

***The cave (La caverna -1952-1969) by Josep Palau i Fabre:
theatre versus philosophical allegory in order both to perform and stop
the tragic and dark end of the bright art of thinking***¹

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Abstract: What is the use of representing in performance the image of the cave from book VII of Plato's *Republic*? Josep Palau i Fabre considers that in Plato's dialogues the speakers are mere instruments at the service of his dialectical purpose. The aim of this article is to show how, by turning the myth into a tragedy and relying on Heraclitus's conflict or war of opposites, the playwright succeeds in favouring a sort of thought which is not one-sided or univocal. On the contrary, in Palau i Fabre's *La Caverna*, the tragic hero, the released prisoner transformed by the light of Reality and finally killed by his "cavemates" –after having been imprisoned again and having tried to rescue them from their ignorance or shadows– still leaves them his powerful experience of the *agonistikós* thought, which might bear fruit in their life to come.

Key words: classical tradition, Plato's cave, allegory, Catalan theatre, Greek philosophy, tragedy,

The relationship between teachers and students has always been difficult and controversial because the noblest mission of the former is not to prolong the intellectual juvenility of the latter but to favour precisely the opposite process. The teachers are then very proud of having turned mere receivers of others' theories into true interlocutors who can expound and defend their own ideas, in other words, they are trained to think for themselves, thus not doomed to always learn from others. *The cave (La caverna)* by Palau i Fabre³ is obviously inspired by the well-known image in the first chapters of book seven of the *Republic* by Plato –one of his most significant dialogues– and we should not forget that the term "dialogue" speaks to us of the comings and goings of the word (*lógos*) through space (*diá*) among different interlocutors, supposedly endowed with the same intellectual level. However, in the Platonic text, Glaucon simply follows Socrates's suggestions, while the anonymous student in the drama by Palau i Fabre wants from the very beginning to reply to his personal Socrates, Mister Guilera. This teacher, complying with his student's request: 'Read me the story of the cave again' (*'Torni'm a llegir la història de La Caverna'*), finds the page in his book and says: 'Imagine the condition of our nature with regard to wisdom or ignorance, comparing it with a situation which is equivalent to what I'll explain to you' (*'Imagina la condició de la nostra naturalesa humana, en relació a la saviesa o la ignorància, comparant-la amb una situació equivalent a la que ara t'explicaré'*). The student must imagine, then, a group of men chained since childhood, shackled by their legs and necks... and reaches a first conclusion: 'They couldn't live that way' (*'No podrien pas viure així'*), so the

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³ Always according to the following edition: Josep Palau i Fabre, 2005, and the numbers in brackets refer to this edition.

teacher hastens to specify that ‘The story of the cave is an allegory’ (*‘La història de la caverna és una al·legoria’*) and, having been made to look up the term in the Fabra dictionary, the boy reads: ‘Allegory. Uninterrupted metaphor, clause or succession of clauses having a direct meaning and a figurative one’ (*‘Al·legoria. Metàfora continuada, proposició o seguit de proposicions que presenten un sentit directe i un altre de figurat’* -333).

I am not going to demonstrate now that the Platonic cave is an image (*eikón* > icon), as inferred from the first Greek term of the above mentioned chapters: *apeíkason*⁴. On a certain occasion⁵, I already warned of the inconveniences of avoiding the Athenian philosopher’s terms and opting instead for a wide and capricious range of alternatives : “allegory”, “myth”, “fable”, “parable”, “simile”, “analogy”, “comparison”. Palau i Fabre chooses to have his Teacher use the term “allegory”, but this trope implies that someone knows how to situate their mind beneath the literal meaning of a text that announces (*agoreúo*) another (*alla*) hidden meaning –which was called *hypónoia* by Plato and not allegory– so that, when he continues to read the “story-allegory” of the

⁴ 514a-517d: ‘Next’, said I, ‘compare (*ἀπέεικασον*) our nature in respect of education and its lack to such an experience as this. Picture (*ἰδέ*) men dwelling in a sort of subterranean cavern with a long entrance open to the light on its entire width. Conceive them (*ᾄρα*) as having their legs and necks fettered from childhood, so that they remain in the same spot, able to look forward only, and prevented by the fetters from turning their heads. Picture (*ἰδέ*) further the light from a fire burning higher up and at a distance behind them, and between the fire and the prisoners and above them a road along which a low wall has been built, as the exhibitors of puppet-shows have partitions before the men themselves, above which they show the puppets’. ‘All that I see’, he said. ‘See also, then, men carrying past the wall implements of all kinds that rise above the wall, and human images and shapes of animals as well, wrought in stone and wood and every material, some of these bearers presumably speaking and others silent’. ‘A strange image you speak of’, he said, ‘and strange prisoners’. ‘Like to us’, I said; for, to begin with, tell me do you think that these men would have seen anything of themselves or of one another except the shadows (*τὰς σκιάς*) cast from the fire on the wall (*προσπιπτούσας*) of the cave that fronted them?’ ‘How could they’, he said, ‘if they were compelled to hold their heads unmoved through life?’... ‘And if their prison had an echo from the wall opposite them, when one of the passers-by uttered a sound, do you think that they would suppose anything else than the passing shadow (*τὴν παριούσαν σκίαν*) to be the speaker?... such prisoners would deem reality to be nothing else than the passing shadows (*τὰς σκιάς*) of the artificial objects... When one was freed from his fetters and compelled to stand up suddenly and turn his head around and walk and to lift up his eyes to the light, and in doing all this felt pain and, because of the dazzle and glitter of the light, was unable to discern the objects whose shadows (*τὰς σκιάς*) he formerly saw... do you not think that he would be at loss and that he would regard what he formerly saw as more real than the things now pointed out to him?... And so, finally, I suppose, he would be able to look upon the sun itself and see its true nature, not by reflections in water or phantasms of it in an alien setting, but in and by itself in its own place... ‘Well then, if he recalled to mind his first habitation and what passed for wisdom there, and his fellow-bondsmen, do you not think that he would count himself happy in the change and pity them?’ ‘He would indeed’... ‘This image (*εἰκόνα*) then, dear Glaucon, we must apply as a whole to all that has been said, likening the region revealed through sight to the habitation of the prison, and the light of the fire in it to the power of the sun. And if you assume that the ascent and the contemplation of the things above is the soul’s ascension to the intelligible region, you will miss my surmise, since that is what you desire to hear. But God knows whether it is true. But, at any rate, my dream as it appears to me is that in the region of the known the last thing to be seen and hardly seen is the idea of good, and that when seen it must needs point us to the conclusion that this is indeed the cause for all things of all that is right and beautiful, giving birth in the visible world to light, and the author of light and itself in the intelligible world being the authentic source of truth and reason, and that anyone who is to act wisely in private or public must have caught sight of this’. ‘I concur’, he said, ‘so far as I am able’. ‘Come then,’ I said, ‘and join me in this further thought, and do not be surprised that those who have attained to this height are not willing to occupy themselves with the affairs of men, but their souls ever feel the upward urge and the yearning for that sojourn above. For this, I take it, is likely if in this point too the likeness of our image (*εἰκόνα*) holds’ -translated by Paul Shorey, Loeb Classical Library. London: William Heinemann Ltd. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1970.

⁵ See: Gilabert 2010.

cave that requires taking into account the “other meaning”, the Student should logically say then that he has already ‘understood’ (*entès*) and not ‘seen’ it –‘I see’ (*Ja ho veig!*’ -334)– exactly the same answer given by Glaucon⁶. In effect, Socrates has asked the latter to create on the intangible screen of his brain a mental image and, afterwards, to look at it as if he were contemplating a painting. Consequently, the answer is: ‘I see it’ (*ho veig*’ -*horô*, 514b7, a verb of physical perception). I insist on this because from the very beginning one notices a *décalage* between the Student and the Teacher. Indeed, for the former: ‘Everything in this allegory is like a theatre. This is perhaps the reason why I like it so much... Why don’t we have it performed instead of reading it?’ (*Tot és com un teatre, en aquesta al·legoria. Potser és per això que m’agrada tant... ¿Per què en lloc de llegir-la no ens la fem representar?*’), while the latter’s reply is: ‘Its goal is not to please but to make you think about it, don’t forget that... It’s impossible (to perform it)’ (*La seva finalitat no és la de plaure, sinó la de fer reflexionar, no ho oblidis... És impossible (representar-la)*’ -334). The Teacher, then, considers the Student a hedonist, which is certainly an unfair charge, because there is no reason to think that the goal or purpose (*télos*) of theatre or the stage arts in general is only to induce pleasure in the audience and not inspire their reflection. On the contrary, very probably this clever Student has already understood that, when a philosopher writes a dialogue and uses an image, he is very close to the art of “contemplation” (*theâsthai* > theatre), an excellent mixture of visual enjoyment and invitation to think, since we should never forget that for Socrates that ‘strange image’ (*átupon eikóna*) and those ‘strange prisoners’ (*desmótas atópous*) are ‘like us’ (*homoíous hemîn* -515a,4,5)⁷.

Free thinkers like the Student –and Palau i Fabre– detest what could be called “textual fundamentalism”, so it is not surprising that, when the boy and the Teacher read, the former dares to leave aside the Platonic script in order to update it: ‘I was updating it a bit’ (*Ho actualitzava una mica*). He introduces, then, expressions such as ‘My God’ (*Valga’m Déu*’ -335) or a serious reflection on the feelings of the released prisoner regarding his ancient “cavemates”: ‘Unless he had no heart, he’d pity them’ (*Per mica de cor que tingués, els compadiria*’), but the evident intellectual “sclerosis” of the latter leads to intransigence: ‘These aren’t Plato’s exact words... We haven’t come here to play. I don’t want you to abandon the text since it was you who asked for it’ (*Això no ho diu Plató... Aquí no hem vingut a jugar. No vull que et distreguis del text, perquè has estat tu mateix que l’ha sol·licitat*’). Therefore, in accordance with these rules, the *lógos* cannot go back and forth between one and the other (*diá*), it is not a “dialogue” (*diá-logos*) *stricto sensu*, nor can we consider real dialogues –according to the Student’s intelligent point of view– many of the works of the great idealist or ideocentric philosopher –except the so called Socratic dialogues: ‘Don’t you think that in Plato’s dialogues the interlocutors are mere instruments of his dialectical goal?’ (*¿No troba que els interlocutors de Plató són purs instruments de la seva finalitat dialèctica?*’). The Teacher’s answer is as poor as it is symptomatic: ‘Bear with it, even if you don’t like it. You wanted to start and now I want to finish’ (*Si no t’agrada, t’aguantes. Tu has volgut començar i ara jo vull acabar*’ -337).

“Instruments”: a key term to unmask the supposed goodness of the Platonic attitude, whose true nature, for instance, becomes quite clear in the erotic texts, when we realize

⁶ On Plato’s cave and its tradition and influence, see, e.g.: Miorelli, 2006; Smith, 2002, and Smythies, J. R., 1994.

⁷ “Dr Zubiri, on the first day of the lectures on Metaphysics at the university began to explain the myth of the cave. I saw immediately that it was worthy of being performed as a play” (“El Dr. Zubiri, el primer dia de classe de metafísica a la universitat va començar a explicar el mite de la caverna. De seguida vaig veure que allà hi havia una obra de teatre” -García 1993, p. 80).

that the beloved (*erómenos*) is a mere instrument or footbridge at the service of the lover (*erastés*) in order to reach the ideal world. I mention this not as a brief digression but in order to remember that “the lover and the beloved” –i.e. to love– have for Plato masculine gender, while to love a woman is nothing but a desire to procreate and perpetuate one's self through the children.

Well then, the Student in *The Cave* by Palau i Fabre finds Plato ‘very one-sided’ (*molt unilateral*), because his world ‘is exclusively masculine’ (*és exclusivament masculí*), and he does not accept that the Teacher should remind him that it is an allegory and that, ‘if you were to involve a woman, everything would become embroiled’ (*si aquí dins hi fiques una dona ja està tot enredat*). Fortunately, the boy neither believes this nor abandons his principles: ‘Not at all, everything would simply be different; the allegory would be seen from a different point of view’ (*El que hi ha és que tot fóra diferent, l'al·legoria canviaria de signe*). In fact, leaving theory aside, the Student finds everything quite clearer when it is ‘performed’ (*representat*). He demands a real contrast, a true dialectical tension between opposite poles –why not start with masculine/feminine?– and the performance makes us “see”, first, and “understand”, afterwards. He does not mind that the Teacher insists ‘This would be theatre and not philosophy’ (*Això fóra teatre i no filosofia*). In the end, if it is ‘a myth, an allegory... by following the same reasoning we can construe the performance’ (*un mite⁸, una al·legoria... pel mateix camí podem arribar a la representació*). ‘This wouldn’t be Plato’ (*Això ja no fóra Plató*), answers the Teacher, but the Student’s mind, which is free and loves theatre, does not give up: ‘On the contrary! It’d be taking the work to its logical conclusions. Didn’t Plato want to become a tragic poet? Don’t you realize that in the myth of the cave, he only got half way there?’ (*Al contrari! Seria dur-lo a les últimes conseqüències. ¿No volia ser un poeta tràgic, Plató? ¿No veu que en el mite de la caverna es va quedar a mig camí?*).

Palau i Fabre ends the prologue of his “tragedy” at this point. Yes, “Tragedy”, because instead of feeling overwhelmed –or made “an instrument of”, so to speak– by any text and its centuries-old tradition, the Student has decided that the dramatic genre perfectly well accepts being mixed together with Plato’s philosophy⁹. Indeed, the released prisoner in his text¹⁰, after having left behind a whole life in the dark contemplating the shadows or appearances of the cave, finally discovers the brilliant nature of things. Furthermore, this prisoner in *The Cave* by Palau i Fabre has a compassionate heart and, again imprisoned in the cave, will try to reveal the physical

⁸ The term “myth” appears now for the first time in Palau i Fabre’s text, without any sort of justification, but, as noted above, it has traditionally been one of the alternative terms for “image”.

⁹ Esteve Gau writes an article on Josep Palau i Fabre entitled precisely: “How tragedy is a constant in the work of...” (“De com la tragèdia és una constant en l’obra de...”): “We only need view the theatrical works by Josep Palau i Fabre to realize that this a mechanism for creation very similar to that used by the Greek authors. They spoke about myths and mythical situations known not only to them but also to the audience... JPF does the same, but his myths belong to European culture. The myth of Electra... the allegory of the Cave... are living and breathing myths in European culture and, therefore, in our own culture. All of them are deliberately used to speak, metaphorically or openly, about the social and political situation of the country, even about themes that directly concern the author” (“Només cal mirar el teatre de Josep Palau i Fabre per tal d’adonar-nos que estem davant un mecanisme de creació molt semblant al que usaven els autors grecs. Aquests parlaven de mites i de situacions mítiques conegudes tant per ells com per tots els espectadors... En JPF fa el mateix, però els seus mites són pertanyents a la cultura europea. Així ens hi trobem el mite d’Electra... l’al·legoria de la Caverna... són mites de constant vigència a la cultura europea i, per tant, a la nostra. Tots són agafats a consciència per tal de parlar, bé metafòricament, bé obertament, de la situació social i política del país o fins i tot de temes que toquen directament l’autor” -in Guillamon, 2000, pp. 155-56). See also: Coca 1991, 2000 i and 2003).

¹⁰ 515c6-517a6

and intellectual light to those who have not been so lucky as to have seen it. However, very ironically and tragically, he will die because of his noble action. Reading Plato's text again and again –that is, adjusting himself to the imperative *apeikason*– the Student 'has imagined everything very differently... I imagine' (*'anat imaginant tot molt diferent... Jo imagino'* -338-39).

Now the performance itself begins and we pass easily from philosophy to theatre. The first image shows us a terrace, "a big rocky place, with the mouth of a cave" (*"un gran roquissar, amb la boca d'una caverna"*). The dialectical tension between the Teacher and the Student reappears now in the opposition of the Old Guard/Young Guard who watch over the entrance of the cave. One of the prisoners is about to be released and the Young Guard guesses that it is in order to 'discharge him' (*'llicenciar-lo'*); he too counts in the end 'each day the days' (*'els dies cada dia'*) until he will be discharged and he does not understand that his mate does not want 'to go back home' (*'ganes de tornar a casa'*). For his part, the Old Guard, on the contrary, in spite of having worked there for ten years, cannot understand that the others constantly think about their discharge: he is perfectly content to wait for death, the 'absolute discharge' (*'Llicència absoluta'*), and regrets that 'You all clear off after having fulfilled the training period' (*'Tots guilleu després d'haver pagat l'aprenentatge'*). 'Or before becoming stupefied' (*'O abans d'embrutir-nos'*), replies the Young Guard, but his mate is convinced that in this life one must choose any form of brutality. For instance, he will always have the necessities of life and, even in case of war, he will live well: 'Women from time to time, money for tobacco and drinks, and good night! Our parents brought us into this world and we must pretend that we are enjoying ourselves' (*'Dones, de tant en tant, diner per al tabac i la beguda i bona nit! Els nostres pares ens van posar al món i hem de fer veure que ens hi divertim'* -340-42). Therefore, the two Guards are evidently "out of the cave" –and not "in the cave"– but, in spite of the sad conformism of the elder one, his last words show clearly that for human beings there are also outer, golden caves where they are pleased to remain whenever they are seduced by the real possibility of having a few possessions and an easy life. However, Palau i Fabre is preparing us to realize, at the end of his tragedy, that sclerotic thoughts, hardened by the rocklike nature of firm convictions –braced by genuine but invisible walls– are in great measure the origin of many human dramas.

In the second Picture one of the prisoners is taken out of the cave by force –how could he want to leave it if he never knew anything different? His new experience goes through four stages: 1) consternation; 2) dance; 3) lyric exaltation and 4) the word. The first is caused by the annihilation and the lack of confidence in all the things that, "alone and free" (*"sol i llibert"*), he feels now "like a frightened beast" (*"com una bèstia atemorida"*), although he will pass very soon from terror to astonishment (*"meravellament"*). The second is caused by the "the body losing its sense of direction with respect to the four cardinal points of the compass until he takes a great leap in the air" (*"desorientació del cos cap als quatre punts cardinals, fins que fa un gran salt enlaira"*), followed by a "jump with side steps" (*"salt amb els passos laterals"*) and a "sommersault" (*"giravolta"* -333-34). The third is caused by the desire to jump and scream "until he has a trembling fit" (*"fins a la convulsió"* -334), and the fourth allows the released prisoner to say finally what he thinks and feels .

Palau i Fabre then invites us to situate him –to situate ourselves– at the beginning of human history when the incipient rationality of men guarantees that they will not be so distant from the Earth, our Mother, as to objectify it and consider it something different from themselves. On the contrary, a human voice transformed into a hymn gives voice to everything: 'I don't know what's screaming most in me: / whether these birds / or

these flowers in my eyes, / or this perfume of wet earth' (*'No sé què crida més en mi: / si aquests ocells / o aquestes flors en els meus ulls, / o aquest perfum de terra molla'*). There is a complete identification with Nature: 'I'm also a tree, and I feel, / under my feet, / the sap working to nourish me' (*'També sóc arbre, i sento, / sota els meus peus, / la saba com treballa per nodrir-me'*). He recognizes that he is the son of a sole womb: 'Motherly womb, Earth, / nourish the newborn, protect in your ample breast. / ... everything was born from you; / I know that I'm your son' (*'Ventre matern, oh Terra, / nodreix el nounat, agombola'l en la teva ampla sina. / ... tot neix de tu; / jo em sé el teu fill'* -344). Yet a true danger looms: forgetting that we started with a dialogue among different interlocutors that was to be a real one; in other words, this new man does not know how he was born from Earth but he has no doubt that it happened with the help of the father Sun: '... Through what so lengthy process / have you conceived me? / When and where did your union take place? ... Everything talks to me about you, oh Father, oh Sun! / Everything talks to me about you, oh Mother, oh Earth! / Everything talks to me about your union' (*'... ¿Per quin procés tan llarg / heu arribat a concebre'm? / ¿Quan i en quin lloc fou la vostra unió?... Tot em parla de tu, oh Pare, oh Sol! / Tot em parla de tu, oh Mare, oh Terra! / Tot em parla de la vostra unió'*). Consequently, this free man has put an end to Plato's one-sided view. Or, in other words, the released prisoner in Palau i Fabre's work does not seem to be called upon to radically undervalue the lower pole –the pole of *Phýsis*– in order to ascend towards the only true pole –the Good– according to the idealist or ideocentric vertical ethical geometry. No, he blesses the union of the father Sun and the mother Earth: 'God bless the force that binds / one to another. / Thanks to it I am...' (*'Beneïda la força que us aferra / l'un a l'altre. / Per ella jo sóc...'*). He certainly recognizes that: 'Thanks to it I rise straight up towards the sky, like all the trees, / ... / And I can soar higher than the birds/ ... / with my thought' (*'Per ella em dreço amunt, com tots els arbres, / ... / I puc pujar més alt que els ocells / ... / amb el meu pensament'*), but this thought comes from the roots: 'Also my roots must go deeper! / Where are they born, from where do they come, so that I can / fly so high?!' (*'També en mi les arrels deuen ser més pregones! / ¿On neixen, d'on arrenquen, perquè jo pugui / volar tan alt?!'* -345)¹¹. In any case, not only the presence of a higher Pole and the absence of a lower one explains the Whole but also: 'Your answer is this powerful presence' (*'La vostra resposta és aquesta presència poderosa'*). Also, this

¹¹ Palau i Fabre considers that his play has a metaphysical ambition: "*The cave*, an attempt to stage the myth of the cave by Plato, must be one of the few plays in the Catalan theatre with a metaphysical ambition" ("La caverna, intent d'escenificar el mite de la caverna de Plató, deu ser una de les poques obres amb ambició metafísica al teatre català" -in García 1993, p. 80). "The idea can come from tragedy and fly as high as he wants. Strange playwright!" ("La Idea pot desprendre's de la tragèdia i volar tan alta com li plagui. Estrany dramaturg!" -Palau i Fabre, 1961, p. 55). Personally, I would say that the released prisoner can fly very high, even higher than birds, but Platonic metaphysics underestimates *stricto sensu* the roots, the material world, a mere simulacrum of the Reality of the Ideas towards which the soul ascends thanks to the *anámnēsis*. I consider, then, Palau i Fabre's words as the firm conviction that, in the realm of thought, one always must go beyond and not stop, but I do not agree with Coca (2000, pp. 115-16): "His interest in the human beings who search for the unhidden truth is ontological, it is a part of his interest in Metaphysics" –"unhidden" because he associates Palau i Fabre's thought with Heidegger's in *The Essence of Truth* ("El seu interès per l'ésser que recerca la llibertat en la veritat desocultada és ontològic, és una part del seu interès per la metafísica" –"desocultada" perquè lliga el pensament de Palau amb el de Heidegger a *De l'essència de la veritat*). In my opinion any ontological truth must be one-sided, univocal, it begins and finishes in itself and can never fight against itself. I think rather that *The Cave* by JPF can be easily associated, as we shall see very soon, with Heraclitus's wisdom. On the other hand, I agree with Coca when, regarding the freedom proclaimed by Palau i Fabre, he states: "It is a possibility... and possibility, because it involves guesswork, includes an *agonistikós* dialectic and the idea of a path, a process, a passage" ("És una possibilitat... i la possibilitat, pel que té de tempteig, inclou una dialèctica agònica i la idea de camí, de procés, de trànsit" -143).

released prisoner wants to have interlocutors: 'Father, Mother, my loves, / give me always other brothers, the delight of my eyes and my hands' (*'Pare, Mare, amors meus, / doneu-me sempre altres germans, gaudi dels ulls i de les meves mans'* -346).

After he has overcome the incipient rationality as well as the hymn as a form of poetic expression, this man poses, logically and in prose, the great questions, the traditional, eternal ones:

'What's the meaning of all this? Why am I here now?... How can this change be explained?... Has this entire performance been conceived for me? Has it been staged to astonish me?... Am I in it, or is it in me, a mirage?... Am I the music or the instrument? Who is performing this concert? Why is it performed and for what? And for whom is it performed?... who but me can enjoy it?... All, all of it is for me!'

'¿Què vol dir tot això? ¿Per què sóc, ara, aquí? ¿Per què era allí fins ara?... ¿Com s'explica aquest canvi?... ¿És per a mi tot aquest espectacle? ¿Ha estat muntat per a meravellar-me?... ¿Sóc jo en ell, o és ell en mi, miratge?... ¿Sóc la música o bé sóc l'instrument? ¿Qui és l'executant d'aquest concert? ¿Per què és donat, i per a què? ¿I per a qui és donat?... ¿Qui, sinó jo, el pot assaborir?... Tot, tot és per a mi!' (346).

Here is a man who has become great, but "the day has now declined and the night falls over the MAN, who once again gets discouraged like a beast" (*"el dia ha anat declinant i la nit cau damunt l'HOME, que es torna a abatre com una bèstia"* -346). However, his scream for help –needless to say, once again a poetic one– is addressed to the two Poles on which his life depends: 'Oh Father! Oh Sun! / Don't leave your son, don't abandon him. / Oh Mother, welcome him. Welcome me, protect me' (*'Oh Pare! Oh Sol! / No deixis el teu fill, no l'abandonis. / Oh Mare, acull-lo. Acull-me, defensa'm, protegeix-me'*). The stars are shining in the sky, and the night with its 'great overcoat' (*'abric immens'* -347) hides the man from himself and dissolves him in himself; once again in the dark the released prisoner falls asleep and rests, since new experiences are waiting for him the next day.

We are now in the third Picture. The great theatre of life and the free man's awareness of his dual and opposed origin, masculine and feminine, have rescued –so to speak– the dialectical tension. Nevertheless, with regard to himself, he might think that he is alone and fall into the masculine one-sided view. Consequently, it will be necessary to stage a performance for him –a play within a play– so that the pole opposed to man will make him understand through the staging that he is also part of a necessary dialectical tension between the self and the [feminine] Other ('l'altra')¹²:

¹² In fact, to Palau i Fabre, women are his god, his only god: "Women are not my god, they are my only god. At least, regardless of beliefs, it is the only possible route towards what is absolute" ("No és que la dona sigui el meu déu; és que és l'únic déu. Almenys, al marge de creences, és l'única via possible d'accés a allò absolut" -Feliu, 2009, p. 98). Or: "Only through woman can one reach the ultimate experience in life. Woman, in Palau i Fabre's universe, is a divine being, either a woman who has fallen in love or a mother. Woman exists to be adored and possessed by man, thus giving him a fulfilled life... Knowing a woman, the only one... the goddess. The incarnation of all the women in the world. To possess all the women is to feel ones' self immortal, to possess the goddess is to become god, a god who has put his sperm in the fecund belly that will perpetuate him" ("Només a través de la dona es pot accedir a l'experiència última de la vida. La dona, en l'univers de Josep Palau i Fabre, és un ésser de naturalesa divina, tant si es tracta d'una enamorada com si és una mare, la dona existeix perquè l'home l'adori i la faci seva, donant-se alhora, a si mateix, la vida plena... Conèixer la dona, l'única... La deessa. L'encarnació de totes les dones del món. Posseir totes les dones és sentir-se immortal, posseir la deessa és

“The curtain rises and, on the stage, another stage is seen, a smaller one, with its curtain down. The MAN, alone, in the centre of the stage with his back to the audience, contemplates this second theatre, whose curtain rises a few moments later. A WOMAN, wrapped in many veils, is in the centre of this second theatre”.

“En alçar-se el teló apareix, dins de l’escenari, un altre escenari més petit, amb les cortines closes. L’HOME, sol, al centre de l’escena i d’esquena al públic, contempla aquest segon teatre, que s’obre pocs moments després. Una DONA, embolcallada en molts vels, és al centre d’aquest segon teatre” (348).

Indeed, the protagonist of this beneficial opposition introduces herself very proudly: ‘I’m your other half, the half you cannot see’ (*‘Sóc l’altra meitat teva, la que tu no pots ser’*), the half which lives ‘in your desire’ (*‘en el teu desig’*) and weaves life with the thread of man’s senses (348). Later on, she shows her face and the released prisoner becomes aware of his personal emptiness yearning to be filled with the best part of himself –and, paradoxically, different from himself: ‘Oh vision, oh woman, oh face; / Oh freedom of prison, / Oh the best part of us, / you empty me and you fill me: / you fill me with you, and you are not me’ (*‘Oh, visió, oh dona, oh rostre; / Oh llibertat de la presó, / Oh de nosaltres la millor part nostra, / em buides de mi i m’omples: / m’omples de tu, que no sóc jo’*). Now the woman takes off all the veils and, as we have already seen, this contemplation (*theâsthai*) makes the man understand that he must reproduce the creative Sun-Earth dialogue: ‘Oh Father, Oh Sun... / The light reaches my thoughts / ... / She is the Earth and I am you’ (*‘Oh Pare, oh Sol... / La llum m’arriba al pensament / ... / Ella és la Terra i jo sóc tu’*) (349). Needless to say, he goes onto the second stage and, when the curtain rises again, the woman rocks a newborn child.

The human Sun and the Earth already have two children, a little boy and girl, and the sort of theatre appropriate for them –because children also need to go to the theatre– is the puppet show which now appears at the back of the second theatre: “Two children play on the ground... the MAN, back to the audience, as in the previous scene, contemplates the theatre at the back, fascinated” (*“Dos infants juguen per terra... l’HOME, d’esquena al públic, com en l’escena anterior, contempla el teatre del fons, fascinat”* -350). They are children and, therefore, they have had no time to read Plato, but everything suggests that the little boy might consider the masculine one-sided view the best of all possible Republics. In effect, he wants to be the king and does not want Mariona to be the queen; he wants to play ‘killing and taking prisoners’ (*‘jugar a matar i a fer presoners’*) and has no intention of looking after his sister’s baby. Mariona, on the other hand, believes in many-sided views –she is contemporary, then, in a radical way! She intends to make him accept that ‘You’re the king, I’m the queen, and he’s the prince’ (*‘Tu ets el rei, jo la reina, i ell és el príncep’*). But the answer of this little but highly egotistical man is absolutely predictable: ‘I’m also the prince’ (*‘Jo també sóc el príncep’*), so that the Man has no choice other than to try to re-establish the healthy dialectical tension between genders, although very probably he will not succeed in this, because, when he was a child, since he did not yet know his mother, he played ‘skittles or football... with other children’ (*‘a bitlles o amb la pilota... amb altres nens’* -350-51).

The stage directions tell us that “They all disappear except the MAN” (*“Desapareixen tots menys l’HOME”* -351), who is about to poetically recite a

esdevenir déu, un déu que ha dipositat la seva semença en el ventre engendrador que el perpetua” - Zgustová, a Guillamón, 2000, pp. 180-81).

monologue as long as all the questions without answer coming from the absolute loneliness that human beings feel and have felt throughout the centuries:

‘How many questions! And I must answer them. / There’re so many questions in me... , / and I don’t know to whom I can ask them, and I pretend / to answer theirs. / Are my questions as puerile / to other ears as I think that theirs are? / Am I perhaps still more puerile? / Why, if my questions are heard, / aren’t they answered by anyone? / They calm down, sometimes, with my answers... / But why does no voice / ever come to comfort me? / ... / Are the questions too pretentious? / ... / Why, before our questions have been answered, do our children come to bother us with theirs? / ... / Is a question the only answer to a question? / ... / Why don’t adults play? / Does our play explain theirs / or does their play explain us? / Who is, here, the explanation of whom? / Am I not, my entire self, a living question? / Will death be a dead response? / Why does life kill us with questions, / and why does dead live in the answers?’.

‘Quantes preguntes! I els he de dar resposta. / Tantes preguntes que hi ha en mi... , / i que no sé a qui fer-les, i faig veure / que responc a les seves. / ¿Són les meves preguntes tan puerils / a una altra oïda, com les seves m’ho semblen? / ¿Sóc, potser, jo, encara més pueril? / ¿Per què, si les meves preguntes són oïdes, / ningú no les respon? / Ells s’aquieten, a voltes, amb les meves respostes... / Però ¿per què a mi cap veu / mai no ve a consolar-me? / ... / ¿Són massa pretensives les preguntes? / ... / ¿Per què abans que les nostres preguntes hagin estat / resoltes, / vénen els nostres fills a importunar-nos amb les seves? / ... / ¿És la pregunta la sola resposta a la pregunta? / ... / ¿Per què no juguen les persones grans? / ¿És el nostre jugar el que explica el seu / o bé el seu joc ens explica a nosaltres? / ¿Qui és, aquí, l’explicació de qui? / ¿No sóc, tot jo, una pregunta viva? / ¿Serà la mort, una resposta morta? / ¿Per què la vida ens fa morir a preguntes, / i per què viu la mort en les respostes?’ (352).

Fighting, usually good against evil, is predominant in the puppet theatre, and the theatre in *The Cave* by Palau i Fabre does not avoid the usual *repertoire*, although in this case the fight between the two opposed factions obscures a deeper meaning. After the curtain has risen: “The masculine elements appear, moving rhythmically, in the form of little lances and upward pointing triangles and cones on one side. On the other, with a more undulating rhythm, the feminine elements, in jagged forms, with triangles and cones pointing downwards” (“*Apareixen, movent-se rítmicament, els elements masculins, en forma de llancetes, triangles i cons per amunt, a una banda. A l’altra, amb un ritme més ondulant, els elements femenins, en forma de dentats, triangles i cons per avall*”). Thus once again the dialectical war of opposites prevails, but, in this field, the great master is Heraclitus, not Plato, so that the end of the previous stage direction is rather predictable: “War between the masculine elements and the feminine elements, which eventually merge” (“*Guerra entre els elements masculins i els elements femenins, que acaben barrejant-se*”). The two voices, masculine and feminine, which come from the back of the puppet theatre, proclaim this undeniable truth, and, if the former says: ‘All in favor and all against. / All against all. / ...’ (*‘Tots a favor i tots en contra. / Tots contra tots. / ...’*), the latter stresses the point: ‘One against all, all against one. / Everyone against themselves. / ...’ (*‘Un contra tots, tots contra un. / Cada u contra ell mateix. / ...’*) (352).

That Palau i Fabre did not consider Heraclitus a dark philosopher (*skoteinós*) becomes quite clear reading the title of the essay he devoted to him, *The clarity of*

Heraclitus (La claredat d'Heràclit), in which he sees the extant fragments as the answers to the questions that the thinker himself posed. I am not going to present here and now a critical analysis; I will simply present the fragments that in my opinion the author very probably took as a reference when he wrote *The Cave*. Concerning the texts that we have already encountered above –and much of what we will see further on– we must definitely call attention to the following fragments: 53 *DK*: “War is the father of everything and the king of everything” (“La guerra és el pare de totes les coses i el rei de totes les coses...”) ¹³ answering the question: “Would the world not work better without war, if war is the origin of all evil? (“El món no funcionaria millor sense la guerra, si la guerra és l’origen de tots els mals?”) ¹⁴ -81); 80 *DK*: “We must understand that war is common, justice is discord and everything happens and is destroyed through discord” (“Cal saber que la guerra és comuna, la justícia discòrdia, que tot es fa i es destrueix per discòrdia” ¹⁵), answering the question: “Why must we celebrate our warriors and leaders if they all are unjust and wicked?” (“Per què hem de lloar els nostres guerrers i els nostres caps, si són injustos i malvats tant els uns com els altres?”) (105), and fragment 8 *DK*: “What is contrary is useful, and it is from what is found in struggle that the most beautiful harmony is born: everything occurs through discord” (“Allò que és contrari és útil, i és d’allò que es troba en lluita que en neix l’harmonia més bella: tot es fa per discòrdia” ¹⁶), answering the question: “How must we face the conflicts and anger engendered by humans and nations” (“Com afrontar les lluites i les iras que desencadenen els homes i els pobles”?) -35) ¹⁷.

The following stage direction reveals that our playwright has decided to correct Plato: “The play stops. The DEMIURGE gets out from behind the puppet theatre, with half of his body appearing as masculine and the other half feminine” (“*S’atura el joc. Surt, de darrere el teatre de titelles, el DEMIÛRG, amb la meitat del cos masculina i l’altra meitat femenina*” -352). Thus, this is not the inferior “craftsgod” of *Timaeus*, who shapes the visible world from the initial chaos using the model of the ideal Forms, everlasting and unchangeable, with the visible world, the best of possible worlds, resulting from his action. Although his ontological and axiological status is lower than

¹³ “πόλεμος πάντων μὲν πατήρ ἐστι, πάντων δὲ βασιλεύς” (Diels-Kranz, 1951, rpr.1966, for all the fragments).

¹⁴ Palau i Fabre’s interest in Heraclitus goes back to the summer of 1946 when he read *Penseurs Grecs avant Socrate*, translated by Jean Volquin, edited by Garniere Frères. In 1965 it was reedited by Garnier-Flammarion. The essay cited here, not included in the edition of the *Obra Literària Completa* by Galàxia Gutenberg (2005), was written and published in French as *La clarté d’Héraclite*, at the end of sixties, and he reproduced Volquin’s translation. The Catalan edition in 2007, to which the numbers in brackets refer, simply translates Volquin’s French translation into Catalan (by Oriol Punsatí-Murlà). I do not always agree with Volquin’s translations but, in any case, I think that here it is essential to use the translations on which Palau i Fabre’s translation are based. On the fragments by Heraclitus, and comments and interpretations, see, among others: Montes, 2011; Gianvittorio, 2010; Mouraviev, 2006; Marcovich, 2001; García Calvo, 1999; Diano, 1994; García Quintela, 1992; Robinson, 1987; Conche, 1986; Kahn, 1981; Colli, 1980 and Bollack, 1972.

¹⁵ “εἰδέναι δὲ χρὴ τὸν πόλεμον ἔοντα ξυνόν, καὶ δίκην ἔριν, καὶ γινόμενα πάντα κατ’ ἔριν καὶ χρεῶν”.

¹⁶ “τὸ ἀντίξουν συμφέρον καὶ ἐκ τῶν διαφερόντων καλλίστην ἄρμονίαν καὶ πάντα κατ’ ἔριν γένεσθαι”.

¹⁷ It is worth adding here to the comment by Palau i Fabre: “Heraclitus’s answer is very clear. Struggle, antagonisms, are the very essence of nature and of “becoming”. But for us, since the time of Christianity, this struggle astonishes us, or seems to astonish us, and we try, usually in vain, to overcome our astonishment, while Heraclitus accepts the universe along with the duality which, according to him, is inherent in it” (“La resposta d’Heràclit és molt nítida. La lluita, els antagonismes, són l’essència mateixa de la natura i de l’esdevenir. Però per nosaltres, a partir del cristianisme, aquesta lluita ens sorprèn, o sembla sorprendre’ns i intentem, gairebé sempre en va, de superar-la, mentre que Heràclit accepta l’univers amb la dualitat que segons ell li és inherent” -35).

that of the Forms, the Platonic demiurge works –so to speak– in favor of the one-sided primacy of the superior Form, the Good, and the visible world will not attain the category of opposite Pole *inter pares* in a certainly inconceivable fight. On the contrary, Palau i Fabre's demiurge, clearly inspired in my opinion by Heraclitus, if he must give something to the world that will take root in it, will endow it with the beneficial opposition of contraries, that is, a true guarantee of genuine dialogue among the parts making up a Whole¹⁸. Or, in other words, beginning with the opposition between genders: the androgynous figure in Aristophanes's speech in Plato's *Symposium* is by no means a joke, but rather the solution to an enigma.

Let us listen, then, to the demiurge's words: 'In me become united the two genders, / clarity of the enigma. / Good and evil in me get mixed up and need each other' (*En mi s'uneixen els dos sexes, / claror d'enigma. / El bé i el mal en mi es confonen / i es necessiten* -352-53), which can be compared with fragment 58 *DK* by Heraclitus: "Good and evil form a unity" ("Bé i mal són tot un"¹⁹ -87), or with fragments 59 and 60 on the single identity of everything: "The way by which we walk straight ahead and the way by which we make a detour are one and the same" ("El camí que va pel dret i el que fa marrada són un i el mateix camí"); "The way going up and the way going down are one and the same" ("El camí de dalt i el camí de baix són un i el mateix"²⁰ -88-89). Later on, the demiurge will say: 'What is masculine? What is feminine? / Everything is the same and everything is different' (*Què és masculí? ¿Què és femení? / Tot és igual i tot distint* -353), which, *mutatis mutandis*, could refer to fragment 10 *DK*: "... from all things one and one from all things" ("... de totes les coses, una i, d'una, totes les coses"²¹ -37). War, as the father of everything is also suggested in: 'Hate and love beget, because they love and hate each other' (*Odi i amor són els qui engendren, perquè s'estimen i es detesten* -353). He also says: 'Everything is opposite to itself / rather than to another' (*Tot és contrari a si mateix / ans que contrari a un altre* -353), and in Heraclitus, fragment 51 *DK*, we read: "They do not understand how the one fighting against himself can converge with himself; movements in a contrary way as in the case of the bow and the lyre" ("No entenen com aquell que lluita amb si mateix pot posar-se d'acord; moviments en sentit contrari, com succeeix amb l'arc i la lira"²² -79). And he further adds: 'Everything is born when it dies / in this performance' (*Tot neix quan mor i mor quan neix / en aquest espectacle*) (353), which reminds us, for instance, of fragment 36 *DK*: "For souls, to die is equivalent to becoming water; for water, to die is equivalent to becoming earth; but from the earth comes water, and from water comes the soul" ("Per les ànimes, morir equival a convertir-se en aigua; per a l'aigua, morir

¹⁸ Let us recall, for example, the following fragments. 23 *DK*: "If injustice did not exist, we would not even know the name of the justice" ("Si no hi hagués injustícia, ignorariem fins i tot el nom de la justícia" -48) ("δίκης ὄνομα οὐκ ἂν ἴδισαν, εἰ ταῦτα μὴ ἦν"); 111: "Is is disease that makes health something pleasant; evil that begets good; hunger that makes us desire satiety, and fatigue rest" ("És la malaltia, que fa la salut agradable; el mal, que engendra el bé; la fam, que fa desitjar la sacietat, i la fatiga el repòs" -131) ("νοῦσος ὑγιεινὴ ἐποίησεν ἡδὺν καὶ ἀγαθόν, λιμὸς κόρον, κάματος ἀνάπαυσιν"); 102: "For God everything is beautiful, good and just: human beings consider some things just and others unjust" ("Per Déu tot és bell, bo i just: els homes tenen algunes coses per justes i altres per injustes" -123) ("τῶι μὲν θεῶι καλὰ πάντα καὶ ἀγαθὰ καὶ δίκαια, ἀνθρώποι δὲ ἅ μὲν ἄδικοι ὑπειλήφασιν, ἅ δὲ δίκαια"), i 67: "God is day and night, winter and summer, abundance and poverty" ("Déu és dia i nit, hivern i estiu, abundància i misèria" -96) ("ὁ θεὸς ἡμέρη εὐφρόνη, χειμῶν θέρος, πόλεμος εἰρήνη, κόρος λιμός").

¹⁹ "καὶ ἀγαθὸν καὶ κακὸν ἓν ἐστίν".

²⁰ "γναφείωι ὁδὸς εὐθειᾶ καὶ σκολιή μία ἐστὶ; ὁδὸς ἄνω κάτω μία καὶ ὡπτή".

²¹ "ἐκ πάντων ἓν καὶ ἐξ ἑνὸς πάντα".

²² "οὐ ξυνιάσιν ὅπως διαφερόμενον ἐωπτῶι ὁμολογέει παλίντροπος ἀρμονίη ὅκωσπερ τόξου καὶ λύρης".

equivall a convertir-se en terra; però de la terra en ve l'aigua, i de l'aigua en ve l'ànima"²³ -61). The echo of war can be heard once more in: 'Look how tender and soft I am /on one side, / and how fierce and sharp / on this other. / Who causes the war between the two? (*'Mira que tendre sóc i fi / per una banda, / i que ferotge i angulós / per aquesta altra. / ¿Qui mou la guerra entre tots dos?'* -353). And, in its turn: 'You'll kill your parents, you'll devour your children: / they rob your strength and they are your secret. / You'll be the child of your children and you'll give birth to your parents, / You'll be born, then, if you want, from yourself' (*'Occiràs els teus pares, els fills devoraràs: / ells et roben la força i són el teu secret. / Seràs fill dels teus fills i els pares pariràs, / Naixeràs aleshores, si vols, de tu mateix'* -353-54), which, despite being based on ever-present war, could be compared, *mutatis mutandis*, with fragment 62 DK: "Immortals, mortals; mortals, immortals: our life is the death of the former and their life is our death" ("Immortals, mortals; mortals, immortals; la nostra vida és la mort dels primers i la seva vida és la nostra mort"²⁴ -91). We shall say finally that this speech of the demiurge is circular, so that we hear again: 'In me become united the two genders, / clarity of the enigma. / Good and evil get mixed up with one another and need each other. / Hate and love beget / because they love and hate each other. / And life and death are appearances' (*'En mi s'uneixen els dos sexes, / claror d'enigma. / El bé i el mal en mi es confonen / i es necessiten. / Odi i amor són els qui engendren / perquè s'estimen i es detesten. / I vida i mort són aparences'* -354).

The demiurge disappears now and the vision has fascinated the Man. He says 'More! More!! More!!!' (*'Més! Més !! Més!!!'*) and approaches the puppet theatre in order to retain the vision, "but a great ray of light shines out from it, blinding him and making him retreat... as if from a fatal blow... the curtains of the theatres close in succession until finally he falls down before the audience. Darkness" (*"però en surt un gran raig de llum que l'encega i que el fa recular... com colp mortalment... es van tancant les cortines dels successius teatres, fins que cau davant la dels espectadors. Obscuritat"* - 354). The audience, of course, will not be able to see anything until the curtains rise again, but everything suggests that our released prisoner, in accordance with the Platonic model, is now well prepared to try to rescue his ancient "cavemates" after being imprisoned again. Nevertheless, the audience should understand that the light he has known, as mentioned before, has to do with a horizontal journey through the visible world of men and women, where the war between opposite and convergent poles prevails, rather than a vertical ascent towards the sole and intelligible Ideal Reality.

The fourth Picture allows us to contemplate the inner part of the cave where the other four prisoners remain. They sit looking at the audience on a long bench with an empty space in the middle that the absent prisoner had occupied, whose name is now mentioned for the first time: Gurt. As in Plato's cave²⁵, they play at predicting the order of the passing shadows reflected in the wall in front of them –that is, on the fictitious screen that would be situated between them and the audience. These shadows are projected by a burning fire behind them, in front of the slope past which some slaves must walk carrying various objects. Nevertheless, today the slaves have not passed by in the usual order: but the Great Hump –with a sack on his back– has overtaken Sleeper – with a board on his shoulders– and in third place they have seen, as usual, the shadow of Hoof –with a pick on his back. The men in the cave do not understand this change and regret the absence of Gurt, who had been the best interpreter of what he defined as the

²³ "ψυχῆισιν θάνατος ὕδαρ γενέσθαι, ὕδατι δὲ θάνατος γῆν γενέσθαι. ἐκ γῆς δὲ ὕδαρ γίνεται ἐξ ὕδατος δὲ ψυχῆ".

²⁴ "ἀθάνατοι θνητοί, θνητοί ἀθάνατοι, ζῶντες τὸν ἐκείνων θάνατον, τὸν δὲ ἐκείνων βίον τεθνεῶτες".

²⁵ 516c7-517a6.

“Great Absent Presences” (*“Grans Presències Absents”*) –let us recall that they only see shadows– although they had carried on a long discussion about “whether they were Great Absent Presences or Great Present Absences” (*“si eren Grans Presències Absents o Grans Absències Presents”*-356-57) –they also call them “the Silent Ones”. In any case, they all think that Gurt has been out for too long, that he must have forgotten them and that he must have lost all touch with their reality. Therefore, his best friend, Teix, should take his place, since ‘he has always been here. He has known our vicissitudes, our desires, our misfortunes, every day’ (*‘ha estat sempre aquí. Ha seguit les nostres peripècies, els nostres afanys, els nostres mals, cada dia’*) (357)²⁶. But, all of a sudden, something unexpected takes place: the two guards reappear with Gurt and they leave him shackled in the place where he had always been. “Completely amazed, he tries to recognize the place where he is and, when he sees his mates, he bows his head... scared” (*“Atònit, intenta conèixer el lloc on es troba i, a la vista dels seus companys, acota el cap... esglaiait”*), and the other prisoners, a bit angry with him because he seems not to recognize them and says nothing, “burst out laughing with rude boisterous laughs” (*“esclaten a riure amb riallades grolleres”* -358). Very soon one of them asks the most logical question: ‘Where have you been all this time?’ (*‘¿On has estat totes aquestes ventrades’*), and the Man transformed by the light of the third Picture tries to explain it to them in a simple way without forgetting, however, the new reality, the reason for which he should rescue them:

‘When here we fall asleep, later on we tell each other our dreams, in which everything is mixed: things that we like and things that we don’t like. Well then, more things, many more things, are mixed there. But not in a dream, but in reality: things that can be grasped and touched, like our pots, our spoons...’.

‘Quan aquí ens adormim, després ens contem els somnis, on es barreja tot: coses que ens agraden i coses que no ens agraden. Doncs allí encara s’hi barregen més coses, moltes més coses. Però no en el somni, sinó en la realitat: coses que es poden agafar i tocar, com els nostres perols, les nostres culleres...’ (359).

For the time being, they do not permit him to explain further because the slaves pass by again in the opposite direction and they must utter their incantations, *‘Tribi, catribi, ucapa’*, predicting that ‘they will become Sleeper, Great Hump and Hoof again’ (*‘siguin Travessa, Gran Gep i Unglot altra vegada’* -359). The collision between different realities is already inevitable and Gurt tells them why he has not wanted to echo Teix by making his own prediction: ‘For me, Sleeper, Great Hump and Hoof are nothing’ (*‘És que per a mi, Travessa, Gran Gep i Unglot no són res’*). However, the others point out that he is contradicting himself: ‘You contradict what you had told us about the Absent Presences and the Present Absences. How do you expect us to believe you?’ (*‘Contradius el que ens havies dit sobre les Presències Absents i les Absències Presents. ¿Com vols que et creguem?’* -360).

So far, the dialogue between the other prisoners and the one who knew freedom has been possible because there has been precisely a fluent and free opposition of opinions, but Gurt knows that his “cavemates’ ” view of things is one-sided as a result of their having been permanently imprisoned. Enlisting their imagination, that is, hoping that they will really grasp the image, he tells them that he was not taken out of this room to a

²⁶ “This also has a lot to do with JPF’s life. He lives abroad for 15 years and, when he returns and explains his point of view, he is considered subversive” (*“Té també molt a veure amb la vida de JPF. S’està 15 anys fora i quan torna i explica el seu punt de vista se’l considera subversiu”* -Gau, in Guillamon, 2000, p. 158).

bigger one, but he has been ‘Out of all the rooms’ (*Fora de totes les sales*), because ‘There is a place, not very far from here... with no more walls. There, you can walk as far as you wish without reaching the limit’ (*Hi ha un lloc, no massa lluny d’aquí... sense més parets. On, per més que avancis, no arribes a trobar el límit*). This is in fact a futile statement because, to those who have always lived surrounded by walls that in a sense they perceive as protectors and definers of their identity, Gurt’s words are practically blasphemy. Thus, at first they only remark that ‘He wants us to think he’s interesting’ (*Es vol fer l’interessant*) or ‘He’s laughing at us’ (*Es riu de nosaltres*) but, when Gurt dares to insinuate that ‘Compared with there, everything here...’ (*Comparat amb allò, tot això d’aquí...*), the answer turns into a clear threat: ‘Be careful, don’t use bad language’ (*Alerta, no malparlis*’ -361).

Gurt insists again and again on his best intentions: ‘Everything we eat here... the very water... is so abundant and good that it would fill thousands of rooms like this... But... true life, is still more than this’ (*Tot això que aquí mengem... l’aigua mateixa... és tan abundant i bona que ompliria mils de sales com aquesta... Però... la veritable vida, és molt més encara*). The boldest statement, however –for obvious reasons– is to tell them that they are victims of gender one-sidedness and that, as a consequence, they lack a half that they never knew: ‘There’s another way of being, opposite to us, that we must join with in order to become complete’ (*Hi ha una altra manera de ser que ens és oposada, però amb la qual ens hem d’ajuntar per a completar-nos*’ -362). They have never seen a woman but he will speak to them about the light that they may have intuited thanks to the shadows: ‘There’s a light. It isn’t this little reflection here inside but the true light. First it will harm you, as happened to me. Later on, you wouldn’t be able to stand its absence’ (*I hi ha la llum. No aquesta mica de reflex d’aquí dins, sinó la veritable llum. De primer us feriria, com em passà a mi. Després no podríeu suportar la seva absència*). But they do not trust him: ‘If that was so beautiful, why didn’t you stay there?’ (*Si allò era tan bell, ¿per què no t’hi quedaves?*) and, when Gurt answers that he has been brought back by those who took him away, then they even feel offended: ‘That means that, had it been your decision, you wouldn’t have come back to us’ (*Així vols dir que si hagués estat per tu no hauries tornat amb nosaltres*). Showing them his most human and unselfish aspect is similarly futile: ‘When I was up there, I thought that you’d also like being there. When I saw the light, I thought that you’d also like seeing it... Everything I enjoyed there, I’d like to help you to participate in’ (*Quan era allí dalt, pensava que a vosaltres també us agradaria de ser-hi. Quan veia la llum, pensava que a vosaltres també us agradaria de veure-la... De tot el que allí gaudia, hauria volgut fer-vos participar*). Indeed, their reaction very much resembles that of the conformist Old Guard in the first Picture, that is: why should they risk losing the certainty of a good meal every day in exchange for an uncertain and unknown future?: ‘Thank you for your good intentions’ (*S’agraeix la intenció*), answers the fifth prisoner, and the second one adds: ‘But with all your good intentions we won’t have any more food’ (*Però amb això no tindrem pas més tall*) (363).

Throughout the entire Picture, Palau i Fabre continues to opt for a dialogue as credible as it is predictable. Finally, Gurt proposes that they try to escape from the cave together because ‘What cannot be done by one person alone can be done by many together’ (*El que no pot un de sol ho poden molts alhora*); he repeats that ‘All this is false and only by getting out of here will you understand this.’ (els repeteix *Que tot això és fals, i que només sortint d’aquí ho podreu comprendre*); he assures them that up there they all will be much more than they are now. But the prisoners do not see it, since ‘It is strange that they’ve let you come back’ (*És estrany que t’hagin deixat tornar*); what he has described is ‘too good to be true’ (*Massa bonic i tot*), and,

furthermore, they want ‘proof’ (*prova*) which should not be merely his testimony (364-65).

If Gurt, the long time prisoner fallen in love forever with freedom, was not meant to be a tragic hero, the drama could end with total conformism and surrender. But the playwright has definitely conceived him as a tragic hero who will be able to firmly face his tragic fate, thus proclaiming the unavoidable duty to never desist in the act of thinking. In effect, he knows that only thus can our mind preserve its agility and avoid sclerosis, only thus can we avoid the hardening that is peculiar to unchangeable certainties²⁷. If the mind of his “cavemates” must be dialectical, other approaches—opposed to theirs— are needed and, above all, if they should eventually discover a definite opposite pole, they must make war against it courageously and at the same time merge with it. To sum up, they must neither make it into an instrument nor subject it to their criterion, because there cannot then be real dialogue but only one-sided views of everything.

The verb “to think” thus appears insistently in the final pages of the script of the drama. The prisoners ask Gurt not to bother them, because they were very well before his arrival, but he must try to put an end to their ignorance: ‘Think a bit about what I’ve told you and answer me later on’ (*Penseu una mica el que us he dit i em respondreu més endavant*). However, the immediate answer reveals their intellectual poverty: ‘We won’t answer you now or ever’ (*No et respondrem ni ara ni mai*). He then addresses the First Prisoner, named Crom, apparently more inclined to develop his intellect; his “cavemates”, however, warn him not to do anything ‘unless Teix has ordered it’ (*sense l’ordre d’en Teix*). Gurt prefers to give him time: ‘Don’t answer me now. Think about what I’ve told you’ (*No em responguis per ara. Tu ves pensant el que t’he dit*). The Fifth Prisoner tries to change Gurt’s attitude: ‘Don’t think about it any longer, Gurt’ (*No hi pensis més, Gurt!*), but Gurt cannot give up: ‘Crom, start to think about it’ (*Crom, ves pensant*), and nor can his opponent: ‘I’ve told you not to think about it any longer’ (*T’he dit que no hi pensis més*). Perhaps he had surrendered too soon and had not been fighting enough:

‘Don’t think about it any longer, don’t think about it any longer! It’s easy to say it! But what if I want to think about it? What if I want to feel that I think and that you cannot envisage what I’m thinking? Because the first thing to be learnt up there is the superiority of thought, obscure to anyone besides the thinker, which can work against you without your awareness... Enough, for the time being. But everything goes on within, through the act of thinking’.

‘No hi pensis més, no hi pensis més! Aviat està dit! ¿I si em plau, de pensar-hi? ¿I si em plau de sentir que penso i que no podeu endevinar el que penso? Car la primera cosa que allí dalt s’aprèn és la superioritat del pensament, on ningú no té accés, i que pot treballar contra vosaltres sense que en tingueu esment... Prou, de moment. Però tot continua per dins, pel pensament’ (366).

There is nothing to be done; the prisoners’ thoughts are not aimed at creating a beneficial tension with those of Gurt, as with the strings of the bow and the lyre. On the contrary, they prefer to stop the process: ‘Change what you’re thinking’ (*Rectifica el que penses*). Gurt: ‘I change nothing’ (*No rectifico res: penso*). The Fifth Prisoner: ‘You think against us’ (*Penses contra nosaltres!*). Gurt: ‘I think without you since you

²⁷ “To live, humanly speaking, is above all to be capable of reach the most distant and diverse regions of awareness” (“Viure, humanament parlant, és abans que res, una capacitat per abastar les zones més distants i diverses de la consciència” -Palau i Fabre, a Guillaumon, 2000, p. 105).

want to remain in the dark' (*Penso sense vosaltres, ja que us voleu quedar a les fosques*). Fourth Prisoner: 'Gurt desires our misfortune' (*En Gurt ens vol perdre*). Any sort of doubt, then, is finished. They must act right now. They tell him that there is a bug crawling on his knee, but he can't see it and:

"As Gurt lowers his head to look down, the Second and Fourth Prisoners, with one hand each, pin Gurt's arm against them, while with the other hand they strangle him together, as the curtain falls and Teix's voice is still heard saying: 'Think, Gurt, think!...'

"Mentre Gurt acota el cap per a fixar l'atenció, el Captiu Segon i el Captiu Quart, amb una mà cada u, immobilitzen el braç d'en Gurt que els queda més a la vora, mentre amb l'altra mà escanyen conjuntament aquest²⁸, mentre va baixant el teló i encara se sent la veu d'en Teix, que diu: 'Pensa, Gurt, pensa!...'" (367).

Gurt, as a tragic hero, has done everything could be demanded and expected of him. By explaining the details of his unexpected experience outside, guided by his great unselfishness and sense of comradeship, he has made a great effort to help his "cavemates" imagine a brilliant life beyond the walls of their dark, protecting cave. His purpose has been noble and he has insisted wail. Thus, he was worthy of success but he has lost his life ironically and tragically. We have gone to the theatre and seen the performance of the drama. We have been able to contemplate all of it with CLARITY and to think about it at the same time. We have not been asked to read a text in solitude in order to discover its hidden meaning. Palau i Fabre has been fascinated by Plato's cave²⁹, has preferred the theatre to allegory and, with the help of Heraclitus, has almost disposed of the "ideocentric" view in favour of a preeminent war of opposites –or an opposition of contraries. The result has been a drama with a tragic end, conceived as catharsis, as a true reaction against fate³⁰, thus creating the tension or that unhindered flow of thought capable of unthwartable persistence. In other words: although the author has written a metaphysical tragedy, Gurt in Palau i Fabre's personal version of *The Cave*, in light of what we have read, should not simply surrender to the Idea. I am firmly convinced of this because, if the author has not brought us to the theatre with this aim, perhaps we should read then –only read– Plato's text again and again and state, as he did, that at least in this world humans will always remain in the dark, since Truth, the Light, has always been in a high, distant realm, entirely alien to this shadowy apparent world of ours.

²⁸ Compare this with Plato. *R.* 517^a4-6: "καὶ τὸν ἐπιχειροῦντα λύειν τε καὶ ἀνάγειν, εἴ πως ἐν ταῖς χερσὶ δύναιντο λαβεῖν καὶ ἀποκτείνειν, ἀποκτείνουσι ἄν;" ("And if it were possible to lay hands on and to kill the man who tried to release them and lead them up, would they not kill him? –translated by Shorey, 1970).

²⁹ Like many others; let us think, for instance, of *La caverna* by Rodolf Sirera (1995) and *A Caverna* by José Saramago (2000). For an analysis of both works from the perspective of the Classical Tradition, see Gilabert (1999 and 2008, respectively).

³⁰ "My most important concern now is tragedy, which is a fight against fate" ("La meva preocupació actual més important és la tragèdia, que és lluita contra la fatalitat" -Palau i Fabre, quoted by Gallén, 1987, p. 35). "At the beginning of the fifties... Palau i Fabre took another way in the inseparable bond between his human evolution and his artistic one; his decision took him to the world of theatre. To tragedy" ("A inicis dels anys cinquanta... Palau i Fabre inaugurà un nou tombant en l'indestructible lligam entre la seva trajectòria humana i la corresponent artística; el decantament l'havia de conduir cap al món teatral. Cap a la tragèdia" -Gallén, 1987, p. 35).

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