

From the Problem of Modern Subjectivity to Giorgio Colli's Concept of Expression

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Contemporary philosophy has neglected and almost forgotten Giorgio Colli's thought. Very well known as a translator of Nietzsche, Kant and Schopenhauer, Colli is barely considered and even rarely mentioned as a philosopher *stricto sensu*, in both international and Italian philosophical discussions (the latter defined according to the paradigm of *Italian thought* – see Esposito, 2010).¹

Actually, Colli is a lone, untimely thinker, who preferred to avoid direct confrontation with the philosophers of his time: as pointed out by N. A. Tusell (see 1993, p. 192), Colli is simply *irreducible* to every other twentieth-century philosophical paradigm.

By the way, Colli's 'philosophical solitude' seems less the result of a personal or hermeneutical decision than the necessary consequence of his own philosophy: indeed, it is the same originality of Collian thought that makes comparisons with other contemporary thinkers hard, because his philosophical solutions and his methodological approach are quite peculiar.

In this respect, Colli's philosophy must be analysed first *in* and *with* itself (at most with the authors of the past whom Colli himself had confronted), before being faced with other contemporary authors. This means that the originality of Colli's thought does not exclude comparisons with twentieth-century philosophers (see C. La Rocca, 2008, p. 76); on the contrary, its uniqueness requires a confrontation with other authors who discussed the same theoretical problems, even though in a different way.

In this paper I will analyse some central issues in Colli's philosophy, showing their link to Nietzschean philosophy (*1. Nietzsche's Modernity* and *2. The Hypothesis of Expression Beyond the Metaphysics of the Subject*). I will try to clarify the meaning of the Collian notion of expression, indicating how it presents itself as a negation of the modern concept of subject. Finally, I will attempt to analyse and, in a certain sense, weigh Colli's criticism against the modern philosophies of the subject, specifying its characteristics, to compare Collian philosophy with other contemporary philosophies, where subjectivity is

¹ References to Colli's philosophy are rare, even in Italian. In the course of this work, I will indicate the main contributions that have been made to an understanding of the theoretical aspects of Collian philosophy.

(in an apparently similar manner) rejected (*3. The Meaning of the Collian Negation of the Modern Subject*)².

1. Nietzsche's Modernity

One of the ways to approach Colli's thought is to analyse the Collian interpretation of Nietzsche. Indeed, Colli is an interpreter of Nietzsche quite *sui generis*, because he did not want to be a mere Nietzschean scholar: Nietzsche is rather the starting point of the properly Collian philosophical thesis. Nevertheless, Colli immediately feels the need to distance his philosophy from that of Nietzsche.

This emerges clearly in *Dopo Nietzsche* (1974), the Collian work which 'presents the greatest affinities with and, at the same time, a sovereign distance from the philosophy of Nietzsche' (Montinari, 2018, p. 141). In this respect, the remark of G. Campioni seems legitimate, who, in a speech in 1981, asked provocatively: 'Did Giorgio Colli want to be the interpreter of Nietzsche and, in general, is it possible, according to Colli, to give an interpretation of Nietzsche?' (Campioni, 1983, p. 19).

So, in *Dopo Nietzsche*, Colli credits Nietzsche with breaking away from the modern metaphysical philosophical tradition. Nonetheless, Nietzsche himself is repeatedly criticised for still being overly attached to modern philosophy: according to Colli, Nietzsche remained 'too modern' (DN, p. 197), because the centrality of subjectivity, claimed by modern philosophers, remains unchanged in Nietzschean thought. Colli argues: 'The belief in the subject that Nietzsche helped demolish is intrinsically connected to his thought, even to his last works. Calling the substance of the world "will" already refers simply to a metaphysical subject' (ibid., pp. 87-88). In other words, according to Colli, Nietzsche posed 'a field of obstacles, a form of inner resistance to a subject. In metaphysical terms, this means postulating a plurality of substantial entities' (ibid.) – and this because of his hypothesis of a *will to power*: 'There is no will power without a subject that supports it, i.e. a subject that is substantial, because the discourse is here metaphysics: and it was Nietzsche who had destroyed the subject!' (ibid.).

In so doing, Colli proposes a very useful hermeneutic operation with respect to the Nietzschean philosophy; in fact, he points out a theme of

² The quotations from the works of Colli, in Italian, and from the works of Nietzsche, in German, are all translated by the author of the present work, in order to make them consistent with the general sense of the article. The titles of Collian works (indicated fully in the bibliography) are abbreviated as follows (and always followed by the page number): *Dopo Nietzsche* = DN; *Filosofia dell'espressione* = FE; *La ragione errabonda* = RE. For Nietzschean works, we will quote from *Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Einzelbänden* (Her. von G. Colli und M. Montinari).

Nietzsche's thought that has been overlooked very often by Nietzschean *Forschung* in the last century: in fact, despite the widespread tendency to consider Nietzsche a philosopher 'beyond the subject',³ thereby the post-modern destroyer of the (modern) metaphysics of philosophical subjectivity, Colli recognises the unavoidability and the inescapability of the instance of the subject in Nietzschean philosophy.

In fact, examining the problem of the subject, Nietzsche performs a double operation:

(i) First, he denies that subjectivity is definable through the attributes developed by the modern philosophical tradition (from Descartes to Kant): thus, according to Nietzsche, the subject cannot be considered a *res*, an eternal, fixed and stable *substantia*, because it is nothing continuous or immutable, present or permanent in our reflections. Put otherwise, Nietzsche aims to deny that the subject is a firm foundation (as Descartes presented it⁴). Indeed, the essence of the subject is not stability, but becoming: its consistency is fluid, fleeting, temporal. 'The individual is nothing fixed and constant' (HH, 222), writes Nietzsche: thinking subjectivity as a substance means thinking of it as a fiction, as a counterfeit of becoming that represents its own essence.

Nietzschean claims on the problem of subjectivity converge in a fragment dated 1885:

What divides me in the deepest way from the metaphysicians is this: I do not allow them that 'I' is what it thinks; on the contrary, I consider the *ego* itself a construction of thought [...]; therefore only a regulatory function, by which one can introduce and invent in a world of becoming a kind of stability and therefore of 'knowability'. [...] However customary and indispensable this fiction may be, nothing proves that its nature is not fictitious. Something can be a life condition and yet false (FP: 1885, 35[35]).

³ This is the title of the famous book written by G. Vattimo: *Al di là del soggetto. Nietzsche, Heidegger e l'ermeneutica* (1981); Vattimo's theses on Nietzsche are inscribed in a post-modernist philosophical theory, which identifies Nietzsche as the father of contemporary nihilism, which means the dissolution of the notion of subjectivity. These positions were recently taken up by J. Constâncio, in *Nietzsche on Decentred Subjectivity, or the Existential Crisis of the Modern Subject* (2015).

⁴ Descartes described the *ego cogito* as a stable and permanent centre; he even compared the subject to the concept of Archimedes' fulcrum: 'Nihil nisi punctum petebat Archimedes, quod esset firmum et immobile, ut integram terram loco dimoveret; magna quoque speranda sunt, si vel minimum quid invenero quod certum sit et inconcussum' (Descartes, 1904, p. 24). In passing, one should admit that the Cartesian theme of the subject is much more complex than it appears; a comprehensive reading of this problem, including the Nietzschean interpretation of Cartesianism, is offered by J.-L. Marion, who recognises a paradoxical proximity between Descartes and Nietzsche (see J.-L. Marion 2021).

Nietzsche defines the subject as an expression of becoming, i.e. a derivative entity which is ontologically subordinated to becoming itself: it does not bear anything 'immediately certain' (ibid.), because it is comprehensible only as a mediated and secondary expression of the incessant flow in which reality consists essentially. Moreover, since the fluid and becoming nature of reality does not admit any form of ontological fixation or stability, which would be required by the definition of the *ego* as a permanent and immutable substance or substrate, the perspective of the subject tends to falsify the becoming it expresses. For these reasons, the subject is described by Nietzsche as a fiction, an alteration or falsification of the infinite becoming: it has a fictitious consistency, since it exists only by denying, masking its own becoming essence. Ultimately, the becoming is described by Nietzsche as infinite, understood as a 'primordial fact' which indicates the original vitality 'from which the finite' – that is every determination, including that of subjectivity, understood as 'illusion' – 'originates' (FP: 1872-73, 19[139]). In a word, the subject is a derivative manifestation of becoming, as Nietzsche states in *Genealogy of Morality* (I, 13): 'A substratum does not exist: there is no "being" below doing, acting, becoming; "he who does" is only added to doing – doing is everything'.

(ii) On the other hand, in passing, Nietzsche recognises in the fictional nature of the subject an expressive function of becoming as such: the alteration in which the positing of subjectivity consists allows the becoming to proceed unceasingly, exceeding any determination within which it is defined, fixed and therefore denied. Becoming reveals its infinity only by surpassing and transcending the perspective of the subject in which it occurs. Indeed, the falsity that characterises the concept of the subject does not prevent it from being a condition of life, according to Nietzsche, because 'the falsity of a concept is not an objection to it' (FP: 1885, 35[37]): therefore, the fiction of subjectivity does not entail the inconsistency of the subject *as such*, because its fictitious nature reflects (by contrast) the irreducibility of becoming to any subjective fictional definition. Ultimately, the fiction of subjectivity reveals its own necessity in relation to the essential vitality of becoming. Indeed, according to Nietzsche, becoming understood as 'fundamental certainty' is constituted as the foundation of a multiplicity of representations, within which it discharges itself, denies and alters its own nature: while becoming is the being of representing ('representing *is* nothing equal to itself, or immutable' – my emphasis), representing 'affirms the opposite of being', because 'it *must affirm* the substance and what is equal, since it is impossible to know what is entirely flux' (FP: 1881, 11[330] – my emphasis).

In summary, to Nietzsche, on the one hand, it is necessary to admit the inevitability that characterises the perpetual and infinite becoming, whose alteration 'is the condition for the existence of the species of being that has representations' (ibid.); on the other hand, the irreducibility of becoming to this finite determination, i.e. its transcendence, must also be noted. Therefore, if 'it is

impossible to know what is entirely flux', it becomes necessary to postulate a subject that 'must invent and attribute qualities of being, in order to exist itself' (ibid.); and nevertheless, an original becoming must be admitted regarding the same definition and alteration of the fictional subject, since becoming is a condition of possibility and 'fundamental certainty'.

Thus, in Nietzsche's thought an irreducible *aporia* between becoming and subject emerges, which suggests the ineluctibility of the perspective of the subject itself: 'A world without a subject', Nietzsche asks, 'is it possible to think of it? But think now of all life cancelled at once. [...] Eliminating the subject with thought is a contradiction: representing without representation!' (FP: 1881 (beginning), 10d[82]). Certainly, Nietzsche describes the subject as a point of view within which the vital becoming is altered and realised as incessant life flow.

Therefore, the ambivalence entailed by Nietzschean criticisms of the modern subject becomes blatant: while Nietzsche rethinks its fundamental attributes, he continues to maintain its centrality; Nietzsche considers the onto-epistemological reality of subjectivity to be unavoidable, like every modern philosopher, although it reconfigures its nature:⁵ subjectivity is a fiction, a finite expression of the infinite becoming, since it is doomed to pass; nevertheless, subjectivity itself is precisely the expression where becoming realises itself, and thus it is a necessary, infeasible (typically modern) fiction. In a word, subjectivity is that fiction which – according to Colli – makes Nietzsche (still) 'too modern' (DN, 197).

2. The hypothesis of expression beyond the metaphysics of the subject

Colli's philosophical aim consists exactly in overcoming the (still Nietzschean) metaphysics of subjectivity, radicalising and surpassing Nietzschean theses. 'Nietzsche's philosophy went a long way. The job was almost complete', Colli writes (DN, p. 81). In this respect, one could consider Collian philosophy as the complement of Nietzsche's, and especially with regard to the problem of the subject – in truth, according to Colli, 'Nietzsche is dragged to a conclusion opposite to the one he wanted to reach' (DN, p. 176).

Collian criticisms of (Nietzschean) subjectivity emerge in the opening of *Filosofia dell'espressione* (1969), the theoretical *summa* of Collian thought. Colli

⁵ In this sense, some Nietzschean aphorisms become quite clear – for example, BGE, 16: 'Naive observers of themselves still continue to exist, those who believe that there are "immediate certainties", for example "I think", or, as in Schopenhauer's superstition, "I will": as if here knowledge could grasp its object pure and naked, as "thing in itself" and no falsification could take place either on the part of the subject or on that of the object. But I will not tire of repeating that "immediate certainty", as well as "absolute knowledge" and the "in itself", involve a *contradictio in adjecto*: one should also get rid, at last, of the seduction of words'.

states that the subject is ‘always slimy and elusive’ (FE, p. 5). In fact, he continues, the notion of subject ‘is not only misleading, but even seriously dangerous. We must reduce it to a merely relative concept, trying to eliminate it completely from any deep speculation’ (ibid., pp. 8-9).

According to Colli, subjectivity is definitely relative, ungraspable and therefore inconsistent. Indeed, the relative status of the subject depends on the continuous relationship that it entertains with objects, with respect to which it is precisely defined as subject: ‘It is only by talking about objects that we can deal with the subject, or more concisely: if we talk about anything, we talk about objects’ (ibid., p. 5)

The relationship subject-object relativises the subject, making it fluid, because

each subject is provisional, and each subject is the object of a more comprehensive subject. The concept of a universal subject conditioning all objects is the product of modern philosophy (Kant - unity of apperception), but in reality this subject does not exist (RE, [281] – my emphasis).

In fact,

every time you analyse a representation you find an object, even in the context of a relationship, that is, according to a perspective, as a specific projection. But there is no point in looking for the point from which this view is opened: the moment it is discovered, that subject becomes an object, absorbing the old object in itself, and it escapes once again the origin of perspective. (FE, p. 13)⁶

Nevertheless, it must be remarked that the Collian decentralisation of the subject in favour of the object does not entail the hypostatisation of the horizon of the object itself. In other words, the removal of the subject does not result in a form of ‘objective hyper-realism’. According to Colli, the ‘subject-object’ relationship is rather insufficient as such, because both subject and object are relative as related: ‘The relationship between subject and object does not grasp the essence of representation. [...] It is therefore permissible to speak about a subject-object relationship only provisionally’ (FE, p. 7). In this respect, in *La ragione errabonda*

⁶ In his posthumous work, *La ragione errabonda*, Colli had argued against Husserl about a real ‘narrowing of the subject by the object’ (RE, 411). As pointed out by L. Torrente, ‘the attacks that Colli makes upon the modern subject are often stinging and aimed above all at depriving it of its autonomy and substantiality. Within the representative context, the subject is the complementary term of the object and derives its existence from that of the representation itself’ (Torrente, 2021, p. 66).

(257), Colli states: 'The Subject-object opposition in epistemology is very modern and misleading'.

Thus, according to Colli, it is necessary to go beyond the representation regulated by the subject-object logic in order to indicate the essence of representation itself, i.e. the depth that the relationship 'subject-object' does not express: 'To determine representation as a relationship between subject and object means to consider it in light of the categories of possession and situation. One should try to determine it in light of the category of substance' (FE, p. 7).

The essence of representation is defined by Colli as immediacy (*immediato*), the flux of the expression (*flusso dell'espressione*), substance (*sostanza*), and being (*essere*).⁷ In fact, to Colli, every representation must be understood *literally* as a re-presentation, a re-enactment of something else, that is immediacy, substance: this is the source and the background of the representation as such. 'The word "representation" is not to be understood as a translation of the German word *Vorstellung*, but rather in the primitive meaning of "to make something reappear in front", in short, as a "re-enactment"' (ibid., p. 6). In this regard, one could state with certainty that immediacy is the original evidence of reality, the condition of possibility of any representation that declines in terms of subject and object. Indeed, in *La ragione errabonda*, immediacy is described as pure representability, the implicit presupposition of every representation. Immediacy is life as such, reality by force of which representation is defined as such; every representation is a determination, a definition that specifies a totality irreducible to representation itself. In a word, representation must presuppose a context, a totality (the representability of the representation as such) in which it fits, but which it cannot reduce. Immediacy then constitutes the background of the representation, its substance – not by chance, in *La ragione errabonda*, Colli specifies the synonymy between expression, which conveys the immediate, and substance: 'Expression is the term that replaces substance' (RE, 366).

Now, according to Colli, representations are in contact (*contatto*) with the immediate substance, that nevertheless cannot be represented as such: every definition of the immediate is its mediation,⁸ i.e. a reduction of the reality of the substance to an object for a subject, within a representational context. On the contrary, the immediacy remains hidden in the representation, and therefore can only be *expressed* by overcoming its logic and its 'subject-object' distinction: 'By expression', Colli writes, 'we mean here a representation from which the perspective of an object is subtracted from the point of view of a subject, and which is therefore considered as something simple' (ibid., p. 22). Thus, the

⁷ A basic overview of the Collian concept of expression is presented by V. Meattini (2018).

⁸ Colli explicitly defines 'contact' as the essence of representation: 'Being is the category that expresses the representation of the nexus – as union within the simple or compound object – as referring to metaphysical contact' (FE, p. 71).

expression becomes in Collian philosophy the device that conveys immediacy and attests to the reality of the substance, overcoming the representational context where subject and object are distinguished. *Espressione* manifests the simplicity and evidence of immediacy, as well as its irreducibility to the logic of representation. It reveals immediacy as representability, i.e. as the background implied by every representation.⁹ In this sense, the metaphysical hypothesis of expression (as Colli defines it) exhibits the limits of representation when it comes to indicating its own essence, testifying to representation's inability to manifest the contact with its immediate essence, from which it derives and to which it refers. In fact, the contact of the representation with immediacy re-enacted remains outside the representation as such, because it is merely reduced in the representational perspective to the status of an object. So, in *Filosofia dell'espressione*, Colli argues that: 'contact is something where subject and object are non-detached. [...] In the contact there is no subject that determines, nor any object that is determined', because they 'seem to be confused': subject and object 'cease to be such' (ibid., p. 39). The contact shows the partiality of the representation, its dependence on an (indefinable) other to which it refers: 'The contact, as a metaphysical element, must still be only an unknowable limit, postulated by the structure of appearance, and to which the expression, analysed, refers' (ibid., p. 40). In fact, according to Colli, the contact with immediacy is the content of the expression, an interpretation (not a representation) of the 'unrepresentable': originally alien to the logic of representation that sees subject and object as opposed to one another, contact

indicates nothing that represents anything, a metaphysical *interstitium*, which however is a certain nothing, since what it is not, its representative surrounding, gives it an expressive determination (ibid., pp. 41-42).

In the end, *contatto* is what indicates that there is an otherness with respect to representation, which representation cannot determine: 'Interpreting the unrepresentable according to the representative structure, we can say that it is the contact between the subject and the object' (FE, p. 39). In a brief and concise manner, Colli points out that the representation of the subject and the object refers to a non-representable otherness in which subject and object do not exist, which must be presupposed by the representation that is defined as such: such otherness limits the representation, and defines it:

Of course, this common element cannot be explained through the subject and the object, which in the immediacy are absent. In the

⁹ The need to understand the notion of expression in Colli as pure representativity was claimed by C. La Rocca (2008, p. 79).

unreasonable the sphere of expression finds a limit, which it cannot reduce to itself, but which it must interpret, precisely because it bears witness to it. (FE, p. 42)¹⁰

Therefore, Colli strives to delineate an antinomy between the horizon of representation and its other (its very foundation), also proposing to maintain the antinomy as such, in its irreducibility and irresolubility: each representation (subject-object) makes sense as it emerges from a background devoid of subject and object. Although the representation cannot be transcended (everything, in effect, is determined, represented, put in perspective), it must be maintained in relation to an otherness that is not reducible. Neither the representation nor its background can be eliminated, although they cannot know each other and reflect one another. The Collian notion of contact definitively ratifies the inconsistency of the subject and the impossibility for it to be constituted on a transcendental level.

Indeed, the subject (as the object as such) is a nothing which refers to immediacy, while the latter is the ultimate essence of reality.¹¹ Thus, subjectivity does not exist except as a temporary, contingent, relative occurrence of the flow of expression: it is simply immediacy empirically defined and thereby mediated, negated:

In the tissue of knowledge there is no pure or absolute subject. Neither as substance, nor as form, nor as synthesis: an empirical subject, however, is a reality of appearance; it is a grouping of representations endowed, among other things, with a certain overall

¹⁰ 'The expression is by nature defective, but precisely because its nature is to express, it also expresses something that is defective in itself. In the abyss of immediacy there is a resistance, an obstacle, a contraction (speaking symbolically), and the expression brings all this with it. The lack that lies in the contact is something unsurpassable: the expression reiterates this insufficiency even as its meaning, in manifesting that resistance, would be to escape it, to overcome it' (FE, p. 47).

¹¹ It is no coincidence that Colli often criticises Descartes, in a way that is not unlike Nietzsche's. In addition to the numerous references in *La ragione errabonda*, see for example: 'For Descartes the principles of our knowledge are that doubt gives us the first certainty (*coincidentia oppositorum!*), that this first certainty concerns the existence of the thinking subject, that the mind is separated from the body and that the latter exists on its own, outside of our thinking, that the existence of mind and body is guaranteed by the existence of God, that the existence of God is guaranteed by the fact that we think it, that the freedom of our will is manifested to the point of being an innate notion, and so on. As for the body, the extended matter, the proof of its existence is amusing: if God made us present the idea of this extended matter by way of something in which there was no extension, one could not help but consider God a deceiver: but God does not deceive, so extended matter exists. Cartesian reason is based on this evidence: the Greek and Indian traditions had not attained even one of these truths' (DN, pp. 53-54).

persistence. [...] What distinguishes one spatio-temporal representation from others is its location in an empirical subject, or, more precisely, the fact that the series of representations constituting the movement is related to the group of representations forming the empirical subject [...]. But the empirical subject is an unstable compound. (DN, pp. 28–29)

In this respect, according to Colli, the subject understood as absolute and permanent substance remains an absurdity:¹² subjectivity is only a fleeting, evanescent expression of the immediate, within an empirical context: the ego is namely and simply ‘the empirical subject’ related to a ‘certain knowledge, that is not conditioned by it’ (ibid., p. 175). In a word, subjectivity is a mediation where immediacy denies itself, because it is prone to transcend every subjective definition that it makes possible. The definition does not ‘attest to the immediate, because “it cannot be attested”, because it is the ineffable, and not because “it must not be said”’ (DN, p. 176).

However, unlike Nietzsche, Colli believes that immediacy, considered as original, does not need to manifest itself through the subject, since the fiction in which the subject consists does not express immediacy, not even by contrast. Indeed, for Colli, what is fundamental is not manifested in fiction, in alteration, in the illusion of the subject (Nietzsche), but rather in going beyond the latter. In other words, Colli does not consider the negativity of the subject as a positive manifestation of the other by the subject (life, immediacy, becoming).

For these reasons, Colli intends to go beyond Nietzsche’s thesis on the subject as such, i.e. beyond Nietzschean modernity: his aim is not simply to rethink the modern subject, like Nietzsche, but even to deny it, through the hypothesis of expression, through the hypothesis of immediacy: ‘The path of expression is the path of the cancellation of the subject’ (RE 411) – in fact, Nietzschean will and in general a subject as such ‘don’t exist’ (DN, p. 151), because subjectivity is simply ‘a lie’ (ibid., p. 86).

3. *The Meaning of the Collian Negation of the Modern Subject*

Criticising the notion of subjectivity, Colli points out definitively the shortcomings of modern philosophy (within which he also includes Nietzschean thought). As Colli states:

¹² In this respect, L. Torrente noted that in Collian philosophy ‘the subject appears as something negative, and anything but original or even founding the essence of representation. [...] If the fundamental datum is *re-præsentatio*, the absolute presence of the subject to itself is something unattainable’ (L. Torrente, 2021, p. 67).

Ancient Greek philosophy is not a stuttering anticipation of the modern, or its as yet unformed anticipation. [...] It is rather that modern philosophy barely rebukes the ancient thoughts, as one who due to trauma has lost his voice and then begins laboriously to recover it by fragments, mumbling. (FE, p. 166)

Nevertheless, the Collian criticism of the metaphysics of the subject (and more generally of the assumptions of modern philosophy) do *not* make Colli a post-modern thinker. Indeed, according to Colli, the negation of the subject does not imply the impossibility of any form of absolute, certain or epistemic truth. In other words, unlike what happens in post-modernist philosophies (often inspired by Nietzschean philosophy), the disappearance of the subject does not lead to the end of the 'great fictions' (J.-F. Lyotard, 1979) or toward a form of 'weak thought (*pensiero debole*)' (G. Vattimo, P. A. Rovatti, 1988). On the contrary, Collian goals are quite different: indeed, it is precisely the disappearance of the instance of subjectivity that makes possible a philosophy based on the strongest sense of truth, that is, a form of epistemic thought.¹³ Therefore, Colli writes: 'If the inconsistency of the subject is proved, or at least that the subject is not a fixed or final term, it can no longer be said that the suppression of the subject implies the suppression of the world, and generally the solipsistic thesis will fall' (RE 370a).

According to Colli, subjective inconsistency testifies to the truth of the world, which reveals its own incontrovertibility, its own absolute (and not post-modern) character. In other words, Colli aims to recover the authentic sense of truth, not to demolish it: consequently, he tends to suppress the subject's perspective, which reduces the reality of truth to its own object, mediating, objectifying and denying immediacy. If the history of philosophy has led to the theses of modern philosophers on subjectivity, philosophy itself must be overcome and 'unmasked'. In this regard, Colli maintains, 'the death of philosophy, precisely in so far as its lying nature is exposed, clears the field for wisdom' (DN, p. 82). In other words, Colli aims to reconstruct the authentic sense of rationality, of the *ἐπιστήμη*; he does not want to give up logic, the *λόγος*. Thus the logic of which the subject is a figure can be maintained if it is rethought as an expression of something else (like the subject as such): thus considered, rationality is admitted, and not nihilistically questioned, as happens in post-modern philosophies.

¹³ Colli, in DN p. 175, defines the paradox of the truth, according to which the truth cannot (rather than *must* not) be said, but at the same time it is maintained as such: 'Only the one who is truthful is defined by the truth. But those who know the truth "cannot" say it, because it would sin against life, they would reject it. It is a conflict between the duty to tell the truth and the duty – or the pleasure – of affirming life. [...] This truth is not hideous, because the predicate only indicates a reaction of our empirical subject to a certain knowledge, that is not conditioned by it'.

Philosophy, the subject, its rationality: all this has only a partial, determined value, conditioned by something else: ‘A two-faced figure belongs to reason, which is an extreme expressive tip, an inexhaustible impulse of exploration, albeit unilateral, in life’ (FE, p. 172). As the subject is only empirical, its rationality is purely ‘spurious’ (Ibid., p. 162). Actually, according to Colli, philosophy must ultimately recover its character of greatness, it must return to thinking the absolute truth (immediacy), without renouncing it, and rather renouncing the subjective philosophical perspectives: philosophy must recover its own wisdom, not accept the end of its grand narratives.

Indeed, wisdom is the essence, the source of philosophy, which cannot be grasped by subjectivity’s philosophical outlook: wisdom is described by Colli as the knowledge of the real structure of truth, i.e. as the insight into the extra-subjective essence of reality. According to Colli, ancient wisdom had correctly understood the relational value of reason and subjectivity, as opposed to their (modern) autonomy. They express another that they cannot represent or determine: ‘The latter understood reason as a simple “discourse” on something else, a *logos* (subject and object together) whose nature is to express something different from itself. This origin was then forgotten, we no longer understand this allusive function of reason, expressive in a metaphysical sense, and we consider “speech” as if it had an autonomous value, as if it were the mirror, the perfect equivalent of an idea or an object therefore called rational, or even an independent substance itself’ (FE, pp. 183-84).

These elements indelibly mark Colli’s distance from any post-modern thought. Hence, one could ultimately note that Colli moves between modern and post-modern thought, without embracing either: both were unable to think the truth, the origin of wisdom, which must be admitted (as is maintained by modern philosophers, not by post-modernism) without assuming any subjectivity (as claimed by post-modern philosophers): finally, wisdom can be recovered by investigating the origins of philosophical thought, in antiquity (not modernity).¹⁴

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¹⁴ Colli argued about the need to recover the ultimate essence of Ancient thought in *Nascita della filosofia* (1975). Moreover, the Collian perspective in *Nascita della filosofia* is widely critical of Nietzschean philosophy.

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