



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
"VERBA VOLANT? ORALITY, WRITING, AND MEMORY"

Faculty of Philosophy of Braga (UCP)
13 to 15 November 2014

The centrality of the word in the context of the Human Sciences is unquestionable. Through word, man sets himself/herself apart from irrational creatures, assimilates and recreates the world, and communicates (himself/herself) personally among equals. The word appears, therefore, as the most faithful mirror of the human, a secret and an unveiling at the same time, which allows a human to surrender to the other and to approach the absolute and the sublime.

Since the origins of Western Literature, two distinct and complementary worldviews have articulated with one another: on the one hand, the *mythos*, and, on the other, the *logos*, somehow transmitted, respectively, through poetry and prose. Ancient Greece, the cradle of Western civilization, was the primal source of both: first, there was poetry, not yet written, associated with oral transmission, which presented to the memory the universal examples and the mythical intuition of the origins; then, following the written record, came the prose, more propitious to logical reflection, with almost infinite potentialities in the great revolution of the attic rationalism. Memory, which is the basis of oral poetry, was simultaneously a mechanism for creation and collective recreation; writing opened, afterwards, an integrative anthropological moment, which corrected the fallible process of oral transmission, and gave the reader an already individualized product, in the lasting immutability ensured by written character.

The debate on the oral or written nature of the first literary products of Ancient Greece is the most widespread of all that happened around the question of literariness. The extraordinary blossoming of philosophical reflection in classical Athens was ambivalent: while it boosted the obsessive importance of the word, especially written, its dangers also became manifest. Aeschylus recalled, in *Prometheus Bound* (459 *sqq*), how writing, by allowing the human being to preserve the memory of all things, was one of the gifts that liberated mortals from the most basic bondage, and drove them close to the threshold of divinity. However, Plato, reacting to the relativistic attitude of the Sophists of separating word from truth, noted in the *Phaedrus* (*On Beauty*) that writing was a threat to memory, as he evoked the Egyptian mythical fable about its invention: "It [writing] will make men more forgetful because, knowing how to write, they will cease to exercise their memory, trusting only in the scriptures [...]" (275a).

Captured by the fascination of the Greek world, Rome was above all the transmitter of this ambivalent legacy. For centuries, literary culture was synonymous with imitation and adaptation of classical models: when the Renaissance engaged in the effort of *revocare ad fontes*, the obsession with the genuine word, distorted by centuries of alleged darkness, culminated in phenomena such as the *Ciceronianism*; also until the Romanticism the weight of the models almost always exceeded the value of *ingenium*. The word of the

national languages went on to be seen as the most authentic representation of the identity of the new peoples, without, however, losing sight of the classical heritage, namely in its pursuit of beauty.

Meanwhile, the religions – from their most ancient forms to the major monotheisms – articulate remarkably well the word, orality and writing, through their myths, oracles-prophecies, sacred books and rituals. It suffices to recall that, in Judeo-Christianity, God creates all things by uttering God's Word (Dabar / Logos / Verbum); a Word that calls Abraham to a new land and a Covenant; an Old Covenant that, for Christians, will be supplanted by the New Covenant in Jesus Christ: "Et Verbum caro factum est": "And the Word became flesh": The Word is now Good News (Gospel) that saves and should be brought to the world. To publish, orally or in writing, to make memory and update the mystery, either by the relationship with God or with others – "to hear the Word of God and put it into practice" – that is the synthesis of Christianity.

Also in philosophical speculation the word occupies a central place, from its Greek beginnings. To rationally scrutinize the being of things means telling (*legein*) the *logos* they contain. The discussions about the (im)possibility of access to the truth and to tell it would go through the centuries to the present. The last century saw major developments, relating to issues of orality, writing and memory, with notable contributions from almost all major thinkers and philosophical currents, from phenomenology to existentialism, from hermeneutics to analytical philosophy, from structuralism to post-modernism. It suffices to recall some of the concepts and themes that were widely disseminated: relation and distinction "langue-parole" (F. de Saussure), "linguistic turn" (L. Wittgenstein), "hermeneutic circle" (H.-G. Gadamer) "theory of speech acts" (J.L. Austin and J. Searle), "communicative rationality" (J. Habermas), "(meta-)narratives" (J.-F. Lyotard), and "arch-writing" (J. Derrida). Besides the names mentioned, some others should also be referred: M. Heidegger, R. Barthes, J. Jakobson, P. Ricoeur, E. Benveniste and U. Eco.

In the world of Arts, the thread of continuity between "words and things" (Foucault) is today under suspicion, threatened by the aesthetic seduction of the image. The (un)readability of the postmodern world derives increasingly from the images that rise from the wreckage of the words, and from the wrecked words. The virtual image asserts itself as a novel food for meaning and experience, for desire and pleasure – for an aesthetic rationality, not forked by the ancient *mythos* and *logos*, but by the multiple feelings (Perniola). Ultimately, the almost "last word" (Thomas Nagel), which now awaits redemption, belongs to image.

Following other previous initiatives, and as a result of the same desire to promote and develop a stimulating critical reflection on the permanence and impact of the heritage of classical antiquity in Western culture of all times, the Centre for Philosophical and Humanistic Studies (CEFH) of the Faculty of Philosophy of the Catholic University of Portugal in Braga, through its Research Line "Studies in Literature and Culture", is organizing the International Conference "Verba volant? Orality, writing, and memory".

The Conference, which will take place at the Faculty of Philosophy between 13 and 15 November of the current year, presents as its fundamental theme the centrality of the word in the experience and memory of human beings. By articulating three core thematic topics (orality, writing, and memory), it naturally favours the integration of several areas of research in the Human Sciences.

1. Organization

Centre for Philosophical and Humanistic Studies of the Faculty of Philosophy of the UCP —
Research Line “Studies in Literature and Culture”

2. Organizing Committee

Ana Paula Pinto and Maria José Ferreira Lopes (Coordinators)

Álvaro Manuel Rodrigues Balsas

António Maria Martins Melo

João Carlos Onofre Pinto

Secretariat

Artur Alves

Maria Manuela Taveira Campelo

3. Scientific Committee

Armanda Gonçalves (Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Braga)

Augusto Soares Silva (Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Braga)

Carlos Bizarro Morais (Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Braga)

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Carlota Miranda Urbano (Universidade de Coimbra)

Delfim Ferreira Leão (Universidade de Coimbra)

Eunice Ribeiro (Universidade do Minho, Braga)

Geraldo de Mori (Faculdade Jesuíta de Filosofia e Teologia de Belo Horizonte)

João Angelo Oliva Neto (Universidade de São Paulo)

João Manuel Correia Duque (Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Braga)

João Vila-Chã (Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Roma)

José Carlos Francisco Pereira (Universidade de Lisboa)

Jorge Deserto (Universidade do Porto)

Kurt Appel (Universität Wien)

Manuel Gonçalves Sumares (Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Braga)

Maria Cristina Sousa Pimentel (Universidade de Lisboa)

Maria Fátima Silva (Universidade de Coimbra)

Maria Helena Rocha Pereira (Universidade de Coimbra)

Miguel António Costa Gonçalves (Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Braga)

Miguel García-Baró (Universidad Pontificia Comillas de Madrid)

Nuno da Silva Gonçalves (Pontificia Università Gregoriana, Roma)

Paula Morão (Universidade de Lisboa)

Rita Marquilhas (Universidade de Lisboa)

Santiago López-Moreda (Universidad de Extremadura, Cáceres)

Telmo Verdelho (Universidade de Aveiro)

Vicente Vide (Facultad de Teología de la Universidad de Deusto, Deusto/Bilbao)

Virgínia Conceição Soares Pereira (Universidade do Minho, Braga)

4. Keynote speakers

João Angelo Oliva Neto (Universidade de São Paulo)

Kurt Appel (Universität Wien)

Maria Cristina Sousa Pimentel (Universidade de Lisboa)

Miguel García-Baró (Universidad Pontificia Comillas de Madrid)

Rita Marquilhas (Universidade de Lisboa)

Santiago López-Moreda (Universidad de Extremadura, Cáceres)

Call for Papers

Scholars, Researchers, and Lecturers from different areas of knowledge of the Human Sciences are invited to present papers on the relevance of the word at the International Conference “Verba volant? Orality, writing, and memory” (Faculty of Philosophy of Braga, from 13 to 15 November 2014). The proposals, articulated around the core thematic lines of orality, writing, and memory, should focus on the relations with areas of research such as Literary, Linguistic, Philosophical, Psychological, Theological, and Artistic Studies, among others.

Abstracts and texts of the papers

The proposals for papers will be anonymously reviewed by at least two members of the Conference’s Scientific Committee, selected by the Organizing Committee, after the submission of an abstract. The abstracts should not exceed 500 words and must clearly explain objectives and issues, theoretical framework and methods of analysis, data, and expected results. They cannot name the author(s) nor his/her (their) institution or address.

The subject of the email should be identified as “abstract-proposal for paper”. The body of the email should contain the following information:

- 1 - Name(s) of author (s)
- 2 - Institution(s) to which he/she/they belong(s)
- 3 - Title of the paper
- 4 - Full postal address
- 5 - E-mail address
- 6 - Telephone/fax number
- 7 - Thematic area in which preferentially fits the Communication
- 8 - One (or more) of the fields of research mentioned above.

The abstracts should be sent as an attachment, preferably in Word or RTF format (or in PDF format, if it contains special symbols), to the following official address: congressoverbavolant@gmail.com.

The approved proposals will be publicly presented at the Conference by the respective author(s) over a period corresponding to twenty minutes (with additional ten minutes for debate).

The texts of the papers will be submitted to a new review by a Scientific Committee, in order of possible subsequent publication of a collective volume. Thus, Authors must write their final version

according to the style sheet of the Portuguese Journal of Humanities (www.rphumanidades.com), not exceeding 5000 words. In addition they must include an abstract in English.

Deadlines

The deadline for submission of abstracts is May 20, 2014.

The proposed date of notification of the results to registered authors is June 25, 2014, after anonymous evaluation of the abstracts.

Upon notification of the results, the Organizing Committee will formalize the registration for papers, by providing an online registration form, and will complete the final timetable of the promotion program.

Registration

From June 25 to July 31:

General: 160 Euros

Graduate* students: 110 Euros

Undergraduate students and institutional collaborators of the Regional Centre of Braga of the UCP*: 60 Euros

From August 1:

General: 200 Euros

Graduate* students: 150 Euros

Undergraduate students and institutional collaborators of the Regional Centre of Braga of the UCP*: 100 Euros

*** Upon presentation of documental proof**

Contacts



CONGRESSO INTERNACIONAL «VERBA VOLANT? ORALIDADE, ESCRITA E MEMÓRIA»
a/c Ana Paula Pinto e Maria José Ferreira Lopes
Faculdade de Filosofia de Braga
Largo da Faculdade, 1
4710-297 Braga — PORTUGAL
T: +351 253 208 075 (Artur Alves) / +351 253 206 100
F: +351 253 208 073
E: congressoverbavolant@gmail.com