

Capítulo  
**9**

**THE SOUTH WITHOUT  
GREECE. DRAFTS FOR  
A MESTIZO SOCRATIC  
MAIEUTICS**

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“But the people always have beliefs”  
(Armando Poratti. *Ancient thought and its shadow*)

## ABSTRACT

Rodolfo Kusch adopts the form of the draft for his American philosophical anthropology. Following this drafted form, we will explore the possibility of a mestizo Socratic maieutics in the figure of the teacher from Lake Titicaca, as conceptualized by Kusch. This exploration can be summarized in a threefold movement: the binary separation of mythos and logos; the dialectic of the explainer and the incapable that Modernity inherited from Greece; and the imperative to think of América Profunda outside the influence of Greece and the Western project. In this tripartite movement, we will gather clues from two Kushian drafts: a teacher who is neither wise nor ignorant but placed; and an América Profunda resistant to the ideas of purity inherited from Greece.

## 1. DRAFTING

A draft is meant to be left behind, to be denied or to be refined; it is meant to be multiple and open. One might think that the opposite of a draft is a theory, in the sense that a draft is, by definition, imprecise, indefinable, a reduced figure, and full possibility. The essential condition of a draft is its provisional nature, more similar to the materiality of a notebook than to the rigor of a genre. In *La Crisálida* (2001), González hypothesizes two paths of thought, “which are like surplus values of reflective living: *metamorphosis* and *dialectics*” (p.18). Thinking through metamorphosis takes the form of myth, the cyclical times of nature, and the animal series in their ungraspable, mutable, protean forms. The figures of dialectics, on the other hand, are the result of a thought that collects “from its own action the dross of negativity that it itself has left behind along the way” (ibid.). Metamorphosis “is the thought of the larva” (ibid.: 19) made up of articulations, passages, and transfusions. The ideal of dialectics takes the form of the concept. Metamorphosis resembles the legends of *mythos*; dialectics resembles the reason of *logos*, its truth, and its idea.

It could be thought that the opposite of *drafting* is *theorizing*, in the sense of the imprecision characterizing a draft, its wanderings, its permanent back-and-forth, its constant return to what is written, drafting over the draft, marginal notes, headers, crossings out. It could be thought that the opposite of a *draft* is an *idea*: the idea is always

one, identical to itself and true; the draft, in contrast, is always ready to return to itself, to be put on, taken off, redone.

It could be thought that once completed, philosophy is without drafts. It could be thought that in its origins as dialogue or in its rigorous system—Platonic or Aristotelian—the love of wisdom is always more than a mere draft. Yet, philosophy is born from stories, anecdotes, and illustrious lives that were told, heard, and repeated; philosophy is entirely born from broken pieces, gestures, and fragments, all of it born from drafts (*cf.* Cassin, 2013: 17-40).

Rodolfo Kusch chooses the forms of the “draft” for his American philosophical anthropology (1978); the draft emerges “from the full silence of popular discourse”, is based “on the absence of knowledge,” and is located “on the margins of the problem of a definition” (9).

There are three major drafted notes in Kusch’s works that we resume here: *América Profunda* assumes the larval thought of metamorphosis; *América Profunda* considers itself denied and non-dialectizable; *América Profunda* “thinks by making grow: it believes in vegetality” (Kusch, 1976: 33). In the attempt to conceive a Socratic maieutics without Greece, we agree with Kusch on these drafts.

## 2. WORD AND WORD

In the beginning, *mythos* and *logos*—storytelling and reason—both meant “word.” Initially, both terms meant “word” (Poratti, 2000). At the outset, there was no distinction between the truth of reason and the tales of belief. At the beginning, the world was woven from mouth to ear, it was woven in the thread of storytelling. Beliefs were sung between the spoken word and the ear; these were beliefs from the muse to the poets, from the poets to the elderly, from the elderly to the younger, from the maids to the children. Beliefs were passed from mouth to ear at the outset.

In the beginning, there were no concepts, only wild and absurd stories about the origins of the world, the beginnings of humanity, the sun, and the stars; in the beginning, there were no demonstrations, only infamous narrations of incestuous, adulterous, and thieving gods; at the beginning of time, the soul was within the body, and there were cannibals, blood, and rebirths; in the beginning, there was no dialectic or idea,

only bodies and metamorphoses; the pre-truth beginning was made up of myths, beliefs, and stories (cf. Detienne: 1985).

Before the *logos* became *reason*, truth did not yet exist, and words could not be false. Thus, myth revealed the world, and the word of the mythical narration was a giver of meaning, an effective word, the creator of life barely repeated from mouth to ear. Myth is “a word that reveals the world and establishes the truth, and it is also *an effective, powerful word* [...] revelation and (re)creation of the world” (Poratti, 2000: 19). At the beginning of time, words could not be false, and therein lies all the magic of the story: “myth is not an answer to anything because there is no prior question” (*ibid.*); it is not the *explanation* forged by a man facing an incomprehensible world, but rather the very *installation* into the landscape of the world. The mythical word is both narration and action simultaneously; it is the tale itself, the characters, and the belief.

In the beginning, before learned reason, there is no ignorance because there is no falsehood, and therein lies the magic of the story: there is no explanation; *the world is as it is*, and man is installed in the world. Before *logos* with its *rational being*, the world appears without explanation, without demonstration, a world full of actions, of men, of gods.

At the beginning of time—when there was still no reason and no truth—belief is knowledge, man is installed in the landscape of the world, word is meaning, meaning is truth, and truth is belief, and belief is knowledge. In the times of legends, at the beginning, there is the “I believe,” “the world is as it is,” “this is how the world is”; before “I think” is “I believe”; before affirmation and negation, there are the favorable and the unfavorable at the beginning, before cogitation, there is always belief; before concepts, there are the living and the dead; the lake is before the theorem (cf. Kusch: 1975).

*Logos* (Greece-West) can only appear in a fissure of reality that establishes the unanswered question: what is the world? what is it? is it? what is *being*?, thereby establishing in the question itself the search for an answer and its verb: *being*, risking the loss of meaning in the search for a gain of principle—identity, non-contradiction, an excluded third party. Thus, Greece itself emerges from the rupture of myth, from the powerful Reason that distances itself from the world, from the theory that is uninstalled from the landscape: the word distanced from action, revelation turned *explanation*, manifestation bent upon itself, reflexive, demonstrative, represented.

Then, the oral word loses effectiveness and myth turns into incredibility, into a fable, into an old wives' tale. With the death of myth, ignorance is born, along with the need for truth, the question at a distance, reason and its explanatory turn, great science with its great evidence, and the small word with its enormous patience, knowledge separated from belief, and beliefs always below science.

*Logos*—also a word—in a “false rescue operation, was not only subordinated and appropriated; worse, it subjected myth to a process of vampirization and drained its substance” (Poratti, 2000: 16). Thus, the idea of truth is born, a singular truth, truth as an idea; then, the things of the world begin to be false, and the world is no longer as it was, and affirmation becomes primary; first, there is the “I think,” cogitation nullifies belief, and the concept always precedes the living and always precedes the dead.

In spite of all reason, the people hold beliefs; in spite of everything, the world is as it is, and “as a backdrop, there is a larger plane where the archetypal predominates and where the subject feels, although he no longer understands, the truth” (Kusch, 1975: 50).

### 3. THE INVENTION OF IGNORANCE

At the beginning of time, when falsehood did not yet exist, *mythos* and *logos* both meant “word.” Initially, man is installed in the landscape and believes what he tells, and what he tells is what he believes, and what he believes is what he knows, and he knows what he tells; thus, myth and *logos* are indistinguishable, both being words and both true. But this changes; then, the question arises: What is the world? What is it? Is it? What is *being*? Then comes the distance between the world and being, then comes the “who” that declares what the world is—and also what the world is not. Then, the distanced truth is born, and man distances himself from the world to approach truth, and *mythos* becomes the opposite of *logos*, word against word: reason beyond narrative, idea beyond belief, concept beyond action, true idea and the great turn to the beyond of the idea. With *logos*, Greece and its detour were born.

After the beginning, when *logos* is no longer myth, there is falsehood, there is the world *here* and the truth *beyond*; it is then that we arrive “at the very heart of the problem of truth, at the explicit true-false opposition: children’s tales, seen in the serious framework of their function in *paideia*” (cf. Plato, 1998: 377a5-6); it is then that myths are divided into true myths (*logos*) and false myths (*myths*), into truths and old wives’

tales. Then, the effective word begins to separate itself from the concept, like a false fable that runs incomprehensibly in a disintegrating rumor, action begins to separate itself from abstraction, and narration from idea; false belief remains below, while truth stands above, always beyond, and above that, knowledge. Then, Myths become nothing more than old fictions without any foundation, repulsive stories of the world of the dead, absurd or monstrous fables, irrational stories of primitive men, false beliefs of villagers. A whole vocabulary to tell the false scandalous, the myth “proliferates with ignorance, swells with passions, [...] crude fables of the Greeks” (Detienne, 1985: 15).

With *logos* established, reason was invented, and with reason, ignorance. Plato condemns Homeric culture as a *paideia* provoking emotions and feelings, triggering beliefs, “a cultural system [...] transmitted through the mouth and ear, musically executed and memorized with the help of rhythmic forms” (ibid.: 35). With the rupture of the myth, the word is separated from the letter, and myths are condemned as charming fictions, producing auditory vertigo, incoherent, false, inauthentic. Truth is like the letter: eternally carved, perennial, with the rhythm of its own silence; falsehood, in contrast, is like a breath of the voice, a fleeting song condemned to repetition, variation, and inevitable transformation of versions, noises, echoes, and hearing.

Plato condemns the falsehood of Homeric myths in his *Republic* as “children’s tales” with all their *paideia* of beliefs; yet it is Plato himself who communicates his highest truths with a myth – for the highest truths are as indemonstrable as any belief is indemonstrable. Then, the Greek mark of the detour is made: on the one hand, false myths linked to the orality of the peoples; on the other, *Platonic myths* that convey the truth of the idea. And although in the end ideas are also sealed in the soul by the narrative force of some story, the distinction is made: on the one hand, truth and knowledge; on the other, old believers with their old stories.

In his *Republic*, Plato invents the cave. In his cave, he seals the knowledge of the wise man and the blind ignorance of the prisoner. Education in the *Republic* is a narrative of souls, souls that saw what prisoners must also come to see by virtue of the souls they do not yet know they have; it must be explained to the prisoners that the world is not what they see, so trapped in their puppet theater, it must be explained to them that the world is what Socrates sees; it is necessary to harmonize “citizens by persuasion or *by force*” (Plato, 1998: 519e). On the one hand, the wise; on the other, the blind. Here is the foundational myth of pedagogy, the tale of a world divided into wise men above and prisoners below, enlightened men to the north and blind men to the south, souls and corporeal men, kings and cavemen, ignorant wise men and ignorant slaves. Here

is the invention of ignorance in its “double inaugural gesture” (Rancière, 2002: 8), the wise man throwing the veil of ignorance that he will later lift, the wise man sealing the prisoner’s shackles before convincing him of the sun outside. The double inaugural gesture of the pedagogical myth is also a political act where Plato sustains the story based on Hesiodic myth of classes: gold, silver, bronze, preventing mixing, “and even if their own children are born with a mixture [...] estimating the value appropriate to their natures, they will throw them among artisans or farmers” (Plato, 1998: 415c). The myth that ends up closing the chains: artisans to crafts, so it is and so it will be, for the same were your parents before as you are now and as your children will be later. Finally, at the beginning there are castes, there lies all the difference between learned ignorance and poor blindness. Myth upon myth to seal in the soul the condemnation of being in the ignorance below, with shackles and chains.

## 4. EXPLAINING TO DOMINATE

When *logos* is separated from *mythos*, knowledge remains *beyond*, outside the cave. When the word of reason is opposed to the words of belief, the world is divided into two places: the *hereafter* of the shadows and the *beyond* of science. When *logos* is separated from *mythos*, binary logic prevails: in the metaphysical reason of absolute being or absolute non-being; in the epistemological reason of knowledge and belief; in the political reason of the *here below* in the cave and the *there above* outside; in the pedagogical reason that divides intelligence into “inferior” and “superior,” the intelligence of the wise explainer and that of the “young child and the common man” (Rancière, 2002: 9).

When binary logic prevails, intelligence becomes the property of the “wisest, most educated, and most well-intentioned” (ibid.), intelligence is the property of the teacher, that benevolent master who shows a slave how the truth of a theorem should be articulated. The Meno illustrates that even the most unrefined individual can acquire understanding when guided by the explanation of a skilled, midwife-like teacher. Between the Socratic ignorant wise man and the poor slave stands the *explanation*—an extraordinary mechanism of domination inherited from the ruins of the Athenian empire.

In the Meno, Socrates states the thesis that “learning is recollection” (Plato, 2000b: 81e); immediately, his interlocutor Meno demands an *explanation* of the thesis (ibid.: 82a). Socrates must demonstrate to Meno—because within binary logic, truth is

demonstrated—that the soul always retains knowledge, but it only comes to light through the techniques of a good midwife-like teacher. From there, the dialogue becomes exemplary as it illustrates in a single stroke both the Socratic maieutics as a technique of deceit and explanation as an art of folding: putting to remove, casting the veil of ignorance only to lift it; the Socratic maieutics in its double inaugural gesture, Socrates throwing the veil of ignorance that he will later lift, checking the prisoner's shackles before showing him the wall with its shadow puppets, the Socratic maieutics in all its trickery and *explanation* in all its literalness as the art of pulling out to create folds. Meno asks for an *explanation* of the thesis, and the scene begins: “call one of these many attendants of yours, whichever you like, that I may prove it to you in his case” (ibid.: 82b). Meno asks for an explanation and Socrates demands a slave; he demands a slave to *properly explain*; he needs an incapable person to demonstrate the thesis; he needs the ignorant slave for the deployment of his learned ignorance.

Meno's slave is the crux of Socrates' demonstration; Meno's slave is the crux of Plato's explanation. But even more, slavery is always the crux of the explanation when truths are absolute, when walls are condemned to shadows and servants to shackles. Socrates asserts that knowledge is recollection, Meno asks for explanations of the thesis, and Socrates asks for a slave to demonstrate how the truth of a theorem nests, even in the souls of beasts. If the beast knows the Pythagorean theorem, then the truth is demonstrated: through the slave, the statement that “knowledge is recollection” shows itself from top to bottom and from bottom to top (that is all that *demonstrating* is). The important thing, however, is not that the beast knows the theorem, but that a slave is the proof of the demonstration game between master Meno and teacher Socrates. I do not know if there is a better example of the demonstration of higher truth through the body of the inferior; I do not know if there is a more explicit example than the moment Socrates demands a slave to stage the demonstration that knowledge is eternal.

*Explanation* as a tool of domination shows that absolute truths have owners, that the end point of explanation is the absoluteness of truth but its starting point is always inequality. The logic of explanation is the dialectic of the explainer and the incapable, the wise ignorant man and the poor slave, the masters and the beast; “this incapacity provides the structuring fiction of the explicative conception of the world” (Rancière, 2002: 8).



If explanation constitutes the very principle of subjugation, then the teacher's audacity cannot consist in illustrating reason but in opposing "the reason of equals to the society of contempt" (Corradini: 2008). This "society of equals" that Rancière speaks of is the opacity of the dialectic of the explainer and the incapable, as a just reverse of the Socratic maieutics of deceit invented by early Greek enlightenment and repeated in every program of West rational declaration. Modernity is heir to the Greek enlightenment; explanation is heir to the Socratic maieutics; the long history of demonstration carries with it the relentless demand for a servant.

## 5. THE GREECE EFFECT AND THE WESTERN PROJECT

The slave's body as a stage for demonstrating the idea: that is the Greece effect. The Greece effect refers to the legitimizing recurrence of the Western project, with Greece as the original and constitutive source of the system of rationality that prevails over the Western *Weltanschauung*. The Greece effect is the recourse to Greece as a universal validation device for the consciousness of the Modern West, the validation of a system of rationality turned into a historical projection of human civilization. Greece symbolizes the superior origin of Europe's superior destiny, serving as the anchor of authority that validates hegemonic projection: "world history projecting hegemonic Europe [...] to the origin of Greek culture [...] with claims of a world-historical explanation" (Dussel, 2007: 380).

The Greece effect is the official history of Modernity, philosophical modernity as tributary to the Europeanizing political project; it is Europe conceived in Hegel's mind, it is Anglo-Saxon America – heir to Europe – tasked with completing the realization of what has already been consummated and thought, hypothesizing a (North) America as "the country of the future" (Hegel, 1980: 177). The Greece effect is Modernity of the *universal*, the *totality*, the *spirit*, the *reason*, the *absolute*; all tributaries to the vampirizing *Logos* of beliefs. The Greece effect is colonialism and imperialism, but it is also metaphysics, that formidable legacy of the *theory of being*. It is the project of denying America and Africa, the project of America and Africa as *useful geographical bases* for the history of the philosophy of history, but it is also the metaphysical tradition as an essential part of the costs of that dialectic, it is the tradition of official exegetes repeating the dialectic of the explanatory master, enlightened by Greece and its Hegelian midwife.

The slave's body as a stage for demonstrating the idea: that is the Greece effect. Europe cannot think without Greece, América Profunda must. In her already classic work *Hegel, Haiti and Universal History* (2013), Susan Buck-Morss sets a precedent by showing us the body of the slave resisting in the demonstration of the idea. She shows us that the body of the Hegelian dialectic is not the body of the French Revolution but the body of black Haitians. She also shows us the hard work of cultured exegesis in the concealment of the body. Read from the reality of Haiti, Latin America steps out of the Greece effect and the Western project and finds freedom in what "the West never wanted to justify [...] the residue, the mass, the Indian, the proletarian" (Kusch, 1999: 123).

The slave's body as a stage for demonstrating the idea: that is the Greece effect. Europe cannot think without Greece, América Profunda must. To think without Greece means approaching the Socratic maieutics not from the perspective of the midwife's science but from the pained body of the birthing woman. If ideas are born, the distance between the Socratic maieutics and American maieutics is the distance between the reason of the midwife and the contractions of the birthing woman. "Have you not heard that I am the son of a midwife, brave and burly?", Socrates asks Theaetetus (Plato, 2000a: 148ff.) before beginning his well-known development of the "art of midwifery" as a method. Socrates himself can no longer give birth but has the techniques for good delivery: stimulating labor, easing it, reducing suffering, and facilitating abortion if necessary. The Theaetetus is a dialogue about what knowledge is, who possesses it, and the legitimacy of its transmission. The Theaetetus is Greek illustration and Socratic technique. If ideas are born, the distance between the Socratic maieutics and American maieutics is the distance between the process of assisting in birth and the act of giving birth and being birthed by the same force.

"Haiti is at the beginning of a free Latin America," says Diego Tatián at the Universidad Nacional de Córdoba during the ceremony where the *France Annex* pavilion of the Faculty of Arts is renamed the *Republic of Haiti*. The ceremony on August 21, 2013 is an academic symbol against the learned ignorance of concealment. The Haitian Revolution is the "opaque" dimension of the French Revolution, the blacks outside of history forcing the French Revolution to be consistent with its principles of *universal* freedom, which had the color black as its limit (Grüner: 2010). Read from the reality of Haiti, Latin America steps out of the Greece effect and its Western project and finds freedom in the bodies with which the West has been demonstrating the truth of its dialectic.

## 6. CLEAR AND CONFUSED

Read from the reality of Haiti means stepping away from the modern project and its Greek Enlightenment origins; it means exercising the practice of thinking beyond *La casa del ser*, disrupting the origin, and acknowledging the opacity of the flame. If Socratic maieutics is the path to the being of good, truth, and beauty, then thinking from what the West denies is finding the common home in the cave, seeing oneself on the wall and in the shadow puppets. Haiti is the cursed and stinking version of the French Revolution, and that is precisely why it is the path to freedom for Latin America.

Maieutics is a clean birth, it is the soul, it is the number, it is the idea, it is a birth with no holes, it is the birth of the idea for the midwife; maieutics is the “clear knowledge”: reason, the soul, the idea. Read from the reality of Haiti is reading the truth from the slave of Meno, reading the theorem from the body of the demand and not from the demonstration of the idea. Thus, “here, we confront reason” (Kusch, 2007: 572). Read from the reality of Haiti is colliding with reason, confronting the fact that “if clear knowledge says that two plus two equals four, confused knowledge will give another result” (id.). Read from the reality of Haiti is confronting the violence of Greece and the violence of its origin of being, identity, and idea. “Life disturbs the rigor of numbers” (id.). Haiti is the stinking and cursed version of the French Revolution, the dark that nestles in the light of the midwife. Philosophy read from the reality of Haiti is not a matter of demonstration but a problem of liberation. Reading Hegel from Haiti is seeing the darkness in Minerva’s owl, wisdom encoded in the resistance of the night, not in the flight of the morning (cf. Kusch, 1975: 81).

Thinking from Haiti is practicing Latin American thought, a philosophy that begins on American soil, deep, a philosophy of being, a mestizo ontology. If official thought is born with the being “that is and that it is not possible not to be” (Parmenides: 2.3), then we must think outside the official canon, where our “roots are found in the deepest non-being, in short, in being” (Kusch, 1976: 155). If official philosophy is born from the imposition of “saying and thinking that by the mere act of *being, one is*” (Parmenides: 6.1), then we must step away from the official canon and from our own language: we must step away from the official being through the possibility of staying in our own language, moving beyond ‘in being, one is’ to ‘in remaining, being endures. (Kusch: 1975). If official philosophy is born from the imperative of “judging by reason (logos)” (Parmenides: 7.5), we must move away from prevailing reason and move through our soil, our myths, our stories. If maieutics is the light of clear reason and certain truth,

we must read from Haiti, ground ourselves, and seek out Greece's cursed and stinking version, "affirm that we are beggars and start from there" (Kusch, 1975: 109), start from our own lack. Meno's slave exemplifies the maieutic method, the slave functional to the demonstration of the truth of the theorem.

Europe thinks through Socrates, but not Latin America. "And the student? [...] in the name of Parmenides [...] in the name of Pythagoras [...]", every time the disciple is thought of in the name of being and in the name of number, every time the disciple is invoked in the name of demonstration, we continue to think in the European way, thinking through Socrates and his midwife lucidity with all knowledge "conceived as a pyramid, where being is at the top and America is at the bottom" (Kusch, 2007: 567). For Socratic maieutics, knowledge is recollection—recollection that we can know if we are lucky enough to have a good master—Socratic maieutics and the pyramid of recollection: at the top is being and at the bottom is America.

If Europe cannot think without Socratic maieutics, deep America must. "We must think like that sphere mentioned by Parmenides, which resembled divinity [...] but we are closer to a soccer ball" (id.). It is not the demonstration that matters; what is important is the previous life, "all that previous life, from the neighborhood, the one that one drags with oneself weighs so much that it is difficult to describe it as the light being" (ibid.: 567-8). Parmenides says that being is like a sphere, equidistant from its center; "Parmenides did not know what he was saying. Being is not spherical but scrawny and lean" (ibid.) Is the scrawny and lean illuminable? Can there be a maieutics that starts and ends with the slave, a scrawny and lean maieutics carrying "a dense life, dragged daily from childhood to death" (ibid.)? Can there be a neighborhood maieutics, a soccer ball maieutics, a maieutics of the popular?

Maieutics is the method of a spherical being like truth, equidistant from its center, "necessary," "identical to itself," "continuous," "complete everywhere," "homogeneous," "unbegotten and incorruptible," "total," "unique," "immobile within the limits of great chains," "without lack" (Parmenides: 8). The "lean being," on the other hand, resembles less a sphere and more "the globe we use in school or a soccer ball" (Kusch, 2007: 576); the "lean being" is "the dark suspicion that for life, it could not be so" (ibid.: 572). Clear knowledge is the knowledge of things that "are grasped," the knowledge of having, the knowledge that demands a slave for its demonstration. Confused knowledge, on the other hand, is the knowledge that "life disturbs the rigor of numbers" (ibid.). Clear knowledge is the maieutics of things that one has—like a slave or a theorem—while confused knowledge is always about "attaching darkness to light" (ibid.), the knowledge of being and lack.

## 7. THE MASTER OF LAKE TITICACA

“To see things wisely consists in attaching darkness to light” (ibid.), life to numbers, stories to reasons; knowledge consists in knowing, “in the name of Parmenides, that the student brings with him a dense life from his neighborhood,” and it consists in knowing, “in the name of Pythagoras, that he cannot shake off life” (ibid.: 568). “Attaching darkness to light” means to make life collide with reason, where “if two plus two equals four in mathematics, the wise man adds the dark suspicion that in life this could not be so” (ibid.: 573). “Attaching darkness to light” is to bring the street into the classroom, because “we are lucid in the classroom but dark in the street, subversively dark” (ibid.: 574). “Attaching darkness to light” means to remember that old stories give substance to reason and ideas. “Attaching darkness to light” is a declaration of validity of life and beliefs in the processes of knowledge.

In *Un maestro a orillas del lago Titicaca* (ibid.: 187-193), Kusch presents a version of the Socratic maieutics from the depths of America. “Someday that teacher will have to teach the Pythagorean theorem” (ibid.: 191); someday the master of Lake Titicaca—like Socrates in the *Meno*—will also have to teach the Pythagorean theorem. Kusch wonders why teach the Pythagorean theorem, “why teach anything else”; it is about “attaching darkness to light.” Every lesson, every “thing else” taught is a new validation of life and beliefs. The theorem is taught “to round off what the students already know about the lake, what they need to live alongside it” (ibid.). All accumulative knowledge—even mathematical and its theorems—is taught to reinforce belief, the immensity of numbers to reinforce the immense lake. What few know is taught to strengthen what we all already know: “Everyone knows the lake. No one knows Pythagoras. The lake is immense and Pythagoras is small” (ibid.: 192); we must not forget this. Teaching is “attaching darkness to light,” the sacredness of the lake to the truth of the theorem.

Why teach the theorem? The theorem is useless without the pampa outside: the lake for the Bolivian, the pampa for the Argentine, the street for the classroom, “symbols of what? Of the deepest part of our soul” (ibid.: 191).

“The truth of things is in our soul,” says Socrates (Plato, 2000b: 86b); knowledge is recollection, through the soul, of the truth. “The legend lives in the souls,” says Kusch (2007: 189), and to know is to reinforce legends, to strengthen our souls with the stories that spring from the ground: the lake, the pampa, the street. The Socratic maieutics is the fine work of separating truth from legends.

Philosophy is the heir of Plato, even on this side of America, we are heirs to the fine work of separation between an external truth and our old legends; “this is the problem of teaching” (ibid.: 192): we trust less in the lake than in the theorem, we bet on a truth without belief, we forget that one only learns in order to be able to inscribe one’s life in the landscape. It is necessary to return to the beginning, because knowing is not a matter of demonstration but of installation on the ground.

The lake, the pampa, the sidewalk of our street, the neighbors’ houses, the nearest underpass, the avenue two blocks away—“pieces of our intimacy, we live immersed in a landscape” (ibid.: 191). The master of Lake Titicaca teaches that knowledge is useless if it does not inscribe itself in the pieces of our lives; if Pythagoras does not become the lake, then the theorem is useless. The theorem is simpler than the lake, “it is much easier to build a rocket than to do what the master did: round off the lives of his students simply with what they needed to continue alongside the lake” (ibid.: 193). “The theorem is simpler than the lake”; in one sentence, Kusch gets out of Greece. The theorem is simpler than the lake because the theorem is explainable and the lake is not. Everything explainable is less than any piece of life, and based on this recognition, we should remember that the demonstration of the Meno is only possible through its servant. “Attaching darkness to light,” returning to the lake because of the theorem is moving beyond explanation, an extraordinary mechanism of domination inherited from the ruins of the Athenian empire.

The accumulation of knowledge and the cult of technique is the psychosis of our century, “whose evident symptom is the rocket” (ibid.). But in the rocket, there is no room for everyone. On the shores of Lake Titicaca remain those who will always be excluded from the rocket, in the lake, in the pampa, in the street, the art of childbirth “is to find a law for that human mass that will not go on the interplanetary rockets and that must stay and continue, committed to its miserable being here” (Kusch, 1999: 123).

In his *The Ignorant Schoolmaster*, Rancière (2002) indicates that any ignorant person can teach with whatever they have memorized: a prayer, a song, anything from memory, something, one always has a legend. This piece of life is the thread of knowledge. Teaching through pieces of life, “this Socratic maieutics without trickery” (Rancière, 2017: 84) resembles the story of the amautas who taught their students about their land and beliefs using strings, to which they added knots, the *quipus*: each knot represents a word or an idea, each knot corresponds to a thing. “On the one hand, there was a sign, on the other, a piece of life that corresponded to it” (Kusch, 2007: 192). Life validates knowledge, not the other way around.

## 8. COMMON WORD AND BIG WORD

We are heirs of Greece and still believe in the light of its Socratic maieutics. The midwife's work begins with a question, with her own question, expecting the interlocutor to answer the question of the midwife-like teacher. In the Socratic maieutics, the interlocutor's answer does not matter; what matters is the teacher, the Socratic maieutics as an exercise of always enlightening the teacher in any birth. The Socratic maieutics is the game of questions designed to show that anyone who decides to enter the game with the rules of their beliefs will fall into error, will need the explanation of the good teacher, and will ultimately exchange their beliefs for the teacher's truth. We inherited from Greece the shame of contradiction and redemption of explanation.

In his monumental work on the history of ancient philosophy, Guthrie, when explaining the Socratic maieutics, refers to the "controlled experiment with the slave Meno" (1994: 424), highlighting as a virtue of the teacher the fact of not providing all the answers to the interlocutor-servant, allowing the other to enter into contradiction slowly and consciously. We inherited from Greece the modesty of contradiction, the need for explanation, and the enlightenment of the teacher.

The Socratic maieutics is built upon an initial question of the type: "What is this?" The Socratic maieutics responds to a "white logic" that determines: "this is," points out causes, demands verifications, and ends in science (Kusch: 1978). In his philosophical drafts, Kusch calls this logic of causes as a "common word"; but there is also the "big word", which escapes determinations and cannot be defined, marking some piece of life: "the great word [...] contains the indefinite why of living itself" (8).

We are guilty of continuing to explain ourselves from Greece, "it is the guilt that hangs over our cultured discourse. It is the guilt of having concealed the knowledge that the great word says" (ibid.), even our silence is skeptical and guilty, the "silent muteness of our cultured knowledge that has lost contact with its content" (ibid.). Our Socratic maieutics is heir to cultured thinking and its logic of instruments, "its logic of [...] an affirmative and quantitative salvation [...] a salvation from this and that" (ibid.: 37f.). In addition, in Kusch's drafts, a birth is possible, but not starting from any question but from silence, from "the absence of knowledge [...] apart from the concern for a definition" (ibid.: 9). The Socratic maieutics on this side of America responds to a "black logic": the fall is not error but the negation of existence; it does not seek verification but salvation; salvation has nothing to do with the affirmation of "this is something," but is sustained

by symbols and stories. The Socratic maieutics in the depths of America reveals a symbolic horizon that guides. The Socratic maieutics on this side of America is a matter of existence. Kusch also attaches darkness to light; his black logic is also an exercise in enlightenment, a “meta-logic” that “also encompasses the truth of existence and [...] reiterates the same in all speakers” (ibid.: 7f.).

Kusch’s Socratic maieutics escapes from Greece because it is concerned with the lake rather than the theorem; it escapes from the Greece effect because it starts with the slave; the starting point of the Socratic maieutics on this side of America is to assume itself as denied and non-dialectizable. Kusch’s Socratic maieutics starts from the silence of the informants to reach belief, from the installation in the landscape of the world, from the beginning where there is “I believe,” “the world is as it is,” where there are the favorable and the unfavorable, where belief is knowledge, where the lake justifies the theorem.

Kusch’s black Socratic maieutics is the stinking and cursed version of Socratic maieutics, listening to the silence of those who *merely exist*, those who *are merely present*; it is the stinking and cursed version of Greek Socratic maieutics because it is not ashamed of contradiction nor concerned with verification, stinking and cursed because it knows that Pythagoras is lesser.

## 9. FURTHER THOUGHTS

When Kusch recounts his encounter with the teacher by the shores of Lake Titicaca, he begins the narrative with a city concern: his concern for evaluation, grading, numbers, knowledge, and a “test that implies evolution, progress, and also measures things—this is what is important” (2007: 188). Kusch begins the story by telling how he explained the teacher of the lake why knowledge validates life only if evaluation validates knowledge. Kusch says that he explained to the teacher of the lake the importance of measuring knowledge for people in Buenos Aires. He even insisted on sending “some test” to the teacher by the shores of Lake Titicaca. The teacher first listened and then smiled. Between the heavy “being” and the lean “essence,” Kusch was talking about the test. When the gods are gone, “there is nothing left but the number” (ibid: 568)—life validated by knowledge, and knowledge by the test.



“However, this teacher had *something else*. After all, being a teacher does not mean only knowing science and culture” (ibid.: 188). Kusch repeats that the teacher had “something else,” and repeats that the “lake is full of mysteries.” The lake encompasses the teacher; the “something else” of the teacher is the lake, with its mysteries and legends, mixed waters and gods, and the legendary feline, the luminous stone, and the Indian water—all *are* embodied in the teacher.

Kusch’s Socratic maieutics represents the stinking and cursed version of the Greek flame because being a teacher is not aligned with the question or the spoken word but with shared listening, with things that speak, with legends founded on shared hearing that the memory of generations has made homogeneous and present (Detienne: 1985). Kusch’s drafts escape Greece because they activate a memory of legends, they activate the memories of the beginning when the remembered word was always true, they activate the wise memories prior to the invention of ignorance, they activate the old tales where the lake justifies the theorem.

Kusch’s drafts free themselves from Greece because they come from the eye as the center of knowledge: evidence, point of view, perspective, discovery, verification, theory—these are all visual metaphors for knowledge. If the word “idea” derives from the verb *eido* (to see) and if “theory” contains *théa* (sight), Kusch deviates from the eyes to the ear. “While the subject of seeing is always given, [...] the subject of listening is always yet to come, spaced out, traversed, and summoned [...] sounded” (Nancy, 2007: 46).

“The day we teach our students a knowledge that is both clear and confused, we will have won heaven” (ibid.: 575). Attaching creation to metal to escape condemnation. Kusch’s Socratic maieutics is the stinking and cursed version of Greek flame because to the inaugural gesture that condemns metal and caste, to the myth of classes, Kusch presents the myth of creation down here in America, where it is not a matter of “just fulfilling the small duty, but of always assuming a bit of the creation of the world” (ibid.: 568), assuming the creation of the world from “the depths of the neighborhood and the depths of America. And that is so difficult. But such is the law of the gods. For otherwise, we would be but a mere sphere, but without life” (ibid.: 569). Attaching darkness to light is the task.

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