

The Art in the Spiritual World: Lamberto Caffarelli and Anthroposophy¹

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Meanwhile a more or less ritual practice of religion contributed to give me a peaceful life. I was feeling I was on the right track, although this path showed few attractions. As I told you, I started to feel closer again and reunited with the Church in 1911: but the effects of this practice were not long lasting. There was no union between *Truth* and *Art* at that time: not yet. *Art* was still a thing outside *Religion*.²

In this letter dated September 1916, Lamberto Pietro Gaetano Caffarelli (1880-1963) tells his muse and sweetheart Giuliana Anzilotti about the moment in his life he had to deal with one of the central themes in the Avant-garde art movements and in Western Esoterism, in the first twenty years of the Twentieth Century: the representation and access to the spiritual dimension.

I find it appropriate to recall the path that led Caffarelli to approach this *dimension*. Lamberto Caffarelli entered the seminary in 1891, attended it for five years and received his first musical education by playing piano lessons. In 1896 he left the institute; in the same period a process of separation from, as he defined himself, “religious traditional certainties” took place, in other words from his religious education. In 1906 this path led to an existential crisis in his life, this event marked his life and brought Caffarelli to dedicate himself to the reading and studying of the classical authors of Theosophy, philosophy, English literature, and occultism.³

If I give a first look at Caffarelli's books collection, which is composed by over five thousand volumes concerning various and different topics, ranging from history of religions, occultism and oriental religions included, I can conclude that his “first esoteric readings” come from France and are written in French. In this collection I can find works of the most prominent exponents of Theosophy and Anthroposophy, among which *The Secret Doctrine* and *The Voice of Silence* written by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky,⁴ *The Thought-Forms* by Annie Besant and Charles Webster

1 I wish here to thank Giuseppe Fagnocchi, the main promoter in Caffarelli's celebration and in the Italian musician's works reprinting; the Manfrediana library manager Daniela Simonini, Silvia Fanti, Piergiorgio Bassi and the whole Manfrediana library staff; Michele Beraldo; Giovanni Casadio; Esmeralda Lupica; Massimo Introvigne, Pierluigi Zoccatelli, and the whole CESNUR's international conference staff.

2 Caffarelli, *Prose e poesie inedite*, p. 17.

3 Ibid., pp. 15-16.

4 In Caffarelli's library there are the French version of Blavatsky works: H. P. Blavatsky, *La Doctrine Secrète – Synthèse de la science, de la Religion et de la Philosophie*, 6 Vv., Paris: Publications Théosophiques, 1924-1931; Id., *La Voix du Silence: Fragments choisis du "Livre des préceptes d'or" à l'usage journalier des Lanous (disciples)*, Paris: Publications Théosophiques, 1899.

Leadbeater,⁵ and *Knowledge of Higher Worlds* and *The Occult Science* (relatively the translation of *Wie erlangt man Erkenntnisse der höheren Welten?* e *Die Geheimwissenschaft*) by Rudolf Steiner.⁶ There are even books concerning the Theosophical Society in English, such as *The Occult World* of Alfred Percy Sinnett⁷; however the contact with the French-speaking countries in Europe will be of fundamental importance for Caffarelli. With regard to French publications, it is important to point out the presence of the Edouard Schuré's work in Caffarelli's library, *Précurseurs et Révoltés – Shelley, Nietzsche, Ada Negri, Ibsen, Maeterlinck, Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient, Gobineau, Gustave Moreau*,⁸ one of the capital sources in the Italian composer's thought. As to Caffarelli's contact with French-speaking countries, I can say that, although this aspect has not been thoroughly investigated, it is sure that in the first ten years of the Twentieth Century Caffarelli got in touch with the French neo-gnostic milieu, specifically with *l'Église Gnostique Universelle's* patriarch Joanny Bricaud.⁹ Apart from the correspondence between the musician and Bricaud that can be found at Manfrediana library in Faenza, what I would like to stress is Caffarelli's interest in gnostic tendencies inside esoteric and occult groups. A “tendency” that he will find in Steiner's thought (and in Anthroposophy too).

In the meanwhile Caffarelli (in the events following the *crisis*) became Chapel Master and organist at Faenza's cathedral. Besides his activity regarding the composition of sacred music, Caffarelli joined the cultural scene of his city by writing articles on philosophical and educational topics.¹⁰ It is in this period that Faenza opens itself to the vibrant “European atmosphere” through the themes of the Pre-Raphaelites, Symbolism, and of the *Art Nouveau (Jugendstil)* introduced in visual arts and as a result in literature and music, also thanks to Domenico Baccarini's (1882-1907) works and his “circle” (that includes artists like Domenico Rambelli, Francesco Nonni, Ercole Drei, Orazio Toschi, Giuseppe Ugonia).¹¹ This “Northern” European tendency does not only involve Faenza, and half Europe, and consequently the visual, musical and literary arts in the first years of Twentieth Century, but it involves the same invisible dimension that is at the root of all esoteric and artistic groups: the spiritual dimension. Also the Russian painter W. Kandisky followed this path in

5 A. Besant & C.W. Leadbeater, *Les Forme-Pensées*, Paris: Publications Théosophiques, 1905.

6 R. Steiner, *L'Initiation ou la Connaissance des Monde Supérieurs*, Paris: Publications Théosophiques, 1912; Id., *La Science Occulte*, Paris: Perrins et Cie, 1914.

7 A.P. Sinnett, *The Occult World*, London: Theosophical Publishing Society, 1901; Sinnett's work is one of the first books in English language, between Caffarelli's esoteric readings.

8 E. Schuré, *Précurseurs et Révoltés – Shelley, Nietzsche, Ada Negri, Ibsen, Maeterlinck, Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient, Gobineau, Gustave Moreau*, Paris: Perrin et Cie, 1913.

9 For a first overview on Caffarelli's link with French gnostic group see Olzi, “Lamberto Caffarelli e la scoperta della Gnosi”.

10 For an overview on Caffarelli's articles and works see Cassani “Il magazzino dell'esoterismo. Una prima ricognizione del fondo Lamberto Caffarelli”, pp. 295-296.

11 For an in-depth analysis on Domenico Baccarini and his “circle” see Sapori, *Domenico Baccarini e il suo Cenacolo*; for Faenza's art scene in the early years of Twentieth Century see Bentini (ed. by), *Art Nouveau a Faenza - Il Cenacolo Baccariniano*.

the same years as can be seen in the publication of his work *Über das Geistige in der Kunst* (*Concerning the Spiritual in Art*) in 1912.¹² As I noticed at the beginning of this presentation, contemporary to Kandinsky's publication, Caffarelli was wondering if the threefold union of *Truth*, *Religion* and *Art* could be realized in his life or in his artistic production. It has been recently observed and studied that the theosophical and anthroposophical works have greatly contributed to the development of artistic movements and works of art.¹³ As I noticed, some of these works are part of Caffarelli's library. Among many elements of the creative genius of Caffarelli's mind, what contributed most to develop/strengthen the idea of Art in the Italian musician's work and thought is the encounter with Anthroposophy, above all with its founder Rudolf Steiner.

Around 1917, Lamberto Caffarelli began to get in touch with the Italian anthroposophical *milieu*, thanks to Alcibiade Mazzerelli.¹⁴ This man was one of the most remarkable translators of Steiner's works and lectures in Italy, and he used to give copies of his translations to Caffarelli. Thanks to Mazzerelli's mediation the Italian musician became a member of the Anthroposophical Society (between 1919 and 1920), and then he took part in the "West-Ost Kongreß" in Vienna, in 1922, where he would meet Steiner for the first time.¹⁵ The following year (1923), during the "Christmas Conference" at the Goetheanum at Dornach, which was rebuilt in 1922 after a fire, some Novalis *Geistliche Lieder* (Spiritual Songs) arranged for piano by Caffarelli are played by German contralto Maria Fuchs. In 1924, still at Dornach's Goetheanum, at the end of a eurythmic performance Caffarelli met for the last time the founder of Anthroposophy who is alleged to have told Caffarelli the following words: "I hope you appreciate this performance: it is only a beginning."¹⁶ A year later (1925), in the night between the 29th and the 30th of March Rudolf Steiner died. Despite his premature death, the *Doctor* (it was Steiner's surname) deeply influenced Caffarelli's soul and artistic production. In the same year of Steiner's death, the Italian composer expressed the peaks of his reflection on spiritual dimension in a piece of work: *L'Arte nel mondo spirituale – Tre saggi come introduzione a una conoscenza cosmico-spirituale dell'Arte* (*The Art in Spiritual World: Three Essays as Introduction to a Cosmic Spiritual Knowledge of the Art*).¹⁷

As the title suggests, the work is a collection of three essays. The three texts are not randomly

12 From 1911 to 1938, Kandinsky carried on a correspondence with the Austrian composer Arnold Schönberg. The Russian painter expressed, in a letter, enthusiasm for a set of pieces composed by Schönberg: "Drei Klavierstücke, Op. 11", see Schlaffer, *Wassily Kandinsky und Arnold Schönberg: Der Briefwechsel*, pp. 35-36.

13 The references are to the activities of the international network/project "Enchanted Modernities: Theosophy, Modernism and the Arts, c. 1875-1960", specifically to the Amsterdam international conference that has taken place from the 25th till the 27th of September, 2013. For any further details on the past conference and on the other network's activities see <http://www.york.ac.uk/history-of-art/enchanted-modernities/>

14 For a biographical overview on Alcibiade Mazzerelli, see Beraldo "Lamberto Caffarelli e il suo rapporto con l'ambiente antroposofico italiano tra le due guerre", pp. 443-444.

15 See Casanova, "Caffarelli e l'Antroposofia", p. 78.

16 Ibid., p. 80.

17 It is possible to find, at Manfrediana library some pages of a draft version of Caffarelli's work, dated 1923.

arranged, but they are intentionally organized depending on their length and contents. The essays succession represents a path not only in Caffarelli's reflection on anthroposophical, Christic, and gnostic themes, but an itinerary that leads to open the door of the knowledge of the spiritual dimension. The essays are as follows :

- 1) Art as Evolution Force of Natural and Human Becoming
- 2) The Three Frontal Impulses
- 3) Art and its Connections with Primordial Visions of Life and Generating Dogmas

Before proceeding with the description of the essays, I find appropriate to provide an introduction to some terms and concepts. I will not be able to make an accurate survey concerning steinerian influence on Caffarelli's thought and in the European context at the beginning of the Century. However, I will illustrate the basic notions in order to shed light on the anthroposophical and Steinerian context related with *Art in the Spiritual World*.

As I noticed before, among “Caffarelli's esoteric sources” we find the *Secret Doctrine* by Madame Blavatsky, and *The Initiation* by Rudolf Steiner. According to the notes found at the Manfrediana library in Faenza, in the course of the spiritual path that led the Italian musician to discover the main theosophical and anthroposophical works, Caffarelli focused his research on two particular themes. I find this two themes in both the books in Caffarelli's collection. These two notions are the one of *transcendence*, and *immortal soul*. The basic idea in Blavatsky's and Steiner's works (and so in their doctrines) is that man lives not in a linear dimension of history, but in a cyclic one. When the body dies, the immortal soul reincarnates in another one. This cycle of death and rebirth has been going on for such a long time that is not possible for modern man to have such an early memory of the beginning of this process. The *Eternal Return* is an existential proof of a spiritual evolution/order in the history of mankind. This evolutive itinerary is present also in Blavatsky and Steiner, although it had for them different aims and results. Madame Blavatsky thought that the karmic circle ruling man's existence must lead to the intuition of a hidden, eternal, unchangeable reality, existent beyond the individual's common perception. In Steiner's thought (not yet in his anthroposophical phase, but still theosophist)¹⁸ the proof of a universal hierarchy's existence (in the domain of visible and invisible things) must lead man to the consciousness of being part of a universal order, and a fundamental element in the inner working of this Spiritual background of the

18 See Leijenhorst, “Steiner, Rudolf” p. 1088; Ahern, *Sun at Midnight: The Rudolf Steiner Movement and the Western Esoteric Tradition*, p. ; Zander, *Rudolf Steiner – Die Biographie*, pp. 110-124.

human history (or as the *Doctor* had defined it, “cosmo-history”, or “meta-history”). In man's *immortal I* (“Ich” in Steiner's terminology) lies that consciousness/knowledge, that metaphysical and meta-historical fulcrum around which the universe revolves around and develops itself. This belief for Steiner has an outcome: man has the chance of spiritually redeeming himself by himself. This theme has a gnostic echo, and Caffarelli paid particular attention to this aspect.

Now I can proceed to the first chapter of Caffarelli's *Spiritual World*. After highlighting the main points in order to be able to feel the the spiritual atmosphere in this historical period , I can better understand a specific statement from this essay (“Art as Evolutive Force in Natural and Human Becoming”):“Art is the human motion of the Cosmos”.¹⁹ The author begins the first essay by showing the reader the final objective of the work, that is the integration of Art in the “life's total stream”.²⁰ How? Through the research of a moral world in the *Art's world*. When does it happen? When the artwork becomes the image of cosmic life. Given the fact that man (Microcosm) is part of a superior order (Macrocosm), the cornerstone of the cosmic life lies in the natural becoming. The artistic creation process has the means to reach the comprehension of this becoming. As a result of Nietzsche's influence, Steiner's thought, revolves around the existence in this world of Evil and Good, since it exists an order in all things. The spirit (or *I*) recognizes his position in this order, and can strive for the fulfillment of his real nature. The act of artistic creation allows the artist to perceive the occult energies that create, rule, and support the natural *becoming* in all the things. Human becoming and natural becoming are similar, since they share the same force that leads them toward Evil or Good. The moral world of Art tends to develop towards the Good. This happens when I can see through the appearance of things , and foresee their real essence. This is possible only if two conditions are present:

- 1) Man recognizes that all the things are crossed by the same energies that constitute the universe.
- 2) Man recognizes himself as part and/or means of the universe, therefore he is analogous creator because he operates by means of the energies of the universe.

Caffarelli affirms that only the poet, the saint and the wise can say the real name of the things in Nature. So the Artist has the mission to work in accordance with the *harmony* of natural and human becoming. The Italian musician says that the bright state of harmony occurs when the threefold union of Truth, Religion and Beauty takes place. The man-artist (at the end of the first chapter) tells, depicts, and embodies the history of the spiritual world. This world is morally

¹⁹ Caffarelli, *L'Arte nel Mondo Spirituale*, p. 50.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

oriented in his becoming. Art becomes the motion and expression of the Cosmos, since it has a privilege point of view: the man.

In the second chapter (“The Three Frontal Impulses”), Caffarelli explains what happens in the artist, in Nature, in the process of artistic creation. This second part of the book begins with a motto “In amor, vivendum est”. Love in this case is not only a feeling, but a passion too. Passion is a force. This force is helpful (in our case) to define and to explain the occult energies combinations that form the Cosmos. Love gives man the opportunity to have access to specific phases in spiritual evolution. In accordance with the idea of *transcendence*, which inspired Caffarelli so much, Love gives way in art to a liberation act the so called *transubstantiation*. The passion that involves man in the art spiritual evolution, can be experienced in different ways. In the first phase this passion can be experienced as Joy. The artist identifies sounds, colors, odors in Nature that have a similarity with the ones in his memories. In the second phase the artist-man senses, by observing the things in Nature, some kind of power flowing through. He feels the same power in the details of his artwork. Caffarelli states that is a natural power of the spirit linking past memories with the occult energies of an idea. In the second chapter of the work, Goethe's and Novalis' influence reaches its peak. The abstraction of the shape looks for a meaning. And becomes the union of both in a instinctual world: the *symbol*. The eternal return of a *I* who looks for the shape in which to reincarnate and the shape that allows his ongoing self expression. The artist-man feels the flowing of the energies through the things. However, this flux does not have a direction yet. Only when he understands that there is a polarity, an order, a before and a after, then he can get through the whole flow of energies. First there is consciousness of a self, then this consciousness becomes will (the artist-man's will!), and the will becomes direction. Love, in this case, means living for something or someone, becomes intention, becomes direction, becomes desire. This is (in Caffarelli's words) a “Volontà Cosmica” (*Cosmic Will*). Quoting a passage from Steiner's work *The Occult Science (Die Geheimwissenschaft)* Caffarelli highlights that a Cosmic Will is still desire/wishing something. Then the final aim guides the generic will, in order to turn it in a “Impulse”. The *spiritual world* is divided between these Three Impulses:

- 1) The impulse which says “I am Solidity”, this is the “Impulso Arimane” (“Ahrimanic Impulse”) and creates thick worlds.
- 2) The one that says “I am Freedom”, this is the “Impulso Lucifero” (“Luciferic Impulse”) and refines the universes in light.
- 3) The one that says “I am Love”, this is the “Impulso Cristo” (“Christ Impulse”) and balances, in the progressive motion (becoming), Darkness with Light, and Many with One.

Caffarelli provides three literary examples related with each of the three impulses. The first one concerns “Bruto Minore” (“Brutus the younger”) a poem from *Le Canzoni* by Giacomo Leopardi. Caffarelli affirms that it is possible to find a Luciferic Impulse in Brutus' character “Brutus' character is a giant that comes out of the historical context, and logic.”²¹ The following example concerns the Ahrimanic Impulse, and it is possible to find it in Gabriele d'Annunzio's works, specifically in *Francesca da Rimini*.²² The same character (Francesca da Polenta) in Dante Alighieri's masterpiece, *La (Divina) Commedia*, together with another historical one (Paolo Malatesta) represents an example of Christic Impulse. The fifth canto in Dante's *Inferno* inspires the following Caffarelli's statement: “what makes Paolo e Francesca a couple so unique and mysterious is the presence of Christic forces operating in Dante's pity”.²³ I can come to the conclusion that the Christic Impulse's duty is that of blending the Luciferic and the Ahrimanic one : “In its historical manifestation Christ gave the definition of his own nature and harmonizing work when he said «I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life» Indication of the Three Frontal Impulses in the new Cosmo-historical figure as factors of a new era of human history, unified in the Selfconsciousness (*I am*)”.²⁴ In the last and third essay (“ Art and its Connections with Primordial Visions of Life and Generating Dogmas”) Caffarelli opens a further paragraph in Steiner's Cosmo-history: civilization. The Chapel Master of Faenza's cathedral begins the chapter by affirming: “The artwork is a Dogma that becomes image and meaning.”²⁵ Lamberto Caffarelli states that the artistic Dogma of a civilization is the *crystallized* image of a ethnic group's spiritual perception. By observing the Dogma's expression in the art of civilization, it is possible to understand the relationship with the spiritual dimension (or in Caffarelli's terminology “Primordial Vision of Life”). Given the three impulses' context, Caffarelli begins to consider the art of past civilization. The art considered at first is Indian art. According to the Italian musician it is characterized by a Luciferic Impulse, and its Dogma is the one of the “Lost Paradise”. The “Maya psychic disposition” brings to consider the material world false and ephemeral, and the impulse is oriented towards a “sky” that can never be reached. Indian art is counterbalanced with Iranian art, whose Dogma is the one of the “Promised Land”. This Dogma is characterized by an Ahrimanic Impulse, and the impulse direction is addressed toward the “roots of a solar civilization” (“the sky becomes the earth's law”). In the same current of the Ahrimanic Impulse, Caffarelli introduces (in order of spiritual evolution) Egyptian

21 Ibid., p. 121.

22 Ibid., p. 133.

23 Ibid., p. 129.

24 Ibid., p. 104.

25 Ibid., p. 167.

and Greek art. Focusing on the relationship with the earth, the first artistic form is defined as the “Art of the progressive netherworld life”, since it has a geometrical nature. For what it concerns Microcosm -Macrocosm's connection, the Egyptian civilization “brings in the physical dimension the soul's lights”.²⁶ The “prechristic geometry of sacred” gives physical color to the people's soul, but does not have any consciousness of itself in a Macrocosm (or in a larger spiritual dimension). With regard to Greek art, “its divine is the natural physical apotheosis”.²⁷ Art bring Gods back to earth, but they do not remember the sky from where they come. The Art spiritual dimension in all this civilizations is restricted by a geometrical nature, and their Primordial Vision of life is defined as “prechristic”. The reason for the choice of this adjective not only lies in the heart of Christianity, but lies in the event that made possible to Christ to be the cosmo-historical figure *par excellence*: The Mystery of Golgotha. Christ's figure between the two thieves and the three crosses on Golgotha represents the cosmos' secret. The secret lies not (or not only) in the historical fact, but in the meta-historical dimension of existence: the spiritual science of I. Caffarelli (as composer and dodecaphonic musician) develops Steiner's lesson to its maximum peak.²⁸ I would expect to find examples of author and of their musical composition and having them compared with the primordial vision of life of the past civilizations. What Caffarelli does is instead going back to the the greatest example of Chrtistic impulse , and gives expression to his Dogma. The greatest example that the Italian musician provides is the episode of the meeting of Dante and Beatrice in the third Comedia's cantica. The nature of art, here, is not geometrical anymore, it is musical. The dodecaphonic music concept reaches its full potential. As Caffarelli points out, the music is rarefied, thin, not audible any longer. The spiritual dimension of the spirit is one with music, or, as Dante experienced through his hearing in Paradise, the music becomes mental, motion, time. As Otto Carlyle defined it: the fourth dimension. In Caffarelli's thought, and in many other artist's works at the beginning of Twentieth Century in Europe, the fourth dimension (or the fourth dimension of art) represented the *Integral Art of Life*.

26 Ibid., p. 179.

27 Ibid., p. 183.

28 I should highlighting that Caffarelli's use of the Chromatic Scale's twelve notes is linked with the circle of fifths. A return to medieval polyphonic music, achieved following a Caffarelli's personal attitude. So Caffarelli uses a medieval polyphony structured on intervals of an octave, of a fifth and a fourth. Caffarelli's musical use “touches” all sound by melodic (horizontal) and harmonic (vertical) intervals. Then he develops a dodecaphonic leitmotiv: “the cross motif”.

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