

Letter to a young author, Or The Uses and the Abuses of Philosophy for Life^{*}

Editor's foreword to the *Letter*

As the editor of *Trahir*, I have recently received an exceptional submission from Lukas Hosford, a very young scholar. I have decided to treat the essay as I would any other and asked Prof. Baross to review it for the journal. She in turn has decided to do write her response in the form of an open letter to the author, which *Trahir* publishes here together with the original essay.

I believe the letter accomplishes what *Trahir* aims to do: to respond to a writing with regard to its force and power. If a text is *good* as long as it *affects* the reader, then her letter is a positive response to the text, encourages – I dare to suppose – a continuation of the *puissance d'affecter*. This has nothing to do with *dialogue* as we do not expect a consensus, we expect *affection*. It could take years before a thinker can pick up the arrow thrown by another. It is on view of this eventuality that *Trahir* offers here the original text by Hosford and a letter in response to it by Baross, as simultaneous objects of affection.

The Editor

^{*} This letter was written by Zsuzsa Baross, in response to the text "Deterritorialization in the Web of Theoretical Existence", by Lukas Hosford, *Trahir*, August 2010.

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Zsuzsa Baross^{*}

It is not without trepidation that I begin writing this letter, fearing that its lessons – for it must be about lessons of some sort, yours and mine – will be not be heard well or will be misread.

Let me begin with your lesson, or perhaps *reminder* would be better term for what your writing showed me as missing, since long, from so many text by peers, colleagues, and certainly by many of my students. Passion and energy are again not the most accurate words, although your writing is driven by both; they have been used up and have become clichés of praise precisely for weak, obligatory, dutiful writings. I should rather say that what in your text reminds me of youth – in the best sense, as a lived experience – is the act of writing itself, which gives expression and comes as response to something irresistible, is carried by an exuberance, and – yes - by a glorious arrogance.

I do not fault your piece for the latter and would hope that learning of one's ignorance need not necessarily dull arrogance, one's impatience with banal stupidity.

I'm reminded of a magnificent little piece in *Deleuze épars. Approches et portraits* (Hermann Éditeurs, 2005): Raymond Bellour is dreaming of Deleuze. In an amphitheater, Deleuze listens to someone defending her dissertation. She says odd things of Bergson. Suddenly, Deleuze grabs the microphone and exclaims in rage: "I wrote five books about Spinoza and I cannot let such things be said." In a progressive furor he falls on his back to the floor. The image reminds the dreamer of Kafka's overturned insect in *Metamorphosis*. I cannot tell you how often I felt the irresistible need to imitate this

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scene and express my impotent rage with legs and arms in the air rather than with words as does Kafka's Gregory Samsa.

Although your piece is full of what must be considered as reductive misreadings, too fast formulations, not once did I feel to urge to repeat the scene described above.

So let me come to my lesson, which would have to be about the uses of philosophy for life. Or simply what philosophy is good for. I have mentioned your arrogance. On the one hand, it is an admirable quality: the *geste* of valuation/revaluation (of Nietzsche). On the other hand, it holds the danger of being simply a vehicle for judgment, for sitting in judgment – over life, the masses, society, the present. Doubtless, you remember how fondly Deleuze cites Artaud: "To have done with the Judgment of God."

So what philosophy is not good for is to change the world, to give expression to one's chagrin about the world. The philosophy of Deleuze especially does not address itself to "errors" of society, it does not legislate what desire is or is not, what life is or is not. It does not address itself to what is. The creation of concepts is a different sort of undertaking. For a concept is or corresponds with a possible world. Which is why it is so difficult to create one. It requires the act of creating a world.

So what does the concept say? It simply says, to think desire not as psychoanalysis does, as a lack, requires not another definition but a concept with the power to conjure up another world; to think life as not my life, but as that which passes through me, is to give life to another life. It is not the philosopher who judges life, it is rather life that judges itself, tastes itself. But letting this happen is not an easy task.

Zsuzsa Baross