and Modernity" de Man insists that "all representational poetry is always also allegorical, whether it be aware of it or not" [12, p. 175]. Bloomfield suggests that both Frye and de Man argue in favor of allegory as the universal basis of critical interpretation and continues that "in this view of allegory… most scholars and literary critics are allegorists" [8, p. 302]. Reviewing the influence of de Man's theory over the literary criticism of his time, Flores insists that "as much contemporary theory argues**,** all texts and readings might be called, however implicitly, allegories" [17, p. 2] and later continues: "allegory is an element in all texts" [17, p. 238]. This is the "hermeneutic" understanding of allegory. And whatever the role of Frye's remark was in formulating this position, its popularity was clearly related to de Man.

Once again, a phenomenological reformulation of this attribution of allegorical modality to any hermeneutics qua hermeneutics can shed some light on the empirical validity of this position. In phenomenological terms, the statement that all interpretation is allegorical would mean that any textual hermeneutics is inseparable from the allegorical modality of the intentionality of consciousness, in other words, from the perception of the abstract and the emotional as the material and the finite. When spelled out in such technical terms, this statement becomes more accessible to empirical verification or falsification. As it seems, this statement is not supported by empirical evidence; the abstract is often considered as abstract, and the representation of the emotional does not necessarily require its reification. What is most important for the current discussion, however, is not whether this statement is accurate or false, partially correct or exaggerated; most important for this discussion is the very fact that the meaning of allegory as a hermeneutic concept can be discussed independently of the problems of empirical accuracy of any statements about its application. Indeed, although it is highly improbable, though logically possible, that any hermeneutically-oriented modality of the intentionality of consciousness has an allegorical component to it, the hermeneutic understanding of the concept of allegory as such does not require reaching a definitive conclusion regarding this question, and its clarification can be analytically separated from the empirical study of various allegories. In addition, the analysis carried out above makes it possible to establish a clear-cut contrast between two essentially different hermeneutic uses of the concept. In contrast to the abovementioned interpretation of allegory as the intrinsic modality of the intentionality of consciousness in its very relation to textuality, its occasional application to textual hermeneutics may be called "allegoresis," following the term suggested by Quilligan (1981) [33].

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[12] See Whitman [52, p. 19–20], which refers to Frye [18, p. 71–128].

At the same time, both abovementioned definitions of the concept through bracketing metaphysical questions, even given its contingent hermeneutic radicalization, seem to be impossible with reference to another crucial aspect of the use of "allegory" in de Man. As has already been said, when in "the Rhetoric of Temporality," *Allegories of Reading* and other works de Man implies or states that all texts are allegorical[13], by "allegorical" he also means an unbridgeable gap between the sign and the referent, and in more narrow terms, within the sign itself, between the signifier and the signified. There are several repercussions to this fact. In spite of a seeming continuity, this is not what is meant by "allegorical" in Frye. De Man does not describe an interpretational modality, but rather the ontology of the human condition as such or, in his idiolect, "the human predicament." In other words, in contrast to Frye, his use of the term "allegory" is inseparable from its underlying ontological claims. Returning to phenomenological terminology, this claim may be paraphrased as follows: any intentionality of consciousness is based on the unbridgeable gap between the sign and the referent. This, in turn, means that the allegorical disruption is not a possible modality of the intentionality of human consciousness, but rather its intrinsic and inseparable characteristics. This is, once again, an ontological statement – or, depending on the point of view, a metaphysical one[14]. And, correspondingly, this the third, "ontological," meaning of the term allegory. It is clear enough that both such a claim and the definition of allegory that hinges on it have nothing to do with literary studies; moreover, nothing indicates that in such a general form this claim can be supported or refuted by any empirical findings of literary studies.

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[13] "For de Man, all texts are implicitly allegorical – an issue central to *Allegories of Reading*" [47, p. 135].

In his analysis of allegory, de Man draws upon the early works of Derrida, but one should remember that the radicalism of these works is far from being consensual, and it was questioned by Derrida himself in his later and more nuanced books. Furthermore, even within deconstruction de Man's positions were far from being consensual outside its radical version. In addition, and probably most importantly, as we know today, what we perceive as a referent of a sign is in itself constructed by cultural orders, although these complex processes of cultural construction usually remain below the threshold of consciousness [39]. Correspondingly, nowadays de Man's ontological pronouncements sound much less convincing than they did forty years ago. Indeed, from the logical point of view, it is far from being evident that the semiotic order and the perceived reality, as its product, must necessarily be separated by an unbridgeable gap. Correspondingly, in case one claims that they are, significant philosophical arguments that support this claim must be presented and discussed. The discussion of these arguments is pivotal for any general understanding of human existence and culture. At the same time, once again, when this problem is spelled out in more explicit terms, it becomes clear that such a discussion of the ontology of human existence has very little to do with the analysis of allegory as a much more specific problem in the study of literature and culture.

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[14] There has been a continuous polemics around the question to what extent de Man's metaphysics of absence is rooted in Benjamin's much more complex and dialectical writings. In the wake of these discussions, and in spite of repeated attempts to defend Benjamin from the attribution to him of de Man's view, it seems that there is partial truth in this attribution. Teskey writes: "The impossibility of accommodating the allegorical signs within any coherent structure of meaning impelled the mind to an act of negation whose movement was dialectical and theological, but whose immediate effect was to encourage the production of signs that emphasize their dead materiality… For Benjamin the figure presenting over this new sort of allegory was Death personified, a figure that makes personification itself possible by cutting a line of demarcation between 'meaning' (*Bedeutung*) and 'nature' (*Physis*)" [48, p. 12–13].

Given this deontologization of the problem, the next question to be asked is: can the problem of allegory in its literary "non-metaphysical" sense be reformulated in an analytical language compatible to the one that was used to clarify the meaning of the terms "allegory" and "allegorical" in Frye or de Man? Once again, the phenomenological language seems to allow for such a translation. As already mentioned, Fletcher defines allegory as a "mode"; and his use of the term refers back to the same *Anatomy of Criticism*. For the later research, this identical terminology created a semblance of theoretical continuity between Frye's decontextualized suggestion that all interpretation is "allegorical" and Fletcher's definition of allegory on the basis of Frye's term. However, this continuity is only seeming. Whereas Frye does not consider allegory as a mode, Fletcher analyzes the structure of allegorical literary texts, rather than the processes of their interpretation. Moreover, this illusion of continuity played a misleading role, for Fletcher's book was published at the time when Frye's comprehensive and consciously essentialist theory was quickly falling out of fashion. Its generalizations frequently contradict a closer analysis of the texts Frye mentions, while its basis in the Jungian version of psychoanalysis gradually turned out to be both logically fallacious and empirically indemonstrable.

At the same time, the understanding of allegory as a mode can be formulated without any reference to Jung, Frye or the assumed belief in the general allegorical nature of all interpretation. What is usually meant by "mode" is the fact that there exist general and stable constellations of the formal characteristics of literary texts, which can be superimposed upon different genres in different periods. As Fredric Jameson explains, in contrast to genre, "as a formal possibility" mode is not "linked to a given type of verbal artifact," and it "is nor bound to the conventions of … given age" [21, p. 142]. In contrast to mode, several genres cannot usually be superimposed one upon another without creating a significant formal tension between them. Thus, for example, the same text, unless it is a hybridic one, cannot be both a lyrical poem and a psychological novel. At the same time, both a lyrical poem and a psychological novel can be ironic or not; thus Jane Austin's novels are ironic, while Tolstoy's are not. Correspondingly, as it can be superimposed on different genres, irony is a mode; in contrast, novel and epos are genres, and they cannot be superimposed upon one another. By the same token, an epos, a tragedy or a novel can be allegorical, in other words, they can represent generalized conceptual and emotional contents as concrete material objects or persons. This, in turn, means that as a literary form allegory is a mode and not a genre. In more technical terms, one can say that allegorical texts are the semiotic correlates of the allegorical intentionality of consciousness or, if one prefers, that they are the textualizations of allegory as a phenomenological modality discussed above. Thus, for example, Kafka's writings articulate a broad range of general contents through very specific narrative figurations: from the Central European Jewish historical experience to modern self-consciousness, from the new forms of totalitarianism to the ultimate inaccessibility of the object of desire, from existential absurd to the absoluteness of the transcendent [43].

The main difficulty with this definition of allegory seems to be related to the fact that, at least at first sight, when defined along these lines, almost any text can be labeled as allegorical. It is partly in response to this difficulty that Quilligan seems to insist on her "generic" interpretation of allegory. Indeed, even Jane Austin's novels imply a variety of complex and relatively general statements about the individual and society, gender and behavioral norms, human dignity and its loss, and even more general statements about good and evil. In reality, however, this seeming theoretical difficulty only allows for a more nuanced approach to the problem. It is indeed true that, when understood in this way, the allegorical modality of consciousness is present in almost any literary text; yet its relative importance to various texts is different. *Pride and Prejudice* can be read only as the story of Elizabeth Bennet, without translating it to any general statements, although such a translation significantly enriches its interpretation. In contrast, although "The Death of Ivan Ilyich" may be read as the story of a dying bureaucrat, such a reading impoverishes its interpretation to such an extent that it actually makes the novella a different literary work. Indeed, if its meanings of a death of "the everyman" and the soul's salvation are ignored, most of the meaning of "The Death of Ivan Ilyich" would be missed. Finally, *The Castle* loses almost all its meaning if reduced to the level of the facticity of its narrative events as such, to the explicitly incongruent story of an illegal immigrant in a small village, attempting to get a work permit from a convoluted bureaucratic organization.

To put it briefly, various manifestations of the allegorical modality in its phenomenological sense can be found in most literary texts; in this sense, the allegorical modality is not a genre, nor even a "mode" if the latter understood in Frye's restrictive sense. This allegorical modality can be present in an epos and a lyrical poem, in a psychological novel and a political pamphlet, in a description of an imaginary journey and in that of an urban landscape, in a western and science fiction. At the same time, it is only when the allegorical modality becomes pivotal to the meaning and structure of a given text that one can speak of the allegorical "mode" of this this text, or simply about an allegory in Fletcher's sense of the term. However, significantly, this phenomenological definition of allegory yields a sufficiently inclusive category, comprising a broad range of diverse but not dissimilar works: from Apuleus' *Metamorphoses* to *Roman de la rose*, from *Faerie Queen* to *Gulliver's Travels*, from *Moby Dick* to *The Castle*, from *Once Upon a Time in the West* to *Blade Runner*. Most importantly, this definition makes it possible to relate these texts to the allegorical modality of intentionality, as one of the basic modalities of the intentionality of human consciousness, and one of the most important cognitive operations we use to understand the world around us.

With this conclusion in mind, it is possible to return to the initial question of this essay: what has happened to allegory over the course of the last decades, both before and under the influence of Quilligan's impressive work on allegory "as a genre"? In light of the analysis carried out above, it becomes clear that the debate over the question of whether allegory is a mode or a genre was anything but a discussion of a more appropriate label. On the contrary, it was the debate about the very question of the object of study. As has already been said, in terms of the history of the study of allegory this redefinition narrowed the object of study to West European literatures and, partly in spite of Quilligan's repeated references to Thomas Pynchon, to a relatively limited period in the development of these literatures. Furthermore, in terms of traditional literary criticism, a description of a given set of literary texts as a genre implies that these texts possess a number of common structural characteristics, which are central to these texts. Although at the time when Quilligan wrote her book, this usual understanding of the genre was already being questioned from different directions, as has also been said, this was still the assumption that underlies her analysis of allegory as a genre. In accordance with this assumption, she indeed finds a number of such structural features; and this, in turn, excludes the texts that do not share these structural characteristics. Certainly, this is not to say that the texts, which she analyzes, are not allegories; they are, yet they are not *all* the allegories. Her technically-oriented approach, however nuanced and detailed, excludes from the study of allegory all the texts, both verbal and visual, which are based on the same phenomenological modalities and representational operations as the texts she discusses, yet which differ from them as regards the specific strategies of textualization. These texts include the absolute majority of modern and postmodern allegories, both in literature and outside it.

At the same time, both in her book and her later essay [33], Quilligan attempted a broader approach to the problem and distinguished allegory as a genre in the narrow sense from *allegoresis* as an allegorizing interpretation, which is carried out by a reader or an interpreter. According to her, in contrast to the "actual allegory," allegoresis "can, in fact, make any text (from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to Rousseau's *Julie*) whatever its manifest literal meaning, appear to be about language, or any other latent subject" [33, p. 163–164]. However, this only complicates the problem. Through the theoretical dichotomization of the proper "allegorical" as a genre and quite arbitrary impositions of the "allegorical" as a hermeneutic technique, Quilligan excludes the majority of the texts that seem to be the proper objects of the study of allegories. To take more specific examples, although *Moby Dick* and *The Trial* do not seem to share the main structural features of *Roman de la rose*, this does not mean that their allegorical interpretation in an external operation, an "allegoresis" imposed by the reader on separately existing literal textuality. On the contrary, as has already been stressed with reference to *The Castle*, if reduced to their narratological level as such, most of Kafka's texts make little sense – or, at least, they do not make any sense that most readers feel to be sufficient for their understanding. It is precisely this intrinsic insufficiency of their supposedly "literal" meaning that necessitates the allegorization of Kafka's texts, but so do *Piers Plowman* and *Roman de la rose*. To put it another way, from the analytical point of view, it is less critical if "the allegorical" is described as a phenomenological modality or as a textual mode in its correlation with this modality, even though an implicit reference to Frye by the term "mode" may still be misleading. Yet, it is important for the revival of the discussion of the problem that the dichotomization of allegory as a genre and as an external interpretation be avoided. Even more important, as it seems, is to avoid the extremes of de Man's ontological speculations, on the one hand, and the narrow "positivist" affirmation of textual facticity, on the other.

At the same time, when these extremes and dichotomies are avoided, the philosophical value of allegory may come to light, without the necessity of redefining it with reference to the speculative metaphysics of "the human predicament" or, conversely, essentialist genre poetics. On the one hand, as is well known, because of its emphasis on the abstract, allegory has been habitually accused of schematism, dogmatism or ideologization; even Fletcher, in the concluding sentence of his book, described allegories as "the natural mirrors of ideology" [16, p. 369]. However, as shown in this essay, a better understanding of the phenomenological basis of allegory, as well as that of the presence of allegorical quality in most literary texts, is capable of dispelling these allegations. On the other hand, because of its contrast to what is usually perceived as the "realistic" representation of human existence, allegory has often been praised for its supposed repudiation of the mimetic conception of literature. The better understanding of its phenomenological and cognitive basis can also dispel these somewhat misguided praises. Indeed, most of our knowledge about the surrounding world is related to abstract or general qualities. Moreover, almost all the words in language are generic, and without them no communication seems possible even in a completely imaginary world. In contrast, most of the objects and experiences we, human beings, "encounter" in our extratextual life are singular and material. Therefore, bridging and double-bridging this gap between the general and the specific in its own way, allegory belongs with philosophy, physics, ethics, sociology, psychology, medicine and almost any other field of human knowledge, however dissimilar to them it may seem at first sight. In this sense, allegory is a natural realization of one the deepest necessities of human thought. Praising or denouncing this need seems to be a task of rather questionable value, especially when one speaks of literary and cultural analysis, as opposed to philosophy. At the same time, it is for us as literary scholars to understand how exactly this modality of human consciousness and this necessity of human thought can be realized in literary texts, how rich and complex these textualizations are, and how different and diverse they were or can be.

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